

Inspection of a good school: Swing Gate Infant School and Nursery

Swing Gate Lane, Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire HP4 2LJ

Inspection dates:

13 and 14 December 2022

Outcome

Swing Gate Infant School and Nursery continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school is a friendly community. Pupils give those new to the school and visitors a warm welcome. Pupils and staff have positive relationships. This helps pupils to feel safe. Pupils flourish in the school's nurturing environment.

At school, pupils are happy and enjoy learning. Pupils are enthusiastic and are keen to have new opportunities to learn and explore. They are proud of their work. Pupils are confident in their knowledge in most subjects. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Pupils respond well to the high expectations that teachers have. Pupils are motivated by the rewards they receive. During lessons, most pupils behave well. They work hard and try their best. If anyone is occasionally unkind, staff help pupils to become friends again. Bullying is rare and any incidents are dealt with quickly.

Pupils know there are many adults they can talk to if they have worries. They understand how to help themselves to manage their emotions. Pupils learn about diversity, and they understand that some families may be different to their own.

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

In most subjects, leaders have mapped out precisely the knowledge that pupils will learn from year to year and from lesson to lesson. This helps teachers plan lessons that build successfully on what pupils already know and can do. Pupils benefit from opportunities to practise using important subject knowledge that helps them remember what they have learned in the long term. In a few subjects, leaders have not broken down complex subject knowledge into smaller parts to help pupils learn it. In these subjects, teachers are less effective in planning sequences of lessons that help pupils to have a secure understanding of more complex ideas. Overall, however, pupils achieve well by the time they leave the school.

Leaders ensure that reading is a high priority. They have changed how phonics is taught. This was to provide more opportunities to practise and use their phonic knowledge. Leaders have ensured that all staff have been well trained to teach the reading curriculum. Leaders provide extra support and guidance to any staff who need it. Teachers rapidly identify any pupils who are falling behind with their reading. Pupils get the support they need to catch up. Pupils are given books to read that closely match their understanding. This helps pupils to learn to read with fluency and accuracy. Pupils enjoy reading. Every day, teachers read to them. Pupils get dedicated time to listen to, share and hear stories.

Teachers check on pupils' understanding frequently. Teachers use these checks effectively to identify where pupils are less secure in their understanding. They are skilled at tackling pupils' misconceptions and moving their learning on. For instance, in mathematics, teachers use questioning effectively to check and deepen pupils' understanding.

In the early years, children's language and communication skills develop well. Staff model and teach a wide vocabulary. Children begin to learn to read as soon as they start in Reception. Teachers use every opportunity to help pupils to learn to read and recognise the phonics sounds. Children learn to understand and use numbers through songs and rhymes. Children understand and follow the school routines and enjoy the exciting activities they can take part in. These help to develop the pupil's skills so that they learn what they need to be ready for Year 1.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported well. Teachers are skilled at adapting their teaching so that pupils with SEND successfully learn the same curriculum as their classmates. Leaders ensure that pupils with greater needs get any extra help that they need.

Most pupils attend and behave well. Staff find the reasons why pupils do not attend and provide help to improve attendance. They help most pupils make the right behaviour choices. Pupils learn how to understand their feelings and what they can do to try to feel better. For some pupils who find this more challenging, staff help the pupils more. However, a small number of pupils' attendance and punctuality are not as good as they should be. These pupils miss out on learning.

Leaders have an ambitious vision that is shared by governors and staff. Governors make regular checks to understand how the school is improving. Alongside senior leaders, they help the staff with their workload and well-being. Staff feel well supported.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff know what to do if they are concerned about a pupil's welfare or safety. They are well trained and have up-to-date knowledge of safeguarding. Staff report any concerns without delay. Leaders take appropriate actions, and these are well documented. They work well with external agencies, such as the police and social services.

Leaders oversee the necessary pre-appointment checks on staff to ensure they are suitable to work with pupils.

Pupils have an age-appropriate understanding of how to stay safe online. They have learned not to talk to strangers online and to tell their parents if they are worried.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few subjects, leaders have not identified precisely the knowledge that pupils should learn or broken this down into smaller steps of learning. This means that teachers are not as confident about what they are teaching or as effective in planning sequences of lessons that build successfully on pupils' previous learning. Leaders should ensure that, in all subjects, they precisely identify the knowledge that pupils should learn. They should also ensure that teachers are effective in helping pupils to build on their prior knowledge in the full range of subjects taught.
- Leaders have been successful in improving the behaviour and attendance of most of the small number of pupils who do not meet the high standards expected. There remains a small group of pupils who are still absent too often or regularly late for school. These pupils miss out on learning. Leaders should continue with their strategies to improve attendance and punctuality so that all pupils benefit fully from their time spent in school.

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 May 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	117260
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10211464
Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	148
Appropriate authority	Hertfordshire
Chair of governing body	Natalie Crane
Headteacher	Francesca Gallagher
Website	www.swinggate.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	25 February 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Currently, school leaders do not use alternative provision for any pupils.
- The school has a breakfast club and an after-school club. The school runs the breakfast club. The after-school club is not run by the school.

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 held meetings with leaders, including the headteacher and deputy headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator, four governors and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector also listened to a sample of pupils read to a familiar adult.

- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector reviewed the single central record of recruitment and vetting checks. The inspector met with the headteacher and the governors. The inspector reviewed records of safeguarding. The inspector spoke to staff about the training they have received and how this helps them identify potential safeguarding concerns. The inspector spoke to pupils to establish the extent to which they feel safe in school.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at playtimes. The inspector reviewed the support and training that staff receive to help pupils manage their behaviour.
- The inspector took account of the 87 responses to Ofsted Parent View, including 65 free-text comments. The inspector spoke to pupils and staff to find out their views of the school.

Inspection team

Jessie Linsley, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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