

Inspection of Commonswood Primary & Nursery School

The Commons, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire AL7 4RU

Inspection dates: 10 and 11 January 2023

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are rightly proud of this school and the wealth of opportunities on offer for everyone. Pupils enjoy the chance to broaden their interests and showcase their talents. There is a high take up of clubs and activities. Pupils relish participating in county-level sports events, being entrepreneurs, fund raisers and performers. Pupils talk positively about awards they have proactively worked for, such as 'clean air champions' and taking part in UK parliament week.

Pupils receive a good quality of education. The curriculum is brought to life through a range of visitors into school, as well as trips out and a residential. Pupils use an on-site nature area and participate in local and national events that go beyond what they may typically experience.

All pupils, including the very youngest, listen attentively and follow the adults' clear routines and high expectations. Pupils are very polite, considerate of others and have close friendships. Bullying is rare, yet if it did happen, pupils are confident that adults would deal with it. Pupils feel safe. They regularly review who their trusted adults are through their 'helping hands'. Pupils use a 'safety ladder' to let adults know if they need advice or support.

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

Leaders have developed an ambitious curriculum. Pupils gain the knowledge they need in a well-sequenced order. Leaders and teachers check regularly to see how much pupils remember about what they have learned. Leaders know their subjects well and have provided training for staff to successfully equip them to deliver the curriculum. In most cases, this is working effectively. Teachers with strong subject knowledge can adapt learning successfully. Consequently, pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), achieve well. However, in a very small number of subjects and classes, some teachers do not yet have enough understanding of how to deliver and assess the curriculum as leaders intend. This limits the amount of detailed knowledge some pupils gain.

Adults prioritise reading; as a result, pupils achieve well. This love of reading starts in Nursery. Pupils access well-resourced class libraries. Pupils, including those in the early years, talk knowledgeably and enthusiastically about books they have read or have had read to them. Adults consistently and securely deliver a systematic approach to teaching phonics. Pupils read books that allow them to practise the sounds they know. Teachers regularly check how well pupils are reading. As a result, pupils read fluently and with good comprehension. Any pupils falling behind quickly catch up.

Children in the early years are well prepared for the next stage of their education, as teachers have designed a rich and sequenced curriculum, with consistently high expectations for everyone.

Teachers provide learning opportunities that are highly engaging, and all children immerse themselves excitedly in these activities. Children listen and concentrate very well for their age. Adults skilfully support children's learning through play, which is purposeful, deepens understanding and promotes independence and creativity.

Pupils behave well at the school. Pupils are taught to be respectful of each other and how to resolve issues if they arise. Learning time is not wasted, and pupils are confident to contribute to lessons.

Leaders have created an ambitious and bespoke personal development curriculum. They have made extensive use of visitors in school to help pupils better understand British values. For example, visits from local councillors help to explain democracy. Talks from the police help older pupils understand the rule of law. Student nurses have supported pupils' awareness of healthy living, and the school has 'Health Ambassadors' to drive these messages home. Leaders have introduced their own anti-prejudice curriculum and linked this effectively to religious education and values in assemblies. As a result, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Pupils are given opportunities beyond what they typically experience, such as learning sports like curling or attending the Commonwealth service in London. Leaders have joined a local programme to ensure pupils with SEND can engage in more extra-curricular activities, and take up of this is high.

Leaders carefully consider staff workload, and the majority of staff feel leaders care about staff well-being.

Governors know the school well and hold leaders to account by actively monitoring the school's priorities and making effective use of local authority support. Governors fulfil their statutory duties effectively. Leaders, including governors, have been mindful of improving partnerships with parents and have this as a school priority. They are aware that some parents feel that communication from school to home could be improved.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils feel safe at this school and know and understand risk. This is because staff ensure pupils are taught how to stay safe and know who to report concerns to. Leaders invite the local police to talk to pupils about the dangers of knife and gun crime. Leaders also teach pupils about consent at an age-appropriate level.

All staff know how to report any concerns and receive regular safeguarding training updates. Leaders are tenacious in seeking support for pupils they deem at risk. Appropriate checks are in place for all adults who work or volunteer in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, teachers set tasks and activities that do not match leaders' curriculum goals. When this is the case, pupils do not achieve as highly as they could. Leaders should provide further training and support to teachers in order to ensure staff use approaches and activities that will help pupils to remember key knowledge and deepen their understanding of what they are learning.
- Leaders have recognised the need to work in closer partnerships with parents and carers. Some parents do not feel they know what their children are learning or are unaware of how the school operates. This work on engaging with parents needs to continue, with clear focus and purpose, so that leaders can regularly assess the effectiveness of their actions from parental feedback.

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 | 117378 |
| Local authority | Hertfordshire |
| Inspection number | 10241276 |
| 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 | 453 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing body | Julie Noakes |
| Headteacher | Gill Seymour |
| Website | http://www.commonswood.herts.sch.uk/ |
| Date of previous inspection | 20 and 21 November 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- Commonswood Primary School has a Nursery for pupils aged from 3 to 4 years.
- The school runs its own breakfast and after-school club.
- Leaders have made use of 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 held meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher and special educational needs coordinator, subject leaders, teachers and support staff.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: reading, mathematics, history, science and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors spoke to

subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke with pupils, looked at pupils' workbooks and spoke with teachers and support staff.

- The inspection team met representatives from the governing body, including the chair of governors. Inspectors also spoke to the local authority school improvement adviser.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including minutes of meetings of the governing body and the school development plan.
- Inspectors looked at the arrangements for safeguarding, including the single central record of recruitment checks. Inspectors spoke with leaders about the systems and processes to support safeguarding and the safeguarding ethos in the school.
- The inspection team spoke to a range of parents at drop-off and considered the letters/emails forwarded to them of two parents.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including the 83 free-text comments. Inspectors also considered the 31 staff survey responses and the 127 pupil survey responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire.

Inspection team

Sara Boyce, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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