

Inspection of a good school: Fens Primary School

Mowbray Road, Hartlepool TS25 2LY

Inspection dates:

23 and 24 May 2023

Outcome

Fens Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud of their school. They enjoy learning and playing with their friends. Pupils and staff have positive relationships. Pupils describe the school as 'a family where everybody is respected'. Pupils understand fairness, equality and diversity. Older pupils, in their roles as monitors, enjoy supporting younger pupils. This promotes the caring ethos of the school.

All staff have high expectations for behaviour. Classrooms are calm and purposeful. This allows pupils to do their best in lessons. Pupils behave well when moving around the school and at playtimes. They are polite, friendly, well mannered and hardworking. Pupils feel safe in this nurturing school. They understand that bullying can happen. If it does, they know that adults will help to ensure that it does not happen again. Pupils appreciate the support and guidance that they receive from staff.

Pupils benefit from a range of opportunities to play an active role in school life. For instance, some pupils act as reading ambassadors.

Pupils take advantage of the variety of enrichment activities. They like attending after-school events including yoga, choir and gardening club. Pupils are proud of their role in supporting community events such as singing at a local supermarket.

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

Leaders have designed a broad, ambitious curriculum for all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Leaders have considered how each subject builds from the early years to Year 6. This helps pupils to make links across their learning. Leaders make sure that teachers have the subject knowledge and resources they need in order to teach well.

In most subjects, leaders have precisely identified the knowledge that they want pupils to know and the order in which the content should be delivered. However, in a small number

of foundation subjects, leaders have not ensured that the important knowledge is clear to teachers. This means that, sometimes, a few teachers have not prioritised exactly what they should teach.

Leaders are refining the school's approach to assessment. In a small number of subjects, leaders have not identified the most important skills and knowledge that pupils need to learn and remember. In these subjects, teachers do not identify gaps in pupils' learning well enough. This means some pupils do not securely build on previous learning, so they do not achieve as well as they could in these subjects.

Reading is at the heart of the curriculum. Staff have created a culture where reading for pleasure is valued. This begins in the early years with daily stories, songs and rhymes. Pupils show a love of reading. They talk enthusiastically about stories that they have listened to and authors that they know.

There is a consistent approach to teaching phonics. Teachers ensure that children use their phonic knowledge successfully when reading unfamiliar words. Books that children read are well matched to the sounds that they know. Leaders swiftly identify anyone who is at risk of falling behind. Adults provide effective support to help children and pupils gain the skills that they need to become confident, fluent readers.

Leaders are quick to identify and respond to the additional needs of pupils with SEND. Teachers think carefully about how to meet their needs so that these pupils can progress well through the curriculum. Staff work effectively with a range of external partners to ensure that pupils with SEND receive high-quality support in a timely manner. Pupils with SEND enjoy learning alongside their peers. They achieve well.

In the early years, staff successfully design interesting activities which develop children's skills, including speaking, listening and early mathematics. Children are well prepared for key stage 1.

Pupils behave well. The 'RESPECT' values successfully support the positive attitudes that pupils exhibit. Pupils respond positively to the rewards and praise they receive for their hard work, achievement and positive behaviour choices. Pupils develop as active, caring citizens, well prepared for their next steps in education.

Leaders provide a wealth of opportunities for pupils' wider personal development. Pupils learn about different religions and cultures. This helps them to recognise and respect difference. Leaders invite visitors into school to raise pupils' aspirations. For example, a Community First Responder shared some valuable life-saving skills and talked about a career in health and social care.

Staff feel appreciated by leaders. They say that leaders are considerate and respectful. Staff value the range of support from leaders to manage their workload and well-being.

Governors are knowledgeable. They hold leaders to account for the quality of education that pupils receive. They are very proud to represent the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff recognise that everyone has a duty to ensure that pupils are kept safe. Leaders, staff and governors are trained well in safeguarding procedures. They understand their responsibilities.

Staff are alert to the possible signs of abuse, harm and neglect. Staff know the procedures that they must follow if they are concerned about a pupil. Leaders maintain the belief that 'it could happen here'. They ensure that appropriate policies and procedures are in place to protect children.

Leaders ensure that vulnerable families are supported appropriately by staff and other agencies. Through the curriculum, pupils are taught to keep themselves safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some foundation subjects, pupils' essential learning is not made clear in the curriculum. This means that, at times, some pupils do not learn and remember as well as they could. Leaders should refine some wider curriculum areas to ensure that essential learning is prioritised.
- Leaders know that the school's approaches to assessing pupils' learning in some foundation subjects need further refinements. Sometimes, teachers are unsure of what pupils have previously learned and remembered. Leaders need to continue to refine their assessment approaches to ensure that they link clearly with the essential skills and knowledge which they want pupils to remember and recall over time. Leaders know that these changes need to be manageable for staff.

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 on 15 and 16 March 2018.

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	111600
Local authority	Hartlepool Borough
Inspection number	10269227
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	459
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Keith Kitching
Headteacher	Christopher Connor
Website	www.fensprimaryschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	15 and 16 March 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- A new headteacher, deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher have been appointed since the previous inspection.
- There is an on-site breakfast and after-school club managed by the school.
- The school does not currently use any 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 carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and physical education. The inspector discussed the curriculum with the subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with pupils and teachers and looked at pupils' books.
- Plans and work from other curriculum areas were also examined. Adults in school were observed listening to pupils read.

- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteacher and other leaders.
- Leaders of safeguarding discussed the single central record and leaders' records of safeguarding. The inspector looked at how safeguarding incidents are reported. Conversations were held with leaders, teachers, support staff, governors and pupils about the culture of safeguarding in the school.
- Pupils shared their views about behaviour in the school and the inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- The inspector studied a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, the school development plan, attendance data and minutes of governing body meetings.
- The inspector considered the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, Parent View, including free-text comments. The inspector also took account of the responses to Ofsted's pupil and staff questionnaires.
- The inspector spoke with those responsible for governance, the school improvement partner and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector spoke with staff about the curriculum and workload.

Inspection team

Alison Stephenson, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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