

Inspection of a good school: Earls Colne Primary School and Nursery

Park Lane, Earls Colne, Colchester, Essex CO6 2RH

Inspection dates: 10 and 11 May 2023

Outcome

Earls Colne Primary School and Nursery continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to this friendly and caring school. Pupils are well looked after by staff. They make sure that pupils feel safe and are safe.

Pupils say they love their learning. They respond very positively to the high expectations set by their teachers in terms of their behaviour and their learning. As a result, pupils do well in most subjects.

Pupils appreciate the opportunities to take on a range of leadership roles, such as in the 'Sibley squad', where pupils take turns to help the headteacher. These roles also embrace the school values of respect and care. Older pupils act as 'buddies', looking after younger children at playtimes. Pupils say there is no bullying in the school.

Pupils enjoy a range of opportunities to learn outside of the classroom. These include taking part in sporting tournaments with local schools, visits to study history at local castles and residential camping trips.

Pupils are continually inspired by their teachers to be creative in their learning. They have had the opportunity to design and create a nature-based, permanent wall mural in a local play park in collaboration with a nearby secondary school.

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

Leaders provide an ambitious curriculum for all pupils to follow, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The curriculum reflects the school's vision for all pupils '... to become confident, independent learners who achieve the very best that they can'.

Leaders prioritise learning to read across every aspect of the school. Teachers train to be experts in teaching phonics. Children gain the foundations for reading immediately they start school. In Nursery, children begin learning to read through songs, games and

rhymes. Teachers regularly check pupils' progress and ensure that pupils who fall behind in phonics are quickly helped to catch up. Teachers make sure that pupils take home reading books that match their reading ability. This means pupils can practise at home to become fluent readers.

In Reception, children consolidate solid foundations for their future learning through fun and engaging activities. Children are respectful to each other and adults as they play and learn. These strong foundations in learning in early years mean that most pupils achieve well at the end of their time at the school.

Leaders ensure that teachers have a high level of subject expertise. Teachers provide fun and interactive lessons that pupils enjoy, including activities that enable all pupils to begin work with enthusiasm. All subjects focus on highlighting key vocabulary for pupils to know and apply to future learning and to use in their writing. However, in a few subjects, teachers are not successful in ensuring that key vocabulary is as memorable to pupils as it needs to be. In a few subjects, teachers do not always help pupils to build effectively on their prior knowledge. This limits the extent to which pupils are able to apply key vocabulary to new learning and to think deeply about the things they learn.

Pupils behave very well in lessons. They show resilience in starting their work and are keen to do well. At all times, they are kind and polite to each other and to adults.

The provision for pupils with SEND is very carefully considered. The school's inclusion team ensures that pupils have access to the appropriate academic and emotional support to help them succeed.

Leaders' focus on pupils' personal development is strong. Pupils are taught how to understand potential risks and how to keep themselves safe. Pupils also learn about what it means to be a citizen in modern Britain, and regularly participate in democratic elections for school representatives.

Developing pupils' positive mental health and well-being is an absolute priority at this school. Leaders use a robust system to monitor all pupils in different areas of their well-being. This system enables staff to identify individual pupils who may need additional support. This support includes therapeutic work in the forest school and the mindfulness club.

All pupils take part in a wide range of school activities. These include the school's dramatic productions, theme days, educational visits and sports tournaments. All pupils can also access many school clubs. These include nature detectives club, craft club and the construction club.

Staff value the way that leaders support them. This includes with regard to their professional development, their workload and their well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured that there is a very strong culture of safeguarding across the school. All staff have been trained to be vigilant to any potential risks to pupils. Leaders make sure that the appropriate checks are carried out on all adults working at the school.

Safeguarding records show that staff are highly responsive to concerns, making sure that pupils quickly receive the best possible support from external agencies.

Pupils can explain confidently how to keep themselves safe from a range of risks.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few subjects, the teaching of vocabulary relating to key concepts is not consistently effective. When this happens, pupils are not able to remember this vocabulary, apply this understanding to their work and make links to new concepts. Leaders should ensure that, across all subjects, teachers consolidate pupils' knowledge of key complex and subject-specific terminology so that pupils can build and extend their working knowledge.
- In a few subjects, some pupils are not sufficiently challenged to extend their knowledge. When this happens, pupils do not build sufficiently on their existing knowledge and make the progress that they could. Leaders should ensure that teaching across all subject areas builds effectively on the prior knowledge of pupils and enables them to think deeply about the things that they learn.

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 December 2012.

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	115312
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10268580
Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	419
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Claire Smith
Headteacher	Jakki Sibley
Website	www.earlscolneprimaryschoolandnursery.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	14 November 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The nursery caters for children aged three, offering both full- and part-time places.
- There is on-site childcare provision for children aged two and over, which is separately registered and inspected.
- The school provides a morning breakfast and athletics club as well as a wide range of after-school clubs.
- The school uses one alternative provider.

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 leaders, including the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and the assistant headteacher.
- The inspector met with a representative from Essex local authority.

- A meeting was held with representatives of the local governing body, including the chair of governors.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and art. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector spoke to groups of pupils about their experiences of school life and their learning in lessons to understand what it is like to be a pupil at this school. The inspector also observed the behaviour of pupils at breaktimes and around the school.
- The inspector spoke to a leader at the alternative provision currently in use by the school.
- The inspector considered the 108 responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including 105 free-text comments. The inspector also considered responses to the staff survey and responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Rowena Simmons, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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