

Inspection of How Wood Primary and Nursery School

Spooners Drive, Park Street, St Albans, Hertfordshire AL2 2HU

Inspection dates: 2 and 3 March 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Early years provision	Good
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Previous inspection grade	Good
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What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy attending How Wood School. They feel safe and are well cared for by staff. Pupils are polite and friendly to each other and to adults. Pupils who are new to the school are welcomed by everyone.

Pupils are keen to learn. They talk enthusiastically about their learning in different subjects. Pupils enjoy the 'wow' moments teachers use to make learning interesting. Pupils achieve well overall. They leave in Year 6 ready for learning in secondary school.

The school's values of 'always respectful, always kind, always learning' are embraced by all. Staff expect the very best behaviour from pupils. Bullying happens, but it is very rare. Any unkindness between pupils is dealt with quickly and well. Pupils usually concentrate and listen attentively. Occasionally, when they do not, pupils' learning is disrupted.

Pupils have opportunities to take part in trips to the theatre and residential visits, and they hear from a range of visitors to the school. This helps them to broaden their horizons and experience something new.

Pupils learn about different cultures and religions. They know it is important to respect difference and the beliefs of others. Pupils relish opportunities for responsibility, such as being elected to the school council.

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

Leaders have designed a curriculum that is well structured and ambitious. In most subjects, leaders have identified the important knowledge that pupils should learn. They have organised this logically. As such, in these subjects, teachers plan lessons that help pupils to build their understanding over time. Pupils can make connections between what they have learned. This helps pupils to remember and use important subject knowledge in different contexts. Learning in the early years is also well planned. Children benefit from thoughtfully planned activities that help them to learn new things.

In a small number of subjects, leaders' curriculum planning is not as clear. As a result, teachers are not always sure of the knowledge that pupils should learn. In these subjects, teachers sometimes do not always plan learning that builds effectively on what pupils already know and can do. Pupils do not learn as well in these subjects as they do in most others.

Teachers are less confident to teach some subjects. They lack the secure subject knowledge needed to teach these subjects as well as they teach other subjects.

Leaders have not provided enough guidance or training to help teachers develop further their expertise in delivering these subjects.

Teachers check routinely on pupils' understanding. They spot misunderstandings and provide further explanation and guidance to pupils. This helps pupils to correct any errors and misconceptions.

Leaders ensure everyone is aware of the importance of reading. Staff teach reading effectively. Children in the early years make a strong start to learning to read. Pupils read books that are matched to their phonics knowledge. They can practise using the sounds they know to read unfamiliar words. Teachers spot pupils who have gaps in their reading knowledge. Pupils get the help they need to catch up quickly. Most pupils enjoy reading. They read accurately, fluently and with understanding.

Leaders accurately identify pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils with SEND follow the full curriculum with their classmates. Teachers usually adapt learning, where necessary, to help pupils with SEND make strong progress. However, teachers do not always carefully identify steps of learning for pupils with SEND. Leaders do not always check whether support is making the difference intended.

Adults set out clear expectations for behaviour. Children in the early years quickly adapt to routines and develop positive attitudes to learning. They play and learn well together. Pupils behave well around the school. In lessons, pupils usually listen carefully to instructions and are keen to answer questions. Occasionally, they talk over other pupils and need reminding of the expectations for behaviour. Pupils quickly refocus on their learning when this happens.

Pupils know that everyone should be treated as an equal. They display tolerance and have a clear understanding of difference. They have many opportunities to visit places of importance, including museums and places of worship from different faiths. They enjoy the clubs on offer. They experience using voting in school and understand that this is called democracy. The curriculum teaches pupils how to stay safe and lead healthy lives. In assemblies, pupils gain further knowledge, which helps them to become good citizens.

Leaders and governors know the strengths of the school and what needs to improve. They are outward-looking. They seek, and use, advice from others wisely.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that staff keep up to date on all matters relating to safeguarding through regular training. Staff know what to do if they identify any concerns that a

pupil may be at risk of harm. Leaders act promptly when they receive concerns. They ensure pupils and their families get any help they need. This includes getting help from experts where necessary.

Pupils know who to talk to if they have a worry. They know that adults will help them. They know how to stay safe online and in the local area.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, teachers do not yet have the expertise to implement some of the intended learning confidently. As a result, pupils do not always acquire knowledge as well as intended. Leaders need to ensure that teachers have the expertise and subject knowledge to teach all subjects in the curriculum highly effectively.
- For pupils with SEND, teachers are not consistently setting targets that are explicit and meaningful for learning. These targets are not regularly being monitored for impact. As a result, pupils with SEND are not always closing gaps in their knowledge effectively. Leaders need to ensure that planned improvements for setting, recording and monitoring targets for impact are instigated.
- In some subjects, leaders have not clearly set out the important knowledge that pupils should learn or the order in which it should be taught. Teachers are not always clear about how previous learning links to future learning in these subjects. They do not always plan new learning that helps pupils build effectively on what they have learned before. Leaders should ensure that all curriculum planning identifies precisely the subject-specific knowledge pupils should learn and the order they should learn this. They should ensure teachers plan lessons that always build effectively on pupils' prior learning.

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	117235
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10255103
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	226
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Nikki Rowland
Headteacher	Cynthia Rowe
Website	www.howwood.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	13 July 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school provides a breakfast club and an after-school club.

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.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior teacher, special educational needs coordinator, early years leader, subject leaders, teaching and support staff.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, music and history. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the

curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.

- The lead inspector listened to pupils read to an adult.
- The lead inspector met with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors, and a representative from the local authority.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors met with the designated safeguard lead to discuss the systems and processes in place to keep pupils safe in school. They reviewed the single central record, staff training and recruitment procedures, and records of concern. Inspectors also spoke to teachers, support staff, pupils and governors about how well pupils are kept safe.
- Inspectors reviewed the records of attendance, behaviour and bullying incidents. They spoke with pupils to seek their views and experiences of the school. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and during playtimes.
- Inspectors considered 37 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text responses. Inspectors also took into consideration 19 staff survey responses and 42 pupil survey responses.

Inspection team

Rod Warsap, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Nichola Pickford

Ofsted Inspector

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