

Inspection of a good school: Monksmead School

Hillside Avenue, Monksmead School, Borehamwood, Hertfordshire WD6 1HL

Inspection dates:

16 and 17 November 2022

Outcome

Monksmead School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

There is a strong culture of mutual respect at Monksmead. Pupils are polite and friendly. Their understanding of diversity makes this a welcoming and friendly school. Adults have high expectations of pupils' learning and behaviour, which the pupils rise to. From Nursery to Year 6, classrooms are calm, purposeful spaces where everyone is valued.

Teachers are ambitious for pupils, and they provide opportunities for them to shine. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are involved in all aspects of school life. This includes extra-curricular activities and clubs. Pastoral support is strong and pupils feel safe in this nurturing environment.

Older pupils enjoy special responsibilities, such as being anti-bullying ambassadors or assembly monitors. They relish the weekly reading buddies session, when they pair up with younger pupils and help them develop their reading skills.

Through the school council, pupils from all year groups have a say in what happens at school. For example, they have recently chosen which charities they would like to support. This also develops their sense of citizenship.

Pupils learn about bullying during anti-bullying week. They say it happens occasionally, but they trust the anti-bullying ambassadors and adults to sort out any problems that arise.

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

Leaders have prioritised reading. Displays around the school promote a love of books and daily story time gives pupils in all classes the chance to listen to high-quality texts. Books are carefully chosen to match pupils' ability and interests. The delightful weekly reading buddies session is a fine example of the way the school celebrates and promotes reading. A new phonics programme was introduced last year. Phonics teaching starts soon after pupils join and skilled teaching staff give pupils the knowledge they need to become

fluent readers. They check pupils' progress regularly and support those who need more help through extra sessions or adult support.

Leaders have ambitious plans for developing and embedding the curriculum. In some subjects, the curriculum is well established and pupils' recall of prior learning helps them progress well. For example, in mathematics, pupils in lower key stage 2 make arrays with counters to show multiplication facts. They then move on to drawing arrays and draw on this when they learn a formal written method of multiplication. In other subjects, leaders have introduced revised plans more recently, so pupils need more time to learn the key content they will build upon later. There are strong links between the early years foundation stage (EYFS) and key stage 1. This means what pupils learn in EYFS prepares them well for the next stage of their education.

Curriculum leaders are confident that the planned curriculum is well sequenced. However, they do not perform suitably rigorous checks on how well teachers are delivering the curriculum in each subject. In some subjects, leaders' understanding of curriculum impact is not clear. Assessment systems do not help leaders to swiftly and accurately understand how well pupils progress through the curriculum.

In lessons, teachers use skilful questioning and other checks to see what pupils know and remember. They are quick to spot any pupils who need extra help and put support in place promptly. They adapt their teaching, so that pupils with SEND can access the curriculum. Most of the time this happens in the classroom, so these pupils are fully integrated with their classmates.

Pupils behave very well in lessons and around the school. Their relationships with each other and the adults are rooted in mutual respect. Teachers establish routines and expectations early on and pupils, even the very youngest, follow these diligently. For example, in singing assemblies, pupils enthusiastically sing songs in rounds and respond immediately to the headteacher's signal for quiet. In the playground, pupils' behaviour occasionally becomes too physical. Leaders plan staff training and new resources to spark high-quality play.

The school offers pupils a range of extra-curricular clubs. These are popular and accessible to all, including disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND. Trips enrich pupils' learning. Residential activities, movie making at a nearby film festival and a visit to the local cinema are among those they remember. Older pupils talk knowledgably about fundamental British values, such as democracy and tolerance. All pupils have a firm understanding of difference and the need to treat everyone equally.

Leaders have a clear shared vision for the school and a quiet determination to realise it. They are supported by a committed and experienced governing body. Staff are proud to work at Monksmead. They feel valued and appreciate leaders' efforts to reduce their workload. They say, 'it's not just a community, it's a family.'

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Adults are trained in safeguarding. They know their pupils well and are alert to any signs a child might be at risk. They know how to report any concerns they may have. Those responsible for safeguarding act swiftly when concerns are raised. They keep thorough records and liaise with other agencies, where appropriate, to provide support for vulnerable pupils.

Pupils feel safe at Monksmead. They learn about safety on- and off-line in computing or in personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons. They know what to do if they are worried about their own or their friends' safety.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some curriculum leaders do not routinely check that staff are following the agreed curriculum and subject-specific teaching approaches. This means they do not have a clear picture of the way the curriculum is delivered. Leaders should support subject leaders to assure the quality of their subjects to help identify areas that may need further attention.
- Systems for assessing pupils' progress are not consistent across all subject areas. Consequently, some leaders do not clearly know the impact of the curriculum. Leaders should identify how to check that pupils have learned the intended content, so that staff can address gaps in pupils' knowledge quickly and efficiently.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in March 2012.

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	117219
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10212466
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained community
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	N/A
Number of pupils on the school roll	228
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	N/A
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Alastair Cox
Headteacher	Lisa Bub
Website	www.monksmead.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	8 March 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school runs before-school and after-school childcare run by school staff and managed by school leaders.
- At the time of the inspection, the school was not making use of any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspector carried out this ungraded inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

- 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 her evaluation of the school.

- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator and eight governors. She spoke on the telephone to a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in the following subjects: reading, mathematics and physical education. For each deep dive, she 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 their work. The inspector also listened to a sample of pupils read to a familiar adult.
- To gather evidence on pupils' wider development, the inspector attended an assembly and met with the PSHE subject leader and groups of pupils.
- To inspect safeguarding, the inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead and deputy designated safeguarding lead to review records. She scrutinised the single central record of recruitment and vetting checks. She also spoke to governors, staff and pupils to evaluate safeguarding.
- The inspector reviewed a range of other school documentation and policies, including the school development plan and minutes of governor meetings.
- To gather pupils' views, the inspector spent time observing and speaking to pupils. There were 52 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire.
- To gather parents' views, the lead inspector reviewed the 56 responses and 34 free-text responses submitted to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View. The inspector also spoke to parents at the end of the school day.
- The inspector gathered staff members' views by speaking to several of them and reviewing the 17 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Caroline Crozier, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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