

Inspection of Pillowell Community Primary School

School Road, Pillowell, Lydney, Gloucestershire GL15 4QT

Inspection dates: 10 and 11 October 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

There is a strong sense of community in this small primary school. Staff know children and families well. Pupils are proud of their school. Older pupils enjoy being buddies with younger children. This helps them to learn about responsibility and being positive role models.

The school has been through a period of significant change and is proud of the improvements it has made. However, curriculum changes are not securely in place yet. This means pupils do not learn well.

Most pupils behave sensibly. They understand the school rules and expectations. Most classrooms are calm and purposeful. Sometimes, a small number of pupils disrupt the learning of others. When this happens, staff are usually quick to intervene.

Most pupils are confident that there are adults in school who they can talk to if they have a worry. Most pupils say that they feel safe. They learn how to keep themselves safe in school and in the community. For example, they learn about bike safety and safety around dogs.

Pupils appreciate a range of extra-curricular opportunities. These include clubs, competitive sports activities, attending Young Voices and residential visits. These help children to develop talents and interests.

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

The school works in partnership with other schools in the federation. The new leadership team has a clear sense of direction for the school and understands the further improvements needed.

The school has implemented a new curriculum. Leaders have considered what they want pupils to learn. They aim for all pupils to be the best they can be. However, the curriculum is not yet embedded. Staff, including subject leaders, are not familiar with the new curriculum. They do not have a detailed understanding of how the curriculum builds over time. As a result, pupils' knowledge and understanding are not secure. Many pupils struggle to remember their prior learning. As such, their learning does not build progressively.

Children in Reception Year settle well. They quickly learn routines and build strong relationships with adults. Staff help children to develop their language and communication through, for example, role-play activities.

The school has implemented new systems for assessment, but they are not yet embedded. Assessment is not yet used to check what pupils know and can do and to address gaps in their learning. As a result, pupils do not build on what they already know.

The school is developing its approach to reading. It has introduced a new phonics scheme. This starts in Reception, where staff ensure that children develop their phonics knowledge over time. Some staff do not have the phonics training they need to help pupils to learn to read well. As a result, some pupils have a limited understanding of the phonics code. Some pupils do not read books that match the sounds that they know. This means they do not practise reading the sounds they have learned to become confident before moving on. As a result, they do not read fluently.

The school provides many opportunities to help promote a love of reading. This includes pupils attending the local literature festival. However, some pupils say they do not enjoy reading. Pupils do not read widely and often. They struggle to talk about a favourite book or author.

There is clear ambition for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school identifies the small steps that pupils with SEND need to take. When learning, most pupils with SEND receive the support and resources they need.

Pupils' behaviour is generally positive. On the playground, they enjoy a range of activities. Pupils enjoy earning the school 'gems' for their behaviour and efforts. The gems help pupils learn how to behave and how to treat one another.

The school supports pupils' personal development well. The motto, 'all different, all equal', helps pupils to learn about fairness. Pupils learn to be responsible and respectful citizens. For example, they take part in fundraising and collecting for the local foodbank. Although pupils learn about online safety, some struggle to remember what they have learned.

Most parents are positive about the school. They value the communication and approachability of staff.

Staff recognise that there have been many changes to the school and the curriculum. They feel that their workload and well-being are well supported by leaders.

The new governing board understands what is working well and what needs to improve. It knows its responsibilities and wants to do the best for everyone at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school does not have a secure understanding of how well the curriculum is implemented across all subjects. Staff do not yet have the training they need to deliver the intended curriculum as planned. As a result, pupils do not have a secure recall and understanding of what they have learned. The school needs to ensure further consistency in curriculum implementation so that pupils know more and remember more, including in the long term.
- Phonics training has not been prioritised. This means that pupils do not always have the support that they need. As a result, some pupils fall behind in their reading and do not read accurately and fluently. The school should ensure that pupils read books that are matched to the sounds that they know, or that staff have the training that they need in order to support those pupils who have fallen behind to catch up.
- Assessment is not yet well established and embedded. As a result, teachers do not check what pupils know and remember and use this to inform next steps in learning. The school must ensure that assessment leads to pupils building knowledge and that gaps are addressed effectively.

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	115554
Local authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	10297921
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	83
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Chris Fordham
Interim Executive Headteacher	Kirsty Evans
Website	www.pillowellschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	19 April 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is federated with Blakeney Primary School and Walmore Hill Primary School.
- Pillowell Primary is a smaller-than-average primary school.
- There have been changes in leadership since the last inspection. A temporary executive headteacher was appointed in the last academic year from another school in the local authority. There is currently an interim executive headteacher, who has been in post since September 2023.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

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 spoke with the interim executive headteacher and other members of the school's senior leadership team. They held meetings with governors and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, early reading, and physical education. 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.
- 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

Nicky McMahon, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Jack Lacey

Ofsted Inspector

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