

# Inspection of a good school: Northfields Infants and Nursery School

Burley, Letchworth Garden City, Hertfordshire SG6 4PT

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Inspection dates:

6 and 7 December 2022

## **Outcome**

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. Inspectors are recommending the next inspection to be a graded inspection.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils are spirited and enthusiastic learners. However, adults' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not always high enough. Pupils enjoy school and being with their friends. They feel safe and know that adults in school will listen if they have worries. Pupils behave well. Children in early years settle quickly because routines are well established. Pupils are polite to each other and respectful to adults.

When children start school, they learn about themselves and their place in the world. Pupils develop a sense of self and belonging. They learn to be aware of their own feelings and the feelings of others. Pupils know what bullying is. They learn to say 'no' and to tell an adult if they are unhappy about what someone is saying or doing to them. Any problems are sorted out quickly.

Pupils take part in community projects alongside local schools. They raise money each year for charity, visit the local church and welcome visitors to talk to them about different religions. Pupils learn about people from different cultures and those with different learning needs.

Parents overwhelmingly comment that the school is 'caring and nurturing' and describe a 'wonderful school with lovely supportive staff'.

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

Leaders, including governors, have a secure understanding about what actions they need to take to improve the quality of education. They have prioritised phonics and early reading. Staff teach the school's chosen phonics programme effectively. As a result, pupils who fall behind with their reading catch up quickly. Pupils are able to choose from a wide variety of high-quality texts in the school library. They read daily and listen to carefully

chosen stories read by adults. Books are matched to help pupils to practise the sounds they are learning in their phonics lessons.

In subjects other than English and mathematics, leaders have not designed a curriculum that develops pupils' skills and deepens pupils' understanding well enough. Too often teachers plan one-off activities that are not revisited or built upon. As a result, pupils do not have opportunities to practise or apply what they know in these subjects.

The maths curriculum is designed to build on pupils' prior learning as they move through year groups. However, teachers do not always check what pupils already know, so lessons are not adapted to move the learning on quickly when needed. As a result, some pupils rush their work and lose concentration because the work is too easy.

In many subjects, pupils do not have opportunities to show what they know and can do, especially in their writing. Teachers do not give pupils appropriate writing resources to help them present their work neatly and legibly. This limits the quality and quantity of pupils' writing. Teachers do not always make it clear what they want pupils to learn and to be able to do. They do not check effectively what pupils know and can do. Consequently, leaders do not know how well pupils are achieving in many subjects.

Leaders have pupils' well-being at the heart of their work. Teachers are well trained to ensure that all pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with significant complex needs, get the right support to be able to attend school and access the curriculum alongside their peers. Teachers are addressing the gaps in pupils' language development by training staff to meet a wide range of needs. Leaders work closely with families to provide support to help pupils attend school. Pupils' attendance is improving over time.

Pupils have many opportunities to take part in competitions, clubs and school trips and to take part in outdoor learning. 'Themes of the week' mean that they get to discuss and debate a range of topics during lessons and assembly time. Pupils learn about different relationships and to be kind and accepting of everyone.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders' checks for keeping pupils safe are rigorous. They work collaboratively with external agencies and specialists to make sure that pupils and families get the support they need quickly.

Staff and governors know the potential safeguarding risks to children in their local community. They know the signs that indicate a pupil may be at risk of harm and how to report concerns promptly. Leaders record all information carefully so that they can manage support for each pupil effectively.

Leaders carry out all the necessary employment checks on staff and safeguarding on visitors to the school meticulously.

## What does the school need to do to improve?

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not designed a well-ordered curriculum that develops pupils' skills and deepens pupils' understanding, including in writing. They have not specified clearly what they want pupils to learn. Learning is too often based around one-off activities. This means that pupils do not have opportunities to practise what they have learned or apply what they know in other areas of the curriculum. Teachers do not know how well pupils are achieving in some subjects. Leaders should specify the important knowledge, skills and vocabulary that they want pupils to know in each subject. In doing, so they must ensure that that they sequence the curriculum logically, so that pupils have opportunities to build on previous learning and practise skills across subjects, and so teachers can identify pupils' achievements and progress.
- Teachers do not consistently check what pupils already know and then adapt learning to meet their needs, including in mathematics. This means that pupils find some tasks too easy and rush their work. Leaders should make sure that teachers use the information they have effectively to identify pupils who are ready to move on, and adapt the curriculum accordingly so that all pupils achieve as well as they should.
- Staff's expectations of pupils are too low. Support for pupils to be successful is not provided consistently. Pupils do not consistently complete tasks as fully as they should. As a result, some pupils' work is not well presented and the content is of poor quality. Leaders should ensure that teachers set high expectations for all pupils and provide appropriate resources that allow pupils to demonstrate their achievement 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 November 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	117223
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10255054
<b>Type of school</b>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	173
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Joanna Heneker
<b>Headteacher</b>	Rob Dell
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.northfields.herts.sch.uk">www.northfields.herts.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	14 September 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The headteacher started in September 2022.
- Children in the early years foundation stage are taught in the Nursery and two Reception classes.
- The school does not currently make use of any alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

- 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.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and curriculum subject leaders, and spoke with staff and pupils.
- The lead inspector held meetings with the three members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- The inspector also held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority.

- The inspector reviewed a range of documentation, including leaders' school development plans, curriculum plans, the school's single central record of pre-employment checks on staff, school policies, minutes of governor meetings and records of pupils' attendance.
- Inspectors considered 43 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and 17 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.
- The subjects covered in depth as part of this inspection were early reading, writing, mathematics and history.
- The inspector spoke with pupils and teachers, visited lessons in early reading, including phonics, and looked at pupils' topic work, which included history, geography and science.
- The inspector spoke with parents at the school gate at the end of day two.

### **Inspection team**

Cindy Impey, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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