

Inspection of a good school: Palatine Primary School

Palatine Road, Worthing, West Sussex BN12 6JP

Inspection dates:

11 and 12 October 2023

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might be outstanding if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

For the pupils of Palatine Primary School, school is their happy place. Each moment of every pupil's day is carefully considered from the moment they arrive. A warm welcome from staff sets the tone for the day. Over time, staff help pupils to understand themselves more deeply, so that pupils can express what they need to feel safe, happy and regulated.

Pupils thrive within the school's physical environment. This has been meticulously developed to ensure that pupils' sensory and therapeutic needs can be met throughout the day. Pupils delight in the school's indoor climbing walls, soft play, swimming pool and outdoor play areas. These also form a key part of pupils' educational provision.

Leaders ensure that all pupils experience an exceptionally broad range of enriching opportunities. The Year 6 residential trip, for example, enables pupils to apply what they have learned at forest school. Pupils love fire building and outdoor cooking opportunities. Over time, pupils build greater independence and confidence in themselves. As one parent said of her son's experience, 'the adults make him feel brave'.

Leaders are determined that pupils have all the magical experiences of childhood, that might not always be accessible to them in the wider community. Last Christmas, for example, pupils were able to find Father Christmas' footprints within their forest school.

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

Leaders' curriculum thinking is very well developed. This has enabled them to design an exceptionally engaging curriculum that meets the needs of every pupil. Pupils follow a highly personalised curriculum underpinned by their education, health and care (EHC)

plans. Teaching staff, therapists and support staff work together to break down the targets in pupils' EHC plans into very small, specific steps. These steps are understood by every adult who works with a pupil. Pupils are carefully supported, not only within pupils' classroom and therapy sessions, but throughout the entire school day to work towards their next steps.

Leaders have developed very clear sequences of learning that support staff in connecting pupils' EHC plans with the school's planned curriculum. Communication and interaction, for example, is rightly viewed by leaders as a cornerstone of the curriculum for all pupils. Work to develop children's communication and interaction starts the moment they join Reception. Staff assess children's starting points very carefully and plan each child's next steps. Staff teach and support the youngest children to be able to make requests and express preferences. Some begin to do this verbally, while others are supported to use pictures and symbols to express themselves. The communication and interaction curriculum provides a vital stepping stone for pupils into the school's language and literacy curriculum.

Staff use consistent approaches to communicate with pupils and ensure they know what is coming next in their day. Key songs, for example, are used to introduce regular activities. These positive and enjoyable routines provide pupils with a great sense of safety and security.

When pupils are ready, they begin on the 'Palatine curriculum', which is a subject-specific curriculum incorporating a broad range of subjects, including English, mathematics, science, history, geography, physical education (PE) and the arts. Every area of the curriculum has been thought through with great care to ensure that it is engaging for pupils. Steps of learning have been broken down, so that teachers are always clear about what each pupil needs to work on next. Leaders at all levels ensure that no ceiling is placed on who can move onto the Palatine curriculum. Ongoing assessment ensures that leaders know precisely when a pupil is ready.

Leaders are ambitious for all pupils, for whom it is appropriate, to learn to read. Those who demonstrate readiness begin the school's reading programme. The strong support that pupils who are learning to read receive over time ensures they continue to develop their fluency and comprehension.

Pupils of all ages are regularly read to in a way that is engaging for them. Pupils who have profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD), for example, enjoy the sensory stories their teachers read to them. These stories are deliberately repeated, so that pupils are supported to anticipate, and respond to, what is coming next, and be able to respond. Stories and texts have been carefully selected and threaded through the Palatine curriculum to engage pupils' interests and ensure they are hearing a wide range of texts.

Every pupil at Palatine Primary is supported to develop their inner confidence and happiness. Character development sits at the heart of the curriculum. Pupils learn to thrive together, appreciating each other's differences as well as the things they have in common. Pupils take huge pride in the responsibilities and roles they take on at the school. For some pupils, early morning jobs, such as delivering breakfasts to classrooms,

helps them to transition into school in the mornings. Others are ready to take on leadership roles within the school, such as head boy and girl. Pupils are incredibly proud of their school.

Staff are exceptionally skilled at identifying and supporting pupils' needs. A range of therapies and interventions are provided to each pupil as part of their 'toolboxes'. These are the suite of interventions that leaders provide to each pupil to enable them to access learning. Behaviour is very calm throughout the school, and when pupils do struggle to regulate, adults are expert in responding in the right way for that pupil.

Leaders at all levels, and those responsible for governance, share an unwavering vision of a school that places children at the heart of everything. This vision is realised each day in a multitude of ways. Staff share leaders' vision for children. Staff feel very well supported by leaders and appreciate that leaders ask them to focus on what makes the biggest difference to children.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in January 2013.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	126159
Local authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	10256548
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	205
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Raye Mills
Headteacher	Catriona Goldsmith
Website	www.palatineschool.org
Date of previous inspection	5 December 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school caters for a broad range of SEND, including PMLD, severe learning difficulties, moderate learning difficulties, autism spectrum disorder and complex co-existing learning needs. All pupils on roll have an EHC plan. All pupils are placed by a local authority.
- The school uses one unregistered alternative provider.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and the senior leadership team. The lead inspector met with representatives of the school's governing board, including the chair of governors, and spoke to a representative of the local authority.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: communication and interaction, early reading, mathematics, and physical development and PE. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors discussed the curriculum for some other subjects, including personal, social and health education with leaders.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors considered pupils' behaviour and attitudes throughout the inspection and discussed the school's analysis of pupils' behaviour and attendance with leaders. Inspectors spoke to staff and pupils about the school's personal development programme.

Inspection team

Alice Roberts, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Caroline Clarke

Ofsted Inspector

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