

Inspection of a good school: Penbridge Junior School

New Road, Portsmouth, Hampshire PO2 7RW

Inspection dates:

7 and 8 February 2023

Outcome

Penbridge Junior School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are cheerful and enthusiastic in this welcoming school. Pupils greet staff excitedly and are proud to meet their high expectations. Positive behaviour is built on warm and caring relationships. Pupils say that the best thing about their school is 'the teachers, because they do their absolute best to help us do our best'.

Pupils are not concerned about bullying, which occurs only occasionally. If it happens, leaders take concerns seriously and take effective action. Pupils feel safe and trust adults to help them.

Girls and boys are equally proud to represent the school in a range of sporting activities, such as football, handball, badminton and cricket. There is a wide club offer, including opportunities such as archery, art and dance. Leaders ensure that nobody misses out. School productions and church visits showcase the performing talents of pupils.

Pupils enjoy making a positive difference to their school community through roles on the 'eco committee' and school council. 'Junior road safety officers' support fellow pupils to be 'safely seen'. Pupils love school trips to enrich their learning experience. Highlights have included trips to a theme park and the Houses of Parliament. Pupils were thrilled to catch the train and visit the dockyards.

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

This school is ambitious and inclusive. Leaders strive to give pupils 'the best chances in life' through a broad education that harnesses technology and widens pupils' experiences.

The curriculum is well sequenced with clearly defined knowledge and language. Learning begins with 'knowledge banks' identifying essential questions and vocabulary. Teachers use frequent recall activities to help pupils secure their understanding. Topics end with 'prove it' sessions, where pupils choose how to demonstrate and 'prove' what they know.

This involves presentations to parents, exhibitions, producing booklets or sharing learning with other classes.

Teachers are skilled at identifying where pupils need extra help. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) use resources such as 'scanner pens' that read text aloud for them. Pupils value their individual laptops, enabling them to research independently. Pupils with SEND use a range of supportive software alongside printed resources, including adapted books. Staff provide emotional support and sensory equipment and breaks to help pupils who struggle to concentrate.

Whole-class 'guided reading' happens every day. Pupils develop fluency and can analyse and evaluate their reading. Pupils love the books that teachers read to them. They are thrilled to visit their inspirational library. Phonics lessons are effective, but catch-up support for pupils' decoding is not always precise. Staff show greater expertise with reading skills, such as comprehension, than phonics. Leaders recognise this, and professional development is underway to rectify this.

Pupils achieve well. They extend their learning in mathematics with investigations and opportunities to justify opinions. Teachers' subject knowledge is strong. They model language and promote rich discussion, such as analysing the impact of trade on Mexico in geography. Pupils recall knowledge such as climates around the equator, tropics and different biomes. History and writing showcase meaningful learning across subjects, with pupils writing impressively about Shackleton. Assessment is efficient and effective in reading and mathematics, but not fully embedded in foundation subjects. This means that teachers do not always know precisely what pupils have learned and remembered in some areas of the curriculum.

Learning behaviour is positive. Teachers deal with minor distractions swiftly, and lessons are not disrupted. The atmosphere around school is warm and nurturing. Conduct at playtime shows mutual respect between pupils and staff. The 'Penbridge powers' of collaboration, improvement, concentration and curiosity are practised across the school.

Pupils say that 'everyone should be valued for who they are'. They appreciate the views of others. Pupils enjoy spiritual development through connections with the local church. 'Penbridge passports' are skilfully designed to develop cultural experiences for pupils, such as flying kites, visiting the seaside or attending music concerts.

Governors and trustees offer insightful support and challenge. Trustees ensure that the school meets statutory requirements. Leaders are passionate, dedicated and highly regarded. Staff, including early career teachers, feel strongly supported by them. Professional development is strong, harnessing expertise across the trust.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders, trustees and governors provide strong challenge to ensure that safeguarding practice is strong. Everyone understands procedures, and staff have full faith in leaders to follow up every concern. Staff are clear that no concern is too small.

The single central record is robustly maintained and checked. Safeguarding records are updated with vigilance. Leaders are relentless in their efforts to support pupils at risk of harm. They communicate closely with agencies to support families. Staff provide strong pastoral support for pupils, including counselling and emotional literacy sessions.

Well-planned curriculum and assembly activities ensure that pupils develop their understanding of online safety and healthy relationships.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Phonics expertise is not secure across all staff. As a result, pupils may not achieve as well as they could in phonics. Leaders should ensure that all staff have strong subject knowledge and confidence to teach phonics with precision.
- Assessment is not embedded in foundation subjects. This means that gaps in pupils' knowledge may not always be accurately identified. Leaders must continue their work with teachers to ensure that assessment practice is effective and manageable.

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 predecessor school, Newbridge Junior School, to be good in October 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	141531
Local authority	Portsmouth
Inspection number	10256463
Type of school	Junior
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	446
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Gerard Newman
Headteacher	Anna Webb (executive headteacher) Karen Denton (head of school)
Website	www.penbridgeschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	31 October 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This school is part of the Thinking Schools Academy Trust.
- The school currently uses one alternative provider.

Information about this inspection

- The lead inspector discussed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils and looked at pupils' work.
- The inspector also looked at pupils' work in history and English.
- The inspector listened to a range of pupils read.
- The inspector observed catch up interventions to learn how staff provide extra support for pupils.

- The inspector met with the executive headteacher, head of school, assistant headteachers, subject leaders, teachers, support staff and the SEND coordinator (SENDCo).
- The inspector met the Chair of the Board of Trustees, the Director of Education for the trust, and six members of the governing body.
- To inspect safeguarding, the inspector studied documents and records, including the school's single central record and child protection referrals. The inspector spoke with the designated safeguarding leader, staff and pupils.
- The inspector considered responses to the staff survey and spoke to a range of staff about their views of the school.
- The inspector took account of the responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire and the additional free-text responses.
- The inspector considered responses to the pupil survey and met with a range of pupils to learn their views about the school.

Inspection team

Scott Reece, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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