

Inspection of Benhall Infant School

Robert Burns Avenue, Benhall, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire GL51 6PS

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 March 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

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

This school was last inspected 13 years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Benhall Infant School is a special place where pupils succeed at being 'the best they can be'. Pupils are keen to learn from feedback, embrace challenge and persevere if they find something difficult. They call this 'purple learning'. It is the thread that runs through everything the school does.

Staff take the time to get to know pupils as individuals. They use this knowledge to construct an ambitious and engaging curriculum. Staff give pupils widespread opportunities to excel in cooking, designing, art and science.

Pupils live up to the 'ready, respectful and safe' expectations in the classroom, outdoors and in dedicated learning areas. Staff rarely need to remind pupils about their behaviour. Friendship issues and unkind behaviour are uncommon. If they did happen, pupils know that they would get the help they need.

Leaders actively encourage pupils to take on leadership roles in school and the community. For example, the school council look for pupils displaying positive learning and award 'purple hearts'. Pupils are proud to organise charity events and lead assemblies.

The vast majority of parents hold positive views of the school. Many comment on how staff empower children to be confident, curious and caring individuals.

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

The headteacher leads with an unfaltering commitment to pupils and staff. Staff are passionate about working here. They report that leaders are supportive of their workload and well-being. Governors share leaders' ambitions and hold them to account effectively.

Leaders have worked resolutely to improve the reading curriculum. They have successfully introduced a new and rigorous approach to phonics. This starts in pre-school. Staff introduce children to rhymes, sounds and words to prepare them for reading. In Reception and Year 1, children confidently read and write the sounds they should know. Staff expertly match pupils' reading books to the sounds they learn. This helps pupils to read confidently and fluently. Leaders have rightly identified that a minority of pupils in Year 2 do not read as fluently as they should. Well-trained staff provide effective support to help these pupils to catch up.

Leaders have introduced a 'dream read challenge' to inspire pupils to read more widely. Pupils talk avidly about the new books they have discovered. They enjoy earning badges to become reading ambassadors. Parents value how staff hold workshops to involve them in their children's learning.

Leaders have reviewed and improved the school's 'continuous provision' curriculum in the past year. They have made sure the early years curriculum prepares children for Year 1. Careful thought has gone into creating coherent sequences of learning in all subjects. Teachers plan opportunities for pupils to revisit and practise what they have learned. For example, in mathematics, pupils play games to consolidate counting in tens. Leaders recognise that they are still defining the important knowledge pupils need to learn in a few subjects. As a result, pupils, including children in the early years, do not yet build a sufficient depth of understanding in all subjects.

Learning extends beyond the classroom. Pupils apply what they know to new learning in the children's kitchen, science lab or workshop. Across the school, attractive displays of pupils' work show the wide-ranging concepts pupils master.

Teachers assess pupils' knowledge regularly. They know the gaps they have and adjust learning accordingly. However, as the curriculum is new, not all subject leaders know if pupils retain knowledge in the long term. The systems for checking this are at an early stage of development in some subjects.

Leaders, including those in the pre-school, identify pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) early and effectively. They provide an impressive range of support and therapy to help manage pupils' precise needs. Leaders engage well with parents to develop pupils' learning plans. Pupils with SEND learn well alongside their peers.

Pupils rise to the high expectations staff have of their behaviour. They become independent from a young age. Pupils share, take turns and work together effectively. Clear routines mean that lessons flow without disruption. The few pupils who struggle to manage their emotions receive effective support from adults.

Leaders enrich the curriculum through trips, events and experiences. For example, pupils work with visitors, such as a local chef, to gain an insight into the world of work. Visits to a nearby castle and piano lessons broaden pupils' cultural awareness. Looking after the school pets encourages care for animals. By learning about different families, pupils improve their understanding of differences. They say that 'We treat everyone the same' and 'make good choices' at Benhall.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders prioritise pupils' safety and well-being. Staff receive regular training, so they know how to notice and report any signs of concern. Leaders respond swiftly to support pupils in need of help. They do not hesitate to escalate concerns when required. Leaders keep accurate records of checks on the suitability of staff and visitors. Governors regularly check aspects of the school's safeguarding work.

Staff teach pupils to understand age-appropriate risks, including online safety and first aid. Pupils know who to talk to if they have any worries.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few subjects, leaders have not made clear the precise knowledge they want pupils to know and remember, including in the early years. This means that pupils do not gain the depth of understanding they could in these subjects. Leaders should identify the essential knowledge that pupils need to learn in all subjects.
- Leaders' systems for checking how pupils remember the intended learning over time are at an early stage of development. Consequently, not all subject leaders have a detailed understanding of what pupils know and remember. In some foundation subjects, leaders should ensure that assessment checks if pupils know and remember the most important content in the long term.

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	115598
Local authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	10256660
Type of school	Infant
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	179
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Laura Stevenson and Amy Spring-Wallis (co-chairs)
Headteacher	Nicky Morris
Website	www.benhallinfantschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	2 and 3 March 2010

Information about this school

- There have been changes in leadership since the previous inspection. The current headteacher took up post in January 2021.
- The governing body's structure and personnel have changed notably over the past year. The co-chairs of the governing body took up their shared post in September 2022.
- The school has an on-site pre-school which caters for three-year-old children which was part of this inspection.
- The school use 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 met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, school staff and five governors. The lead inspector held a meeting with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, science and art. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector met with curriculum leaders and looked at documentation in other subjects, including geography and design technology.
- The lead inspector listened to pupils in Years 1 and 2 read to an adult.
- The lead inspector reviewed the school's safeguarding documentation, including recruitment checks on adults working in the school. Inspectors talked to governors, staff and pupils about how the school keeps everyone safe.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site. They asked pupils about their experiences in school, including bullying.
- Inspectors spoke with a range of staff to discuss how leaders support their workload and well-being.
- Inspectors considered responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments and responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Dale Burr, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Sandra Woodman

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2023