

Inspection of a good school: Strathmore Infant and Nursery School

Old Hale Way, Hitchin, Hertfordshire SG5 1XR

Inspection dates: 27 and 28 June 2023

Outcome

Strathmore Infant and Nursery School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Strathmore is a friendly and happy school where pupils thrive and 'everyone is welcome'. Pupils like coming to school and attend well.

Pupils feel safe at school. They know their 'trusted five' adults who they can talk to if they have any worries. Pupils' well-being is central to the work of the school. Pupils benefit from the 'acorn room' and take time in the 'regulation stations' in their classrooms to think about how they are feeling. This gives pupils the opportunity to look for ways to help themselves. They know that staff care about them and will help them sort out any difficulties they may have.

Pupils understand the school's values. Everyone is kind and respectful of each other. Pupils meet the school's expectations of behaviour and behave very well. Bullying is rare and staff deal with any incidents quickly and fairly.

Staff have high expectations of what all pupils can achieve. Pupils rise to the challenge and are excited by their learning, readily 'digging deeper'. Pupils say their opinions are valued. They talk excitedly about the change they brought about, for example with the creation of the Strathmore Restaurant.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school.

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

Leaders have developed an ambitious curriculum which sets out clearly what pupils will learn. Leaders have identified the key knowledge, skills and vocabulary that they want pupils to know, and when, from the early years to the end of key stage 1.

In the early years, children experience a good start to their education. They thrive and achieve well because of the well-considered curriculum, which considers what children need to learn ready for Year 1. Children learn well in the stimulating and well-developed

learning environment. As a result, children are well prepared for the next stage of their learning.

Teachers plan lessons that build on what pupils have learned previously. Teachers check that pupils have understood what they need to do. As a result, pupils learn well. Staff regularly review the progress that pupils make in reading, writing and mathematics. However, leaders have not ensured that this checking of what pupils know and remember is as well developed in other subjects.

Leaders have prioritised reading. Staff have secure levels of expertise and teach phonics well from Nursery to the end of key stage 1. Pupils read books matched to the phonic knowledge they are learning. They quickly build their confidence in reading and, as a result, learn to read fluently. Staff skilfully help pupils to catch up if they are beginning to fall behind. Pupils develop a love of reading. They value the new library area, which they regularly visit. Pupils speak enthusiastically about the books that the whole school reads on themes such as poverty and diversity. A typical view from pupils is that reading 'takes me away from the busyness of the day'.

At Strathmore, leaders and staff value all pupils highly. They are determined that all pupils are cared for, have a full range of opportunities, and are given the specific support they need to do well. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), who learn well alongside their friends. Teachers adapt lessons effectively to meet these pupils' needs. Support staff are well trained to help pupils overcome challenges and to develop their confidence. This helps pupils with SEND achieve well in line with their peers.

Leaders have prioritised pupils' personal development. Pupils understand the connection between the school's values and those in the wider community. They recognise the importance of respect and kindness, ensuring that there are 'no outsiders' at Strathmore. Pupils learn about different religions and cultures and celebrate people's differences in ways like the International Day.

Staff are overwhelmingly positive about being part of Strathmore. They appreciate the efforts that leaders make to manage their workload and support their well-being.

Governors work effectively. They are a new but strong team with a wealth of experience and expertise. They know the school well and take their roles very seriously. They fulfil their statutory duties effectively.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure there is a strong culture of safeguarding that underpins the school's work. Staff know pupils and their families very well. This helps them to identify safeguarding concerns early and intervene. Leaders work effectively with a range of external agencies to ensure that pupils and their families get the support they need.

Staff receive regular training so that they are up to date with statutory guidance. Staff are swift to act on any concerns.

Leaders complete appropriate pre-employment checks on adults to check on their suitability to work with pupils.

The curriculum supports pupils to support them to know how to stay safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have identified the key knowledge that pupils need to learn. Teachers regularly check what pupils have learned in English and mathematics. However, leaders have not developed a consistent approach to assessment in other subjects. As a result, teachers do not clearly know what pupils have learned in these subjects and this leads to gaps in pupils' knowledge. Leaders need to develop a consistent approach to assessing what pupils know and remember in these subjects.

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 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

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| Unique reference number | 117114 |
| Local authority | Hertfordshire |
| Inspection number | 10284259 |
| Type of school | Infant and Nursery |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 3 to 7 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 198 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing body | Debbie Pal-Born |
| Headteacher | Rachel Howes |
| Website | www.strathmore.herts.sch.uk/ |
| Date of previous inspection | 22 March 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- The school does not use any alternative providers.
- Leaders provide a breakfast club on site.

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 school leaders and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector held meetings with senior leaders, governors, subject leaders and the special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator.
- The inspector conducted deep dives in three subjects: early reading, science and history. For each deep dive, the inspector met with the subject leader, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Members of the school governing body met with the inspector. The inspector had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.

- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour and met with groups of pupils.
- The inspector considered 96 responses to Ofsted's questionnaires for parents and 92 free-text comments. She also considered 16 responses from staff and 40 pupil responses to the Ofsted survey.
- The inspector reviewed school documents relating to safeguarding, behaviour, attendance and the curriculum.

Inspection team

Ruth Brock, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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