

Inspection of a good school: Summerswood Primary School

Furzehill Road, Borehamwood, Hertfordshire WD6 2DW

Inspection dates:

7 and 8 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. The next inspection will therefore be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Summerswood is a lively, caring and inclusive school. Pupils get on well together. They enjoy taking part in school clubs and the planned opportunities to experience new things. The recent in-school pantomime was a great success. Pupils are polite and welcoming to visitors. They are confident to speak about their work and school life. Roles, for example as play leaders or school ambassadors, are eagerly anticipated as pupils make their applications to take on the new responsibilities.

Pupils feel safe. They know that bullying is not tolerated and that staff will help if they are concerned. While most pupils behave well, a few find it harder to live up to the high standard expected. Consequently, learning and play are sometimes disrupted.

Most pupils enjoy reading and listening to the stories that adults share with them. From the outset, children in the early years begin to learn the sounds that help them to read new words quickly. However, over time, pupils who have fallen behind with their reading are not supported well enough to catch up as rapidly as they should.

New pupils are welcomed warmly into the Summerswood community. Pupils and parents appreciate seeing the headteacher at the school gate every morning to greet them.

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

Leaders are ambitious for all pupils. However, a period of significant staffing changes has disrupted plans to implement and embed improvements to the curriculum. Most curriculum leaders are new to the school or new to their leadership role, including in the early years. Consequently, they are still developing their skills in checking and improving the quality of provision in their areas of responsibility. While improvement plans are in

place, staff training to reduce the variability in pupils' learning experiences across subjects is at an early stage.

New curriculum teams have thought about what they want pupils to learn, in what order and when they want them to learn it. While teachers make regular checks on what pupils know, plans do not consistently set out the detail of the small steps needed to adapt learning from pupils' different starting points. Activities in lessons are not consistently matched closely to what pupils need to know and remember. Consequently, they do not achieve as well as they should, including in reading and mathematics.

Leaders have acted to strengthen the way children in the early years learn to read and for older pupils who need to catch up. Children practise the sounds that letters make regularly. Books are matched appropriately to the sounds that they are learning. While all pupils are helped to improve their reading, the support offered is not always as precise as it should be, especially for older pupils who have fallen behind. As a result, they do not improve their reading and spelling as quickly as they should. This holds them back in other subjects.

The school's special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) works closely with staff and other leaders to accurately identify and support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Work is underway to ensure that learning targets for these pupils are sharply focused on what they need to know so they achieve well in all subjects.

Most pupils behave well in lessons and during breaktimes. They understand the school rules and can explain what it means to be 'ready, respectful and safe'. Occasionally, a few pupils get distracted and so some learning time is interrupted as teachers remind them of the rules. In the early years, children settle into routines quickly and form positive relationships with adults in the school.

Pupils speak confidently about how their well-being is supported. They know who to go to and how to use a 'worry monster' to report a concern. Leaders have acted decisively to ensure that all pupils attend school regularly. Attendance information is reported weekly to parents. Pupils are keen to earn the whole class non-uniform day reward for full attendance.

Pupils' personal development is well promoted. Application and selection processes, such as for the new 'pupil ambassador' roles, provide an early insight into competition and workplace practice. Pupils are confident and welcoming. Themed assemblies and visitors to the school remind them of important values, for example maintaining healthy relationships and respecting individual differences. The school's 'Pupil Parliament' works to promote good relationships in the community as well as within school.

Leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and what needs to improve. Governors are now checking the quality of pupils' learning more closely through on-site visits. Appropriate strategies are in place to continue to improve the provision, including through the use of subject-specialist support. While there are some signs of improvement, much of this work is at an early stage.

Ensuring staff well-being is a leadership priority. Consequently, most staff feel that leaders are mindful of their workload. Relationships with parents are typically strong and productive.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and governors go the extra mile to ensure pupils' safety and well-being. Safeguarding training is updated systematically. Staff know what to do if they are concerned. Pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs are equally well considered. Support for families is prioritised, including securing access to any practical or professional help needed.

Pupils access a curriculum that teaches them to know the importance of safe choices and respecting others' personal space. They understand what they need to do to keep safe when playing games online.

All the pre-employment checks on new staff are completed. Safeguarding records are thorough and closely monitored.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers make regular checks on pupils' learning, but curriculum plans do not consistently set out the detail of the knowledge and skills pupils need to secure from their different starting points. This means that activities are not always matched well to pupils' needs, including for pupils with SEND. Leaders should ensure that plans are sufficiently precise and that teachers know what they need to do to adapt the curriculum so that pupils build on the strong foundations of previous learning and remember more in all subjects.
- The catch-up support for pupils who have fallen behind with their reading is not always as precise as it should be, especially for older pupils. Some inconsistencies in phonics teaching mean that pupils do not improve their reading, spelling and writing fluency as much as they could. Leaders should ensure that any further training needed is implemented quickly so that all pupils achieve consistently and well.
- Middle leaders are still developing their skills in checking and improving the quality of provision in their areas of responsibility. As a result, staff training to reduce the variability in pupils' learning experiences across subjects is at an early stage. Leaders must ensure that all staff have the training they need to implement improvement plans quickly so that all pupils achieve as well as they should.

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 2016.

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	117182
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10240792
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	384
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	James Conradi
Headteacher	Sarah Kneller
Website	www.summerswood.herts.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	2 and 3 November 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The number of pupils on roll at Summerswood Primary School has reduced since the previous inspection.
- A higher proportion of pupils than previously enter and leave the school at different points and different stages of their education.
- The school operates its own breakfast and after-school clubs.
- There is a specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND (specially resourced provision) on the school site. This provides short-term support for up to six pupils from other primary schools across the local authority area.
- The school does not use any alternative education provisions.

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 conducted deep dives in the following subjects: English, early reading, mathematics and history.
- To complete each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons and spoke with teachers. She also spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at samples of their work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector checked safeguarding policies, the school's record of pre-employment checks on new staff and a sample of child protection files. She also spoke with governors, leaders, the designated safeguarding leads and other staff about safeguarding practices at the school.
- Additional meetings were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the SENCo and the leader with oversight of the school's specially resourced provision.
- The inspector spoke on the telephone with the school's improvement partner and a local headteacher with a pupil on a short-term placement in the specially resourced provision.
- A range of documents were checked, including behaviour logs, attendance records, minutes of governor meetings, school improvement plans and school policies.
- There were 45 responses to the online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, which were considered alongside 49 free-text responses from parents. The inspector also spoke with some parents as they dropped their children off at school.
- The 70 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for pupils were evaluated, alongside the information from the inspector's discussions with pupils during the inspection.
- There were 34 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for school staff. The inspector also spoke with staff throughout the inspection to gather their views.

Inspection team

Christine Dick, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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