

Inspection of Swallow Dell Primary and Nursery School

Blackthorn Road, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire AL7 3JP

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 March 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils build warm and respectful relationships within the school. Adults model how to build positive and healthy relationships, and leaders plan for this to be taught explicitly in the curriculum. Therapeutic interventions support pupils with their mental health and well-being. As a result of these things, pupils behave well and meet the expectations of their teachers.

Bullying is rare. Pupils are confident in sharing their concerns with staff if there is a problem. They know teachers take bullying seriously and will deal with it. Pupils are safe.

Pupils value the opportunities that leaders put in place for them to take on responsibilities within the classroom and across the school. For example, there is a buddy system where pupils from Year 6 mentor and support those starting school for the first time. Pupils see themselves as part of a community. They participate in weekly ballots to elect the 'learner of the week'. This helps to develop their understanding of democracy.

Pupils do not learn as well as they could because leaders' ambition for them is not high enough. Too many pupils have fallen behind where they should be.

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

In a small number of subjects where leaders have carefully designed the curriculum, teachers break down the important information into small component steps. This helps pupils to know and remember the information that they need to move to the next stage of their learning. However, in many subjects, leaders have not broken pupils' learning into small, sequenced steps. As a result, pupils are not able to build their knowledge cumulatively over time. They struggle to recall prior learning as it is not embedded in their long-term memory.

Leaders sometimes use the information gathered by assessments of what pupils know to improve the curriculum design and teaching. Too often, though, leaders collect information about what the pupils have learned without using this to ensure pupils learn more. Teachers sometimes use activities or structure their teaching in ways that do not help pupils as much as they could. Pupils do not learn as well as they should.

Teaching in phonics reflects the broader inconsistencies in curriculum design and implementation. The leaders' chosen phonics scheme does not give teachers the level of rigour and detail they need to help children learn to read. The expertise of teachers varies, and the training they have received does not support them to consistently teach as leaders intend. Pupils are not given enough opportunities to practise, rehearse and embed their learning. This means pupils are not remembering the sounds they need to know. The books given to pupils do not match their

phonetic knowledge. As a result, pupils are not able to practise and develop their knowledge, and they find reading unnecessarily hard.

In the early years, children are happy. Adults interact positively and support children in their learning. However, leaders have not identified the important knowledge that children need to learn in some aspects of the early years. Opportunities to develop independence and confidence in learning are not maximised. The early years are not as effective as they should be in preparing children for key stage 1.

Leaders have ensured that adaptations that help pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to succeed are working well. Teachers meet pupils' needs by adapting resources or through targeted questioning to check understanding. These approaches allow pupils with SEND to learn the curriculum alongside their peers. The school runs an on-site unit to support pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs that cannot be met in a mainstream setting. The provision within the unit is supporting those pupils well.

Pupils enjoy and benefit from the school's programme of educational visits. Year 6 pupils, for instance, visit the Isle of Wight, where they hunt for fossils and learn about endangered animals. Pupils also attend a variety of sports clubs, such as gymnastics, football and rugby.

Leaders have prioritised increasing the attendance of pupils. Leaders' actions and support are beginning to show impact, and attendance rates are starting to improve.

Governors have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They have rightly identified that increasing achievement should be their main focus.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There are minor weaknesses in safeguarding arrangements that are easy to put right. Despite minor discrepancies in leaders' record-keeping and systems, they take appropriate actions to ensure that pupils are safe.

Staff are vigilant and have a clear understanding of the system for reporting concerns. Leaders make appropriate referrals to external agencies when pupils require additional support.

The curriculum supports pupils to understand about how to keep themselves safe. For example, they learn how to keep themselves safe on the internet.

Leaders and the governing body carry out appropriate recruitment checks when employing new staff.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In most subjects, the curriculum does not set out the order and detail of the content to be learned. Consequently, the curriculum pupils experience does not build towards proficiency in these subjects. Leaders need to identify and sequence the important information that pupils will learn.
- Teachers do not all have the confidence or subject knowledge to deliver the curriculum effectively. As a result, some teaching does not help pupils to understand and remember. Some pupils do not make the progress that they could. Leaders must provide teachers with the training and support they need to teach the curriculum well.
- Assessment processes are not consistent. This means that leaders do not have an accurate view of how well the curriculum is supporting pupils to know and remember the intended knowledge. Leaders should develop assessment systems that help them identify how effectively the curriculum is being implemented so that they know how well the children are learning and can identify where changes may be required.

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	133488
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10241910
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	428
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Lesley Hollinshead
Headteacher	Clare Hollingsworth
Website	www.swallowdell.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	5 November 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school runs the WelHat Hub. This is based on the school site but in a separate building. The hub provides support for pupils in Welwyn and Hatfield who are experiencing challenges in their school due to social, emotional and mental health needs.
- There is nursery provision on offer to children aged two and over. The school offers before- and after-school childcare provision for its pupils and is run by staff from the school.

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.
- The inspectors met with leaders, including the headteacher, deputy headteacher, assistant headteachers, special educational needs and disabilities coordinators

and three governors. The lead inspector also met with a representative from the local authority.

- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, geography, science and physical education. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders, scrutinised curriculum documentation, visited lessons, spoke to teachers, talked to pupils about their learning and looked at pupils' work. The lead inspector also listened to a sample of pupils read to a familiar adult.
- To further inspect the curriculum, inspectors met with the subject leader of English to look at writing, reviewed curriculum documentation and sampled pupils' work in some other subjects.
- The inspectors met with leaders responsible for safeguarding and looked at safeguarding records, staff training logs, the single central record of recruitment and vetting checks.
- The inspectors met with a range of pupils to discuss their views. This included formal meetings and informal discussions during playtime, lunchtime and in lessons.
- The inspectors spoke to parents and staff to gather their views. The inspectors also considered the 42 responses and 32 free-text responses to the survey, Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Mark Sim, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Michael Thomas	Ofsted Inspector
James Adkins	Ofsted Inspector

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