

Inspection of Underhill School

Mays Lane, Barnet, Hertfordshire EN5 2LZ

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 February 2023

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and kept safe at Underhill. There is a strong nurturing ethos within the school, where care for pupils is at the heart of everything that leaders and staff do. Bullying is not tolerated. Any incidents that do arise are dealt with swiftly. Pupils trust that adults are always available to help them should they need it.

Leaders want all pupils to achieve well. The curriculum is broad and ambitious. In most subjects, pupils deepen their knowledge and understanding successfully. As a result, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Leaders and staff regularly promote the 'Underhill Way', which incorporates the core values of 'understand, uplift, unite'. These values, alongside the 'I can, you can, we can' motto, have been chosen to support pupils to become resilient and show strength of character. Pupils behave well. This is because there are clear, consistent routines and expectations from staff.

Pupils are proud of their school and its community. They are keen to take on the wide range of responsibilities offered to them. For example, they can become school councillors, house captains and well-being warriors. The process of election for these roles aims to help pupils to understand the importance of democracy. Through the curriculum, pupils are taught important information to prepare them for life in modern Britain.

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

Pupils study a broad and balanced curriculum which matches the requirements of what is expected nationally. The key knowledge and vocabulary that pupils need to learn across all subjects has been identified. From the early years onwards, this is well sequenced. This means that learning at each stage of the school provides the foundations for what comes next.

Opportunities for pupils to revisit and practise what they have learned are provided frequently. This ensures that pupils typically learn and remember more and are well placed to access more complex learning. For example, in mathematics, children in Reception secure their understanding of key mathematical concepts, such as counting. Carefully selected resources and activities provide opportunities for children to revisit key ideas and secure their knowledge. As a result, strong foundations are built. This means that, as children progress through Years 1 and 2, they are ready to understand place value and larger numbers. Similarly, in computing, pupils confidently recall previous learning about staying safe online. They use what they know to discuss and debate safeguarding scenarios that they may encounter.

In a few subjects, leaders' oversight of the curriculum is not as strong as it is in others. Leaders do not have a consistently precise understanding of how well pupils are learning the intended curriculum. At times, necessary refinements to the curriculum and assessment practices are not identified and acted on swiftly. This

reduces how well pupils are able to build up deep knowledge in these subjects. A few subject leaders are new to their roles. They are being supported by senior leaders to build their knowledge and confidence to lead their subjects.

A love of reading is evident across the school. Pupils are enthusiastic about books, enjoy reading and being read to. They are well supported to read with growing accuracy and confidence. Staff are well trained to deliver the phonics programme as soon as children enter Reception. Those at risk of falling behind are identified swiftly and supported to catch up and keep up with their peers. Books used to teach reading are carefully matched to the sounds that pupils know. This too helps them to become fluent, independent readers.

A calm and purposeful atmosphere is evident in all classrooms and when pupils are moving around the school. Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes towards their learning. Leaders have effective systems in place for ensuring that pupils' attendance continues to improve.

Provision for pupils' personal development is exceptional. A wide variety of enrichment activities are available, such as dodgeball, cheerleading, curling and knitting. These are popular and appreciated by pupils. The curriculum has been designed to help pupils to learn about important topics, such as equality and diversity. Pupils have numerous opportunities to discuss and debate important ethical issues. Leaders and staff work closely with the on-site children's centre, which is an intrinsic part of the school community. Leaders and staff draw on the services available to provide timely support to families in different areas.

Leaders, including those responsible for governance, have created an ambitious culture where expectations of what pupils can learn and achieve have been raised. Leaders are committed to further improving the school.

Staff, including those at the start of their careers, are overwhelmingly positive about the school and leaders' consideration of their well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that safeguarding is an ongoing priority. Staff and governors understand their statutory responsibilities because they are well trained.

Staff are proactive in identifying and reporting any concerns that they may have. Leaders monitor any safeguarding issues rigorously. They work effectively with external agencies and follow up any cases as required to make sure that pupils and their families get the help they need as quickly as possible.

The curriculum has been designed to help pupils to understand how to stay safe. Pupils learn about important issues, such as online safety, consent, and the difference between 'good' and 'bad' physical contact.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few subjects, leaders' oversight of the curriculum is not as precise as it is in others. As a result, leaders do not have a consistently clear understanding of how well pupils are learning the intended curriculum. Leaders should ensure that support for subject leaders, especially those new to their role, continues to build their knowledge and confidence. Leaders and subject leaders should ensure that necessary refinements to the curriculum and its delivery result in pupils developing a consistently secure and deep knowledge in all subjects.

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	101301
Local authority	Barnet
Inspection number	10243888
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	545
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Abigail Moss
Headteacher	Jennie Reed and Nicola Hayles (co-headteachers)
Website	www.underhillschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	24 and 25 September 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is much larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The school runs a breakfast and after-school club.
- Leaders use one registered alternative education provider.
- The current co-headteachers were permanently appointed to their role in September 2021.
- There is an on-site children's centre that is managed by the school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- The inspectors met with the co-headteachers, assistant headteachers and members of staff. They also spoke with a representative of the local authority, and met with six governors, including the chair of the governing body.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, history, physical education and computing. For each deep dive, inspectors met with leaders and staff to discuss the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of their work.
- The inspectors also considered the curriculum in other subjects.
- The inspectors looked at a range of documents, including leaders' priorities for improvement.
- Inspectors reviewed the arrangements for safeguarding by scrutinising records and through discussions with leaders, staff and pupils.
- The views of pupils, parents, carers and staff were gathered through both discussions and their responses to Ofsted's online surveys.

Inspection team

Samantha Ingram, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Amanda Carter-Fraser	His Majesty's Inspector
Karen Kent	Ofsted Inspector

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