

Inspection of Pirton School

High Street, Pirton, Hitchin, Hertfordshire SG5 3PS

Inspection dates: 17 and 18 October 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Early years provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy to come to school and attend regularly. They understand and follow their school values to be 'ready, responsible, reflective, respectful, resourceful and resilient'. Good manners are commonplace, and pupils look after their school environment.

Pupils say they feel safe and supported. Most parents and carers agree. As one parent said, 'Pirton school and its staff provide a safe and nurturing environment for learning.' Pupils know that any concerns they may have will be listened to and taken seriously. Lessons are rarely disrupted. At playtimes and lunchtimes, pupils' good behaviour continues.

Pupils are proud of the roles and responsibilities they hold. They say these roles, such as eco-warriors, reading ambassadors and creative crew, help to improve the school and environment. Pupils enjoy the wide range of clubs on offer and the chance to try new sports, such as archery and fencing. Pupils make a positive contribution to the success of the school.

Pupils enjoy the opportunities they have to learn about their locality and beyond. They have learned to value difference and diversity. Pupils read regularly and are grateful when staff recommend new authors they may enjoy.

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

All pupils have the best possible start to their education. Staff ensure that children settle quickly whenever they join the school. Staff identify the needs and barriers to learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils receive the help that they need to become independent learners.

The school's curriculum sets out what pupils will learn and by when. It is ambitious in most areas. In reading, mathematics, early years and personal development, leaders and staff have undertaken work which has led to positive improvements for pupils' learning. Where aspects of the curriculum are well developed, pupils can learn and remember lots. For example, in mathematics, pupils talk confidently about what they have learned and can apply this knowledge to new tasks. However, leaders' work to revise the curriculum is very recent in some areas. In some subjects, teachers do not always make effective checks on what pupils have learned and remembered. Staff do not yet fully understand how to adapt this curriculum to meet the differing needs of pupils in their class. This means some pupils struggle to remember what they have learned.

Children learn to read as soon as they start school. Pupils read from books that match the sounds that they know. Teachers quickly identify which pupils are struggling with their reading. When pupils fall behind, teachers provide support to enable them to catch up quickly. Pupils know how important it is to read well and have developed a love of reading. Pupils enjoy reading an increasingly wide range of

texts. Leaders have carefully selected texts to ensure that pupils have the knowledge they need to understand topics and themes, such as diversity. Pupils appointed as reading ambassadors help to encourage other pupils to read more often.

Children settle quickly into their class routines in Reception. Relationships are strong and children play well together. All pupils are well supported in their early development because staff know them well. For example, children are provided with the help they need to develop their independence. Children learn the school's values through meaningful activities, such as taking turns and being responsible. The newly developed early years learning environment encourages children to practise what they have learned. Children enjoy exploring the outdoor environment and are learning how to take safe risks in their play. It is purposeful and supports children in making a strong start to their education.

Leaders promote pupils' wider development well. Pupils learn how to be safe and healthy, including online. Pupils learn how to be responsible citizens by participating in activities such as the harvest festival and charitable events. Pupils develop an understanding of democracy through school council elections and voting for class representatives. Pupils enjoy taking on additional responsibilities. Older pupils support younger pupils with reading. Pupils show respect for each other and celebrate difference. They know that it is important to make everyone feel welcome. Pupils gain from many opportunities to learn beyond the school curriculum.

Staff value the support they receive from leaders. Leaders are mindful of staff workload and well-being and are taking steps to support staff in these areas.

Leaders understand what the school does well and how it needs to improve. Governors hold leaders to account effectively for the school's performance. They carry out their statutory responsibilities well.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, the curriculum does not equip pupils with the key knowledge children need to learn over time. This means that pupils are not fully prepared for learning that comes later. Leaders need to ensure that all subjects are carefully planned and sequenced to prioritise the most important knowledge that pupils need for future success.

- The school curriculum does not set out clearly enough what pupils need to know and when. This means that teachers do not have sufficient knowledge to check pupils' understanding and precisely identify gaps in their learning. Leaders need to ensure that they support teachers to plan, teach and assess important knowledge across all areas of the curriculum.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use 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	117128
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10287095
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	150
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Vanessa Cole
Headteacher	Jenn Magdeburg
Website	www.pirtonschool.org.uk/
Dates of previous inspection	1 February 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not use the services of any alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- 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, other senior leaders, subject leaders, the special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator, governors and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors spoke to the designated safeguarding lead to discuss the school's procedures for keeping pupils safe. Inspectors considered the school's recruitment procedures, staff induction and training, records of concern and engagement with

external agencies. Inspectors spoke with staff and pupils throughout the inspection to gauge their views of the school.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. 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.
- The lead inspector heard pupils from key stage 1 and key stage 2 read to a member of staff.
- The lead inspector reviewed a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan.
- Pupils' behaviour was considered at various times of the day, including in lessons, around the school and at breaktime. The school's records on behaviour were also considered.
- To gather the views of pupils, inspectors spoke to groups of pupils, including in lessons and at breaktime.
- Inspectors spoke with parents and considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. The lead inspector also considered other correspondence received from parents during the inspection.
- To gather the views of staff, inspectors spoke to several staff and took account of responses to the Ofsted staff survey.
- 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.

Inspection team

Simon Eardley, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Paul Fykin

Ofsted Inspector

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