

Inspection of a good school: Parsons Down Junior School

Herons Way, Thatcham, Berkshire RG19 3SR

Inspection dates:

5 and 6 July 2022

Outcome

Parsons Down Junior School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy their Parsons Down experience. They are happy and friendly to all. They are justifiably proud of being an official 'eco-school'. Pupils are excellent role models for protecting the planet. They ensure that everyone reduces energy use, litter and waste. The keen pupil eco-committee valiantly lead the way. This demonstrates how adults actively encourage pupils to 'make a difference together'.

The headteacher and her staff are highly ambitious for all pupils. This starts with teaching pupils how to behave. Pupils know to do the right thing and they work hard. They love to collect as many 'learning gems' as they can. Pupils are not worried about bullying and feel safe. They trust that adults will listen and help.

Pupils love the outdoors, especially their learning on 'Fresh air Fridays'. Pupils are in their element at playtimes as staff keep them active and busy. Pupils love to compete in sports, and they are proud of their ongoing sporting success.

There are excellent opportunities for pupils to lead. Staff help pupils understand their role as citizens through being librarians, house captains and games makers, and through other chances. Pupils even stood with the town mayor to fly the flag for Commonwealth Day.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders know exactly the school's strengths and what they need to work on. Their action planning and evaluation of this impact is precise and focused. Since her promotion, the headteacher, has lifted expectations in all aspects of the school. She, along with her staff and governors, ensure that the quality of education for pupils is at the heart of this work.

The curriculum is well thought out. It fully meets the ambition of the national curriculum. In subjects, knowledge is mapped progressively. This builds step by step from the beginning of Year 3 through to the end of Year 6. Leaders see learning as a sequence

rather than standalone lessons. The school day is designed well to maximise pupils' practice of what they have learned.

On transition to the junior school, leaders check the reading of every Year 3 pupil. They plan bespoke support to help any child who needs to catch up with reading. Leaders are clear whether a pupil needs support with learning phonics or to develop reading speed and fluency. The new library is reminiscent of a bookshop. Most pupils read fluently. But staff do not always encourage pupils to read enough different books, by a range of authors. This means that some pupils are not developing a rich reading diet and widening their vocabulary even further.

Teachers explain concepts clearly. They use well-chosen practical resources to help pupils master new ideas. They break down challenging tasks into manageable steps. This really helps pupils to achieve well. Teachers check pupils' understanding through probing questions. Teachers' assessments are well matched to what pupils learn.

Leaders identify pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) quickly. There are effective mechanisms in place. Adults put in the right support to help all pupils access their learning, but sometimes teachers do not always have the highest expectations of what these pupils can do. This can lead to setting work which hinders some pupils learning the same knowledge as their peers.

In lessons, most pupils focus well. However, some pupils can chat to classmates or be preoccupied with doing something different to the rest of the class. Staff can be slow off the mark to put this right and reinforce the school's rules.

Pupils embrace difference. The school's neurodiversity celebration week demonstrated pupils' acceptance of others. As a result, pupils are knowledgeable and respectful about physical and hidden disabilities. Pupils engage well with community projects and charity fundraising.

Governors work effectively. They are astute in checking the impact of what leaders tell them. They look beyond what is written in a policy to see how this benefits pupils. While the federation is undergoing change, governors remain focused on the quality of provision for all pupils.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Adults are proactive in keeping children safe. The headteacher leads this knowledgeably, ensuring she is alert to what may be happening in the locality. She trains staff well in what to look out for. Staff quickly raise any concerns and leaders respond right away. The school works productively with other professionals. For example, police community support officers visit the school to educate pupils about the law. Pupils know how to stay safe.

Leaders keep accurate and well-organised records. They escalate a matter to children's services when necessary. Governors are thorough. They test out the school's safeguarding culture very well.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- While pupils know how they are expected to behave, some low-level disruption is not always addressed quickly enough by teachers. Leaders need to ensure that their high expectations for behaviour are met in lessons and that staff apply rules and routines consistently well.
- Some pupils with SEND do not always learn the same knowledge as their peers. This happens when teachers sometimes adapt the curriculum in a way which asks less of these pupils. Leaders need to continue supporting teachers to effectively meet these pupils' needs in learning the school's highly ambitious curriculum.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in June 2017.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, ['disadvantaged pupils'](#) refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	109923
Local authority	West Berkshire
Inspection number	10241686
Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	238
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Marilyn Cornwell
Headteacher	Catherine Bull
Website	www.pdp.w-berks.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	6 and 7 June 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is federated with the infant school on the same site. The school has reduced its published admissions number. It is moving from a three-form to a one-form entry school. There has been a leadership and staffing restructure. There is now one headteacher and one deputy headteacher for the Parsons Down Partnership of Schools.
- The headteacher took up her post in January 2019.
- The school currently uses one alternative provider.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in his evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, staff and pupils. He also met with four governors, including the chair and vice chair. He held a telephone conversation with a school improvement officer from the local authority.
- The inspector carried out deep dives into these subjects: early reading, mathematics and physical education. To do this, he discussed the curriculum with subject leaders,

visited lessons, had discussions with staff, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- Some younger pupils were observed reading to a familiar adult by the inspector.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector spoke with staff and pupils. He met with the designated safeguarding lead to examine records and actions. This included sampling a range of safeguarding documentation. He reviewed checks on the safer recruitment of staff and training records.
- Pupils from different year groups were met with to talk about their learning and experiences at school.
- The views of staff, parents and pupils were gathered through discussions and Ofsted's online surveys.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documentation provided by the school. This included the school improvement plan, leaders' self-evaluation, policies, curriculum documents, published information about pupils' performance, external monitoring reports from the local authority and minutes of governors' meetings.

Inspection team

James Broadbridge, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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