

Inspection of a good school: Palace Wood Primary School

Ash Grove, Allington, Maidstone, Kent ME16 0AB

Inspection dates:

14 and 15 September 2022

Outcome

Palace Wood Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy school. Playtimes are joyful times, where pupils build strong relationships with one another. They enjoy the many games organised by adults and hoot with laughter during activities such as parachute games. Pupils also work collaboratively while building dens and keep active while playing a range of ball games.

As well as during play, teachers have high expectations during lesson times. There is a real sense of ambition for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). In lessons, teachers provide helpful resources to make sure that all pupils can access their learning and strengthen their knowledge. Pupils experience a variety of specialist weeks and events, such as sports week and arts week. These events help pupils to build confidence in a range of curriculum areas.

Pupils form positive relationships with the staff. If bullying takes place, adults work quickly to address this properly. This helps pupils to feel safe and to build positive relationships with one another. Pupils learn about the school's values of curiosity, challenge, courage and compassion and apply these to their daily lives thoughtfully. On the occasional times pupils behave less well in lessons, they see the sanctions given to them as fair. This helps them to improve their behaviour.

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

The curriculum is ambitious for all. Pupils gain the knowledge and skills needed across a wide range of subjects. Subject leaders have thought carefully about the content and sequence of learning in the curriculum. As part of this, they have introduced a process intended to help teachers know what pupils can remember and recall. However, there is inconsistency in the use of this process, particularly in music and science lessons. Consequently, some pupils do not reach the ambitious curriculum end points in some subjects.

Leaders have strengthened the leadership of the curriculum during the past year. Staff

feel supported by leaders, who give them time to think through new initiatives introduced across the school. As a result, teachers say that leaders help them to manage their workload.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge which helps them to deliver purposeful lessons. As a result, pupils' misconceptions are rare. Teachers encourage pupils to think about their own understanding, using the school's assessment system to structure this conversation. This helps pupils to demonstrate what they have learned in lessons and allows teachers to think about what pupils have not understood. However, teachers do not always check that pupils remember what they have learned over time. Teachers are refining their use of assessments to ensure that the information that they gather accurately reflects what pupils know.

Children in the early years follow the phonics programme as soon as they start school. Most pupils build strong phonics understanding and quickly learn how to read well. Leaders have ensured that disadvantaged pupils and those who are at risk of falling behind receive additional opportunities to read in school. This helps them to become confident, fluent readers. Pupils enjoy increasingly complex books as they move through the school. This builds their vocabulary and fluency while broadening their exposure to a range of authors.

The teaching of mathematics is strong. In the early years, children learn about number and scale. They develop an understanding of capacity through play in the water tray and build their knowledge of shape in the construction area. Pupils use their mathematical knowledge well across the curriculum.

Pupils behave well in lessons. In the early years, children settle quickly into the well-established routines in place. Pupils move around the school sensibly and are courteous to adults and each other. If pupils become distracted in lessons, adults gently guide them back on task, helping pupils to remain focused.

The special educational needs coordinator works hard to make sure that teachers are clear about the adaptations needed in lessons to support pupils with SEND. For example, pupils use visual prompts to help them to record work in science lessons. This helps pupils with SEND to be successful in their learning.

Provision for wider opportunities is strong. Pupils develop their cultural understanding through trips and visits. Leaders have thought carefully about the deficit in experience caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. They have introduced specialist activities that have given pupils access to a wide range of sporting, cultural and arts experiences. This has also led to the introduction of a range of extra-curricular clubs, such as 'Rock Steady' and 'Korfball', that are well attended by pupils.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Well-established systems are in place to make sure that all staff know how to keep

children safe. Staff receive timely and helpful training enabling them to support pupils who are at risk of harm. When staff have a concern about a pupil, there are clear protocols in place to ensure concerns are carefully recorded and followed through.

Pupils learn how to remain safe when online. This helps them to recognise when they risk being placed in unsafe situations. As a result, there is a culture of safeguarding that pervades the school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not checked carefully enough that retrieval strategies introduced to help pupils to remember essential knowledge have been consistently used as leaders intend. Some teachers are not clear about what pupils know and can remember over time in some subjects, and some pupils are not secure in the essential knowledge needed in these subjects. Leaders need to carefully check that teachers understand the purpose of these retrieval strategies and use them as intended so that they can adapt their work to meet the needs of pupils effectively.

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 July 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	135106
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10241833
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	422
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Stuart Russell
Headteacher	Clare Cairns
Website	www.palacewoodprimary.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	4 and 5 July 2017

Information about this school

- The school has a classroom for pupils with SEND. This is exclusively for pupils attending a local specialist school.
- The headteacher and chair of the governing body have been appointed since the previous inspection.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

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 their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteachers, the inclusion lead, subject leaders and a representative from the local authority. The inspector also met with five members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, science and music. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a

sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector also considered the curriculum in other subjects, including mathematics.

- The inspector reviewed a wide range of documents, including those related to the governance of the school.
- To inspect safeguarding, the inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead and considered safeguarding documents and records. This included the school's records and plans for supporting pupils who have been referred to outside agencies.

Inspection team

Graham Chisnell, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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