

Inspection of Therfield First School

The Causeway, Therfield, Royston, Hertfordshire SG8 9PP

Inspection dates: 17 and 18 October 2023

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|------------------------------|--------------------|
| Overall effectiveness | Good |
| The quality of education | Good |
| Behaviour and attitudes | Good |
| Personal development | Outstanding |
| Leadership and management | Good |
| Early years provision | Good |
| Previous inspection grade | Outstanding |

This school was last inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 14 years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between graded inspections under section 5 of the Act. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive at this small school, which has a 'family feel'. Kind and caring relationships are at the heart of it. These help to ensure pupils feel safe to learn and to play.

Pupils know that all adults want them to do well. Pupils enjoy their lessons where teachers 'bring learning to life'. Pupils relish the practical and fun tasks in lessons. Regular outdoor activities enable pupils to learn beyond the classroom. Pupils excitedly recall recent trips. This includes the whole school trip to a city book shop. Pupils can remember community visits. Interviewing residents helps to improve their communication and writing skills.

Pupils know and follow the school behaviour code. They behave well. Pupils helped to design the activities for the outdoor play sessions. They benefit from a range of equipment at breaktimes.

Pupils take an active role within their local community. They interact with different generations as part of the school's GAP project. This helps them to develop an understanding of themselves in society. Pupils develop their talents and interests in an extensive range of different activities. Examples include pottery, gardening, cookery and sport.

Overwhelmingly, pupils love coming to school. One parent represented the views of many, commenting, 'They are always enthusiastic about what they are learning!'

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

School leaders and staff share the same ambition for high standards in pupils' learning. They provide a broad and rich curriculum. There is a strong focus on oracy. This fosters an enthusiasm for learning from the early years through to Year 4.

The school has ensured that in most subjects the knowledge and skills that they want pupils to learn, and when, is clear. In these subjects, pupils learn and practise new skills in lessons. They successfully build on their prior knowledge. Teachers have the expertise to introduce new ideas and concepts clearly. They frequently check what children have learned. This helps to support pupils with their next steps. In these subjects, pupils achieve well.

However, the curriculum in a few foundation subjects does not yet set out clearly enough the vocabulary and knowledge pupils should learn. This means teachers cannot check precisely what pupils have remembered. Therefore, they cannot pinpoint next steps in learning with enough accuracy.

Reading is at the heart of the curriculum. The curriculum for phonics is well thought through. Well-trained staff teach early reading well. As pupils begin to read books,

they have materials matched to the sounds they are learning. Pupils practise these newly learned skills and remember them well. Reading spaces are enticing, including in the early years. The youngest children show an avid interest in choosing books to share. Older pupils are keen readers. They take on extra responsibilities in the school library.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported. The school expects children with SEND to achieve well alongside their peers. Staff know the pupils very well. They are sensitive to their developmental needs. Staff ensure that pupils with SEND feel included and valued. Teachers provide beneficial, extra resources that help pupils with SEND to understand new ideas.

Pupils understand and respect their differences. In so doing, they show the value of tolerance. Pupils learn about and are respectful of diversity in the world beyond their village. Outdoor learning enhances pupils' abilities to work together. They develop their confidence and resilience. Pupils enjoy a wealth of cultural opportunities. These include djembe drumming, role playing, religious festivals and virtually touring various places of worship. They are being prepared very well for life in modern Britain.

Pupils behave well. Lessons are calm. Relationships at the school are very strong. Pupils learn without distractions. Pupils adhere to the well-established class routines. This starts in the early years where children begin to share and learn how to be kind. Pupils are orderly and polite around the school. Staff address rare instances of poor behaviour consistently and fairly. They rarely have to remind pupils to stick to the school code.

The school is passionate about helping pupils to develop as active and responsible citizens. Leaders help pupils to take pride in their community. The governing body and staff work closely with parents and others to realise this aim. For instance, pupils worked closely with parish councillors to make decisions about changes in the village.

The governing body uses robust systems to ensure that the school maintains its high aims and ambitions. Governors ensure that they have the skills and training to carry out their statutory duties. They work closely with the school staff and the local community. The governing body contributes positively to the development of the school. The school ensures that staff well-being and workload is a priority.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few foundation subjects, the school does not sufficiently break down the knowledge and vocabulary that pupils need to know. As a result, staff cannot precisely check what pupils have remembered and pinpoint their next steps in learning. The school should identify the most important knowledge and vocabulary in these subjects, so that teachers know how well pupils are progressing through the curriculum and can accurately plan pupils' next steps in their 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' 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

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| Unique reference number | 117153 |
| Local authority | Hertfordshire |
| Inspection number | 10255039 |
| Type of school | First |
| School category | Maintained |
| Age range of pupils | 4 to 9 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 66 |
| Appropriate authority | Local authority |
| Chair of governing body | Daniel Jones and Tim Atkins (Co-Chairs) |
| Headteacher | Tara McGovern |
| Website | www.therfield.herts.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 12 and 13 March 2009, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- The school does not use the services of 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 educational 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.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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 carried out deep dives in these subjects: Early reading, mathematics, history and design and technology. For each deep dive, inspectors met with

subject leaders, considered curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke with pupils about their learning, and scrutinised samples of pupils' work. Other aspects of the curriculum were also scrutinised to provide further evidence for the quality of education.

- The lead inspector listened to some pupils read to staff. She also spoke with pupils about their reading.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour across the school. They met with groups of pupils to seek their views. They also spoke to pupils informally in class, around the school and at breaktimes.
- Inspectors held meetings with various senior leaders, including the special educational needs and early years leaders. The lead inspector met with the chair and vice chair of the governing body.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation during the inspection, including curriculum plans, headteacher's reports, minutes of governing body meetings and school development plans.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents. Inspectors considered 45 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View.
- Inspectors spoke with different groups of staff to gather their views, including about their workload and well-being. They considered 13 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Pamela Finch, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Joe Creswick

Ofsted Inspector

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