

Inspection of a good school: Cotham Gardens Primary School

18 Cotham Grove, Bristol BS6 6AL

Inspection dates:

10 to 12 January 2023

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?

Pupils are fulsome in their praise of the school. Pupils and parents and carers say that they feel welcome and included. Pupils are tolerant. They enjoy finding out about each other's cultures, beliefs and values. The school celebrates its diverse character.

Pupils feel safe. Bullying occurs infrequently. Pupils know that if it happens, staff resolve it quickly. Pupils are considerate towards one another. They behave well around school and in lessons.

Pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), enjoy learning. Pupils are keen to read. However, sometimes pupils do not learn as well as they could.

Pupils talk animatedly about visits and clubs they attend. Many pupils enjoy singing in the school choirs. Others are keen to take part in local sporting competitions. Many participate as eco-monitors. Pupils learn about their place in the world and the contribution they can make.

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

Leaders have created a broad and balanced curriculum. Core subjects have a coherent curriculum from early years through to key stage 2. However, this is not the case for all subjects. Subject curriculums that are well sequenced help pupils to build and recall knowledge over time. In early years, children recall what they have learned so they make sense of new knowledge. However, where the curriculum is not well sequenced or taught as effectively, pupils' recall of essential content is not as strong. As a result, pupils' prior knowledge is not secure enough to learn new content successfully or to move on to more complex work.

Staff know pupils with SEND well. Pupils with SEND who need specialist support are helped successfully to learn alongside their peers.

Leaders use assessment well in core subjects to check on pupils' progression. This is less developed in other subjects. Teaching, when most effective, spots pupils' errors and misconceptions. Pupils then work with their teacher to address gaps in knowledge. However, assessment information is not used well enough to check where the curriculum is working successfully and what areas need to be strengthened. This means that where the curriculum and teaching are not helping pupils to learn well, subject leaders do not know why.

Leaders make sure that reading is a priority. Staff promote a love of reading from early years onwards. Leaders have developed a systematic and sequenced approach to the teaching of early reading. Staff have been well trained in the new reading curriculum. As a result, it is delivered effectively in early years so that children quickly learn to decode words and to build up their fluency. Books are matched to children's phonic knowledge in early years. However, the books read by pupils in Year 2 do not match the phonics programme. There are plans to rectify this. Pupils who need help to become stronger readers receive additional support. However, this is sometimes slow to have impact.

Staff have high expectations for behaviour. Children in early years learn how to work together well. Staff apply the behaviour policy fairly to address and improve behaviour. They use individualised behaviour plans effectively for pupils with SEND. On the occasion when teaching instructions are unclear, or pupils do not have secure knowledge to complete work, their behaviour is weaker.

Leaders have created a well-structured curriculum to promote pupils' personal development that meets their needs. Pupils learn about important aspects of growing up. They have an age-appropriate understanding of relationships and their place in the world. Pupils learn about different religions and important values. They enjoy discussing the different faiths that are represented in the pupil population.

Staff describe a collegial environment that supports their well-being and workload. However, some staff report concerns about the way they are managed. Those responsible for governance are taking steps to address these concerns. Governors, many in new roles, are keen to make a difference. They are committed to driving the necessary improvements at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that staff are trained well so they are confident to report safeguarding concerns. Leaders respond to concerns in a timely manner. They ensure that pupils and families receive extra help when needed. Leaders make sure that adults who work at the school are safe to do so.

Leaders are strengthening practice around whistle-blowing, ensuring that policies are well known by all staff.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe. Pupils have learned how to avoid risks when online. Older pupils describe how to stay safe when travelling to school. Pupils know whom to talk to if they have any worries.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum is not sequenced or implemented well in all subjects. Pupils' recall of essential content is not as strong in some subjects as in others. As a result, pupils' knowledge is not secure enough to learn new content successfully or move on to more complex work. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum is well sequenced and that effective pedagogy is employed so that pupils learn well.
- Assessment is stronger in some subjects than in others. This means that in some curriculum areas, leaders do not use assessment to help them to check on the impact of the curriculum. Where this occurs, curriculum leaders do not know whether the curriculum and teaching are leading to pupils learning successfully. In some cases, while leaders may know where there are deficits in pupils' knowledge, they cannot say why. Leaders should ensure that assessment is developed and used more effectively to check on the impact of the curriculum.

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 June 2014.

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	138708
Local authority	City of Bristol
Inspection number	10256772
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	543
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trustees	Tom Hilliard
Headteacher	Alex Bell
Website	www.cothamgardens.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	19 September 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school. It is located on two sites.
- The school does not use 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.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders and representatives of those responsible for governance. Meetings were also held with leaders of personal development, class teachers and the special educational needs coordinator.
- An inspector listened to pupils from Years 1, 2 and 3 read to a known adult.
- Inspectors met with the designated safeguarding lead, examined school records and discussed safeguarding cases.
- Inspectors completed deep dives in early reading, mathematics and history. Inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke

to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning, listened to pupils read and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- Inspectors spoke with parents at the start of the school day.
- Inspectors considered responses to the staff and pupil surveys and the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments from parents.

Inspection team

Alan Derry, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Tracey Reynolds

His Majesty's Inspector

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