

Inspection of a good school: Cooks Spinney Primary Academy and Nursery

Cooks Spinney, Harlow, Essex CM20 3BW

Inspection dates:

23 and 24 May 2023

Outcome

Cooks Spinney Primary Academy and Nursery continues to be a good school. There is enough evidence of improved performance to suggest that the school could be judged outstanding if we were to carry out a graded (section 5) inspection now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils demonstrate all aspects of the five 'A values' of the school. They respond well to adults' high expectations. As a result, pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), achieve exceptionally well.

Pupils are safe and bullying is rare. If there are any incidents of unkindness, pupils are taught to reflect on their actions. Pupils know that adults will help to sort things out quickly. A typical view is that this is a place where everyone is included.' If pupils have any worries, they can talk to the safeguarding team, or choose to 'ask it in a basket'.

Taking on responsibilities is central to pupils' school life. Roles such as class ambassadors and junior leadership team enable pupils to make a positive difference. Pupils apply to lead school assemblies. They show confidence and maturity in their delivery and choice of topics. Pupils are rightly proud of their school and their achievements.

From the early years and beyond, pupils take part in a wealth of opportunities to enhance the curriculum. All pupils enjoy sporting competitions and theatre visits alongside the daily mile and a host of clubs, including boccia, choir and young carers.

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

Leaders have designed a curriculum from Nursery to Year 6, which ensures that pupils have opportunities to build on what they already know. Skilled staff deliver the curriculum consistently well. They model new concepts and knowledge to pupils effectively. All staff are clear about the key content and vocabulary that they want pupils to learn and remember. Staff check that pupils have understood the learning before they move them on to the next stage. Pupils work towards the 'big questions' in each subject. Staff know

pupils' needs and abilities in detail. Children in the early years learn specific vocabulary and skills to ensure that they are well prepared for key stage 1. Pupils in upper key stage 2 are well prepared for secondary school. They show confidence and are articulate when debating moral and ethical issues.

Leaders have developed a reading curriculum that encourages all pupils to have a love of reading. Pupils can read fluently because staff know how to teach reading consistently well. Daily reading sessions focus on the key skills that pupils need to learn. Pupils access ambitious books of various genres that depict different people and places. This widens their experiences through reading. Children in Nursery are eager to learn their sounds. They sing traditional rhymes off by heart. In Reception, children use the sounds that they have learned to read and write accurately. Leaders check pupils' achievement regularly, so that they do not fall behind. Where a few pupils need extra practise, this is planned on an individual basis.

Pupils behave exceptionally well. Staff are well trained so they ensure that all pupils are ready and able to learn. In lessons, pupils stand when it is their turn to speak. The positive attitudes and strength of character shown by pupils is a key factor in their success. Minor interruptions to pupils' learning are very rare. If this happens, pupils are quick to reflect, adapt their behaviours and do the right thing.

Pupils with SEND access the same ambitious curriculum as their peers. Staff pay close attention to the smallest of their needs. Pupils use strategies to help them to remember the order of their learning. Staff are skilled in knowing when pupils may need a 'brain break' to be able to focus fully on their learning. The equal weighting of academic and pastoral support ensures that pupils with SEND achieve well. The 'GROW' specialist provision for pupils with SEND is an example of exemplary practice.

Leaders have threaded the wider curricular opportunities throughout the school day. This ensures that all pupils benefit. Pupils compete in sports tournaments, perform in concerts and 'Spinney's Got Talent'. They take part in visits to art galleries and the Houses of Parliament.

Governors and trustees have a detailed knowledge of the curriculum, as well as the arrangements for managing safeguarding and pupils' behaviour. They provide support and challenge in equal measure to ensure that their ambitious expectations for all pupils are achieved.

Staff and parents speak highly of the school's leadership and ethos. Leaders are considerate of staff's workload and well-being. Staff are proud to work at the school. A few parents who shared their views were less positive about the way pupils' behaviour and bullying is dealt with.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that all staff have regular training in how to identify if pupils are at risk of harm. Staff are diligent in recording concerns and communicating these to leaders. Prompt referrals are made to external agencies when necessary. Leaders keep a close check on each caseload. The welfare team are expert at providing pupils and families with pastoral support.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves and others safe, including online, through the personal social health education (PSHE) curriculum, and assemblies. They have opportunities to share concerns in class through their worry boxes.

Governors ensure that all checks are in place for adults working in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- A few parents hold a negative view about how pupils' behaviour and bullying are dealt with. Leaders and those responsible for governance should continue to develop strategies so that parents are well informed and understand the reasons why leaders have chosen to adopt the current restorative and reflective approaches to managing behaviour.

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 school to be good in June 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	140024
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10255194
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	463
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Paul Drayton
Executive Headteacher	Neil Stirrat
Website	www.cooksspinneyacademy.org
Dates of previous inspection	14 and 15 June 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Cooks Spinney Primary Academy and Nursery is part of the Burnt Mill Academy Trust.
- The school has an executive headteacher and a head of school who were both appointed to their roles in September 2022.
- The school has a nursery class that admits 24 pupils, for morning or afternoon sessions, from the age of three years.
- There is a breakfast club for pupils who attend the school. It is run by school staff and managed by school leaders.
- The school has an unregistered alternative provision onsite that can admit eight pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. This is commissioned and managed by Essex local authority. Pupils are dual registered with Cooks Spinney and their home school.
- Leaders do not use any alternative providers.

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 she has taken that into account in the evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the executive headteacher, the head of school and the two assistant headteachers. The inspector also spoke with the chief executive officer (CEO) and the assistant CEO of the trust.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in three subjects: early reading, mathematics and religious education. For each deep dive, the inspector spoke with leaders, visited lessons, spoke with staff, spoke with pupils and viewed pupils' work. The lead inspector also listened to a sample of pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- The inspector spoke with subject leaders. She also looked at curriculum documents and work in PSHE, art and design, history and geography.
- The inspector visited the 'GROW' provision and spoke with the manager.
- The inspector viewed a range of documents, including governor meeting minutes and safeguarding records.
- The lead inspector met with the chair and one other governor from the primary governing board. She also met with the welfare, human resources, special educational needs and/or disabilities directors from the trust.
- The inspector spoke with parents before and during the school day. She also considered the 74 responses made by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, including 74 responses to Ofsted's free-text facility.
- The inspector took account of the 28 responses to Ofsted's online survey for school staff. She also spoke with a range of pupils throughout the inspection and took account of the 30 responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey.

Inspection team

Isabel Davis, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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