

Inspection of a good school: Warden Hill Infant School

Birdsfoot Lane, Luton, Bedfordshire LU3 2DN

Inspection dates:

24 and 25 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?

The school is a warm and happy place. Pupils and staff have a wide range of ethnic backgrounds and come from many different countries. These differences are valued and celebrated. Everyone is welcome at Warden Hill Infant School.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They like their teachers and know that they look after them well. Pupils enjoy spending time with their friends. They say that playtimes are fun and that there are hardly ever any problems. They know that adults will help them if something goes wrong. Bullying happens rarely. Leaders deal with it quickly and effectively when it does occur.

Pupils behave very well in their classrooms and as they move around the school. Pupils know the school's rules, and they usually follow them. Pupils are polite and well-mannered. They enjoy speaking with visitors and talking about their learning.

Leaders are determined that every pupil will do as well as they can during their time at the school. They know that, until recently, some pupils have not done as well as they should. Leaders have made changes to the curriculum. It is early days, but pupils are starting to learn better, particularly in reading.

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

There is some evidence of decline since the previous inspection. Leaders have taken appropriate action to improve this, but their efforts have been slowed by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, there are signs that the school is now beginning to row back in the right direction.

Leaders have focused well on developing the school's curriculum. They know where it is stronger, and weaker, and know what needs to happen next. Leaders have started work on improving the curriculum. This work is further developed in some subjects, such as mathematics, than it is in others, such as art.

The curriculum in each subject has its roots in the early years. Leaders think carefully about what should be taught when. The content of subjects is broken down into small steps. However, these steps are sometimes too focused on what teachers want pupils to do, rather than what they want them to learn.

Leaders describe teaching pupils to read as 'a moral imperative'. They see pupils being able to read well, and developing a love of reading, as the school's core purpose. They have done a great deal to improve the quality of the reading curriculum as a result.

Leaders introduced a new phonics programme at the beginning of the previous school year. All teaching staff were provided with appropriate training to enable them to deliver the programme effectively. Leaders provide ongoing coaching to help staff further develop their practice. As a result, the phonics programme is taught well.

Strong assessment practices in phonics mean that pupils are put into the right phonics group to meet their needs. They are given books to read that are matched well to the phonics they know. As a result, most pupils are now at least at the expected phonics stage for their age. Assessment in other subjects, such as mathematics, is developing but is not having the same impact.

Secure arrangements are in place for pupils who fall behind and for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff know pupils well. They use a variety of strategies to provide pupils with the help and support they need.

Pupils behave well in their classrooms. Children in the early years very quickly learn what is expected of them. As a result, classrooms are calm and orderly places. Learning is not usually disrupted by pupils' behaviour.

The curriculum is enhanced by a wide range of trips and visits to places of interest. Visitors, such as the community police officer, come into school regularly. The school has a well-established programme to teach pupils about values such as perseverance and respect.

Some pupils do not attend school frequently enough. A sizeable group of pupils are frequently absent from school. Others regularly arrive late, after lessons have started. In most cases, these pupils are doing less well than their classmates in reading, writing and mathematics. Leaders try to encourage punctuality and regular attendance. However, too many pupils continue to be absent from school too often.

Leaders have taken a number of actions to reduce teachers' workloads. Teachers appreciate these changes and say they are helping to make their workloads manageable. The vast majority of staff say that they feel well supported by leaders and that they enjoy working at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured that staff are well trained to notice possible signs of abuse and neglect. Staff record concerns promptly. The school's designated safeguarding leads know their roles well. They take timely and appropriate action to protect pupils. They do not shy away from taking concerns further if they are unhappy with responses from outside agencies. The governing body monitors the quality of the school's safeguarding arrangements closely. Leaders have ensured that recruitment processes are robust.

The curriculum content ensures pupils learn how to stay safe in a range of contexts, including when online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum is underdeveloped in some subjects, such as art. In some subjects, the curriculum is focused too much on what pupils are to do rather than what they are to learn. As a result, some subjects are not delivered as well as they could be, and pupils do not learn as much as they should. Leaders should take action to ensure that the curriculum in all subjects is well sequenced, showing clearly the intended progression for pupils from the beginning of the Reception Year through to the end of Year 2.
- Too many pupils do not attend school frequently enough or do not arrive on time. Where this is the case, pupils do not learn the curriculum, including learning to read, as well as they should. Leaders should take further action to ensure that all pupils, including children in the early years, attend school regularly and on time.

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 May 2017.

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	109570
Local authority	Luton
Inspection number	10241658
Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	354
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Trish Pinner
Headteacher	Lisa Maxted
Website	www.wardenhillinfant.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	10 and 11 May 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Warden Hill is a large infant school in Luton. There are four classes in each year group, from Reception to Year 2.
- The headteacher joined the school in January 2020, shortly before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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 spoke with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and other leaders; a group of six governors, including the chair of governors, and the clerk to the governing body; and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and science. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- To check the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector met with the school's designated safeguarding leads, checked the school's single central record of pre-appointment checks, looked at safeguarding records and spoke with pupils and staff.
- The inspector took account of the 35 responses that were received to Ofsted Parent View, and the 34 free-text comments that were submitted, as well as the comments made by one parent during a telephone call. The inspector also considered the 27 responses that were received to Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Wendy Varney, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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