

Inspection of The Palmer Primary Academy

70 Northumberland Avenue, Reading, Berkshire RG2 7PP

Inspection dates: 22 and 23 November 2022

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| Overall effectiveness | Good |
| The quality of education | Good |
| Behaviour and attitudes | Good |
| Personal development | Good |
| Leadership and management | Good |
| Early years provision | Outstanding |
| Previous inspection grade | Good |

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, parents and staff are proud of this kind and inclusive school. Staff prioritise getting to know pupils and their families. Current pupils welcome new friends, including those new to the country, with open arms. Pupils embrace the diversity in the school and the way that everyone is respectful. They know this helps make school such a special place for them.

From the very start of their schooling, pupils embrace the 'Palmer Powers'. The values, which include being resilient, collaborative and independent, permeate through the school. These high expectations lead to a school of pupils who are courteous and who try to do what is right. Pupils understand the difference between unkind incidents and bullying. They know bullying can happen, but it is rare. They appreciate the pastoral support that is available to them to support them with any worries.

Pupils like the interesting books and topics that teachers select for them to learn. The weekly celebration assembly is a treasured time to recognise the qualities pupils have shown across the school. Members of the Palmer Parliament, house captains, play leaders and librarians all fulfil their responsibilities with pride.

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

Leaders have high expectations for all pupils in every aspect of school life. With support from the trust, the school has recently undertaken rapid improvements, especially around the curriculum that is offered to its pupils.

Leaders have designed a well-sequenced curriculum that identifies the knowledge pupils need to learn, from the start of Nursery to the end of Year 6. Pupils enjoy their lessons and enthusiastically follow the school's vision of 'enquiring minds' to support 'inspiring futures'. In some subjects, such as English, mathematics and science, staff have good subject knowledge. They design activities that help pupils revisit previous learning and then use this to learn the next part of the curriculum. This is not yet the case for all pupils in all subjects as some teachers do not have the subject knowledge required to plan suitable learning activities. Some staff also lack the precise knowledge they need to skilfully adapt learning to meet the needs of all pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This means not all pupils learn across the full curriculum as well as they could.

Leaders have prioritised reading, and the new phonics curriculum ensures pupils are learning to read quickly. For those pupils who need extra support, skilled staff provide the extra that is needed. Pupils love reading and want to read well. They appreciate the wide range of books that are there to read. All classes have quality texts that are read to them to help support their vocabulary and knowledge of styles of writing.

For the youngest children, in the early years, leaders have designed an exceptional curriculum. The children are curious, and fascinated by learning new things. The learning environment is designed to maximise learning. There is an exemplary focus on communication and language. Communication with parents is strong. As one parent commented on their child's progress, 'I can't believe the leaps forward in a few months.'

The vast majority of pupils behave very well, reflecting the positive attitudes they have for learning. There is a calm and orderly environment in lessons. Pupils say that teachers deal well with any behaviour issues. The school is rightly proud of the supportive and respectful relationships between adults and pupils, and between pupils and their friends. Pupils are genuinely grateful for these as they enable them to play a full and active part in school life, including those who speak English as an additional language. A range of positive strategies help promote this good behaviour, such as the 'Star of the Week' assembly to celebrate individual pupils as well as recognition for demonstrating the 'Palmer Powers'.

Leaders and governors ensure that all pupils are prepared for growing up in modern Britain. Pupils receive a well-organised education that helps them understand equality and diversity. Pupils value the way the school offers a range of clubs, including sporting and cultural opportunities. Leaders are in the process of increasing these opportunities as they recognise their importance.

The wider governance of the school is strong, as it provides support and challenge. Both the trust and the local governing board have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. School leaders and governors are working together very well to ensure that plans for the future improvements are clearly focused on the most important next steps.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong safeguarding culture at the school. The school ensures that the necessary recruitment checks are always completed. Staff receive appropriate and regular training. This keeps their understanding of current issues fresh and up to date. Staff are confident to identify and report any concerns about pupils' safety or well-being and they do so swiftly. Senior safeguarding staff are tenacious in ensuring that vulnerable pupils and their families get support from external agencies when this is needed.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Support plans for pupils with SEND do not always accurately identify how pupils' specific needs will be met. This means these pupils do not always get the support they need to achieve well. Leaders need to ensure all staff have the knowledge to identify the individual needs of all pupils with SEND and the skills to action the right support to achieve the best possible outcomes across the curriculum.
- Subject and pedagogical knowledge are not strong for all teachers. Teachers do not use the most effective strategies to ensure that pupils transfer knowledge into their long-term memory. This means that pupils do not always learn as well as they should. Leaders need to strengthen teachers' knowledge to ensure that all pupils learn and remember the full curriculum well.

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

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| Unique reference number | 139653 |
| Local authority | Reading |
| Inspection number | 10241977 |
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Academy sponsor-led |
| Age range of pupils | 3 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 458 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair of trust | Gavin Robert |
| Headteacher | Aaron Wanford (Interim Executive Headteacher) Libby Thomassen (Interim Head of School) |
| Website | www.thepalmeracademy.com |
| Dates of previous inspection | 6 and 7 June 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- The school is sponsored by the REAch2 Academy Trust.
- This is a larger-than-average primary school.
- The interim executive headteacher joined the school in May 2022.
- The school has an on-site nursery with places for three- and four-year olds.
- The school currently uses one registered alternative provider.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the interim executive headteacher, the interim head of school, two assistant heads and the deputy director for education of the trust. The lead inspector also held an online meeting with the chair of the local governing body, the vice-chair of the local governing body and the chair of the board of trustees.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, science, physical education and history. For each deep dive, inspectors 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 inspectors reviewed the arrangements for safeguarding by scrutinising safeguarding records and interviewing staff, and through discussions with pupils.
- The inspectors considered the views of parents shared through Ofsted Parent View. They gathered the views of pupils and staff through surveys, interviews and discussions conducted throughout the inspection.
- The inspectors reviewed a range of the school's documentation, including self-evaluation reports, minutes of governing body meetings and behaviour incident logs.

Inspection team

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|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Chris Parker, lead inspector | His Majesty's Inspector |
| Simon Francis | Ofsted Inspector |
| Alison Ashcroft | Ofsted Inspector |

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