

Inspection of a good school: Harwell Primary School

The Styles, Harwell, Didcot, Oxfordshire OX11 0LH

Inspection dates:

13 and 14 September 2022

Outcome

Harwell Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Every pupil receives a warm welcome and a smile at the start of each day. Pupils are proud of their school, of how they get along together and of how kind they are. This is a caring school with a real sense of family and belonging.

Pupils love to learn new things alongside their friends, irrespective of different backgrounds or abilities. Leaders encourage pupils to make the most of the opportunities available, including community involvement and Fitness Fridays.

Leaders have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and how they should behave. Pupils rise well to meet these challenges. They try hard to make the right choices in class, and play sensibly during breaktimes. Bullying is not something that pupils worry about. They feel safe and well cared for. Pupils say that if they have any worries, staff listen and deal with their concerns swiftly. The school rules of 'be kind, be safe and be your best' are understood and lived out by all pupils.

The school is inclusive, which parents acknowledge and appreciate. All pupils benefit from the wide range of trips, residential visits and clubs. They particularly enjoy the extensive grounds and special features. These include the swimming pool and all-weather pitch, to develop their interests and talents.

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

Pupils achieve well, from the early years to the end of Year 6. The curriculum in Reception class is particularly well designed to help children know and remember more. For example, they are taught new words explicitly to build their vocabulary ready for the next stages of learning.

In some subjects, such as reading and mathematics, leaders make sure learning is in a logical sequence. This helps pupils build knowledge securely and begin to make connections to other ideas. In mathematics, pupils appreciate how they are taught clear

methods to find answers, prove their thinking and explain their reasoning. They prefer this to quicker shortcuts, which undermine secure understanding.

In some foundation subjects, leaders have not yet set out precisely what they want children to learn. This means that pupils do not build essential knowledge securely and are unable to practise using it in different contexts. Teachers do not check for secure understanding before moving the learning on. Leaders recognise that doing both things will improve pupils' achievement even further.

Teachers identify and carefully design learning activities that meet all pupils' needs. This includes those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff are well trained, and make sure these pupils get the tailored support they require to learn successfully alongside their peers. Where required, leaders work effectively with external professionals to make sure pupils get the timely help they need. All this has helped to create a positive environment where pupils are ready, eager to learn and achieve well.

Leaders have made reading a priority. Staff teach early reading with precision. Effective training ensures that staff have expertise when teaching phonics. Staff ensure that beginner readers practise with books carefully matched to the sounds they are learning. This helps them develop fluency, accuracy and confidence. Teachers support pupils to deepen their understanding of the books they read, and to broaden their vocabulary. This helps pupils enjoy reading and listening to a variety of stories.

Pupils work hard in lessons, showing a strong desire to succeed. Pupils quickly recognise the importance of treating others with respect and being respected themselves. They are polite and courteous in lessons and at social times. There are a very small number of pupils whose behaviour can sometimes disrupt lessons. However, teachers take effective action to minimise the impact of this and get learning back on track.

Children get off to a strong start in Reception Year. They love exploring their exciting environment with their friends. Children carefully follow the well-established routines. They take turns, play happily and learn cooperatively.

The personal development of pupils is prioritised, and is a growing strength. Pupils enjoy a broad and growing range of extra-curricular activities. These include running, football, yoga and construction kit challenges. Pupils will soon be able to restart participation in sporting competitions, take responsibility as play leaders for younger pupils and take part in a variety of musical events locally. The sense of community, from supporting the local produce show to raising money for worthy causes, is fully embedded.

Governors work well alongside leaders. They have an accurate view of the school's strengths and next steps. They are also ambitious for pupils' academic and personal success. Governors provide effective challenge and support to leaders in equal measure. Staff are proud to work at the school. They feel strongly supported by leaders in managing their workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

This is a school where pupils' well-being and safety are everyone's top priorities. Leaders have established a strong culture of safeguarding. Records are meticulously kept and checked. The approach to all aspects of safeguarding is highly effective. Leaders and staff know pupils and their families very well. They are proactive, and tuned in to any signs of concern. Leaders follow up on all concerns. This often includes involving external agencies to secure the right help in a timely manner. Staff understand the risks that pupils may face outside of school and teach them how to keep themselves safe, including when online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some foundation subjects, leaders have not precisely laid out what knowledge and skills pupils need to learn. This leads to teachers being unclear about what to teach across a series of lessons. Subject leaders require further training or support to sequence this curriculum content step by step.
- Assessment in some foundation subjects is not yet consistently in place. Teachers are therefore not always confident in knowing how secure pupils are in their understanding of key knowledge. Leaders should carefully monitor the effectiveness of assessment to ensure that pupils know and remember more across the school's 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 an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in May 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.

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	123062
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10241673
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	205
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Aisha Nevers
Headteacher	Bryn Gibson
Website	www.harwellprimaryschool.co.uk/
Dates of previous inspection	23 and 24 May 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school provides and manages a breakfast and after-school club.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.
- A substantive special educational needs and disabilities coordinator (SENDCo) was appointed in September 2022.

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 held meetings with the headteacher, the assistant headteacher and the SENDCo.
- The inspector met with eight governors, including the chair of governors, with two other governors joining online. The inspector held a separate meeting with a representative from the local authority.

- The inspector carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed curriculum planning with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and spoke to pupils about their learning. The inspector also heard pupils read to a known adult.
- The inspector checked a range of safeguarding documentation and school policies, including the single central record.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, school improvement plan and relevant school policies.
- The inspector took account of parents' responses to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire, along with their written comments. The inspector also talked with parents on the morning of the second day of inspection.
- The inspector gathered pupils' views about their learning, what behaviour is like at the school and whether they felt safe.

Inspection team

Gareth Flemington, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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