

Inspection of a good school: Belswains Primary School

Barnfield, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire HP3 9QJ

Inspection dates:

28 and 29 March 2023

Outcome

Belswains Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), learn and achieve well. Pupils' learning is enriched by a range of in-school experiences and visits to settings including parks, museums and sporting events. Pupils also develop their wider interests through attending a range of clubs including science, rock bands and sports clubs.

Pupils respond enthusiastically to adults' high expectations of them. From the start of early years, they forge trusting relationships with staff. The care and nurture provided by staff enable pupils to flourish. Pupils trust adults to help and care for them. Pupils feel safe and are kept safe.

Pupils behave very well. They know the difference between right and wrong. As pupils grow older, they increasingly make good behaviour choices independently because they understand that it is the right thing to do. They know that they are role models for younger pupils. Pupils are kind and respectful to each other and bullying is rare.

Pupils make an important contribution to their school community through pupil leadership roles such as playground prefects, house captains and lunchtime helpers.

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

The numbers of pupils attending the school have grown considerably since the previous inspection. Leaders have managed these changes and ensured that pupils continue to receive a good quality of education.

Leaders have redesigned the curriculum to better enrich pupils' experiences of the wider world. Leaders have provided staff, including subject leaders, with the training they need to deliver the curriculum in most subjects effectively. In the majority of subjects, teachers teach the curriculum in line with leaders' expectations. Pupils learn well and produce high-quality work.

Where the curriculum is well established, teachers are clear about the most important knowledge pupils need to know. Teachers break learning down into manageable chunks and present these clearly. This helps pupils to more easily grasp important facts and concepts. Teachers make effective use of assessment to check that pupils have understood this content. Pupils remember what they have studied and can apply it to new learning well.

In a few subjects, leaders' work to improve the curriculum is new. Some teachers do not have the same clarity about the most important knowledge they need to teach. They do not check that pupils have a secure grasp of important information and are ready to move on to more complex learning. Leaders do not know how well the curriculum is implemented in these subjects.

Staff are highly skilled in teaching the school's chosen phonics programme. From the start of early years, staff teach phonics with precision. Children know the routines and quickly begin to learn to read. Leaders identify quickly those pupils who are not keeping up with the programme and provide targeted support to help them catch up. Leaders have invested time in developing the reading curriculum, so that it meets the needs of their pupils. Pupils enjoy reading. Pupils, as they get older, become confident and fluent readers. They talk about books they have read with excitement.

Leaders have identified those pupils with SEND who require additional support. Leaders ensure that staff use well-considered strategies so that these pupils access the same learning as their classmates. Pupils with SEND learn and achieve well.

The early years sets children off on the right foot to achieve leaders' aim that all pupils 'learn and grow together'. Staff teach children the importance of routines, taking turns and working together. Staff place great emphasis on developing children's language and speaking skills. There are lots of discussions and time for stories. Staff support children to develop independence with routines such as snack time and outdoor play.

In keeping with leaders' expectations, staff model the positive behaviour they require of pupils. Pupils learn to behave well and know why it is important to do so. They are kind and respectful of each other as they go about their learning and play.

Pupils develop a well-rounded view of the world. They support others with fundraising activities. Pupils learn how to be kind, caring and respectful individuals. Pupils are proud to be part of their school.

Governors have skilfully managed the transition in leadership. They work well with the school leaders and know the school priorities. Governors challenge leaders to ensure that they have a good understanding of the quality of education in the school. Staff enjoy working at the school and they are well supported by school leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders make sure that staff keep up to date with important safeguarding training. Staff know pupils well. This helps adults to identify any signs that a pupil may be at risk of harm. Leaders act on any safeguarding concerns quickly and diligently. They work with, and challenge, external agencies to ensure that pupils and families receive the support they need.

Leaders make sure that pupils are taught strategies to keep themselves safe. For example, pupils learn how to recognise risks when playing outside, crossing the road, swimming in the sea, as well online dangers.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few subjects, teachers are not delivering the new curriculum in line with leaders' expectations. Some teachers do not have clarity of the important skills and knowledge that they need to teach. They do not check pupils' understanding well enough. Leaders should ensure that teachers know leaders' curriculum expectations and the precise knowledge that pupils need to learn. Leaders should ensure that they check the curriculum is being implemented as they have designed it, and that pupils learn well.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in July 2013.

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

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| Unique reference number | 117365 |
| Local authority | Hertfordshire |
| Inspection number | 10255222 |
| 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 | 378 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Frances Parkins |
| Headteacher | Neysa Claridge |
| Website | www.belswains.herts.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 14 September 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- A new headteacher, deputy headteacher and inclusion leader (INCO) have been appointed since the previous inspection.
- The number of pupils has grown significantly since the last inspection.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

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 met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, subject leaders and INCO.
- To evaluate aspects of the school and leaders' work, the inspector met with seven governors, including the chair of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector spoke to staff to discuss workload, well-being and safeguarding.

- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, science and geography. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with the subject leader, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning, listened to pupils read and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector also looked at other curriculum plans including for religious education and personal social, health and emotional education.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documentation relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.
- The inspector took account of the 122 responses to the online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View, including a free-text facility. The inspector took account of the 36 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and the 88 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey. The inspector also spoke to pupils about their learning, safety and behaviour.

Inspection team

Nerrissa Bear, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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