

Inspection of a good school: The Hill Primary School

Peppard Road, Emmer Green, Reading, Berkshire RG4 8TU

Inspection dates:

31 October and 1 November 2023

Outcome

The Hill Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school's motto, 'Growing good people', is at the heart of everything the school does. Pupils benefit from learning and playing in stimulating environments, including the nature area and outdoor classroom. From the minute they join the school, children flourish here. Staff get to know them well. This helps everyone feel confident and safe. The school's ambition is for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to blossom.

The school values, threaded throughout the school's work, underpin pupils' behaviour. As a result, pupils speak kindly to each other and play calmly together. Pupils treasure the exciting climbing equipment and branch out onto the school 'trim trail' as they grow older. Pupils develop creative skills throughout the school. The talent show, organised by Year 6, showcases martial arts, art, music, dancing and singing. Pupils cherish the opportunity to celebrate each other's success.

Children settle quickly into Reception. Staff teach them school routines and expectations. Across all year groups, pupils focus well in lessons and do not disrupt each other's learning. Occasionally, pupils recognise that their peers may struggle to uphold the school's high standards. Pupils are tolerant of each other and forgive quickly.

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

The school has designed a broad and ambitious curriculum. Leaders have identified the essential knowledge and skills that pupils need to learn right from the start of Reception. In most subjects, the school has thought carefully about how learning builds over time. However, in a small number of subjects, the school has not yet completed its curriculum thinking fully. Children get off to a strong start in the early years. Staff support children successfully to develop socially and emotionally, as well as academically. Early on, staff use engaging resources to promote the effective development of mathematical knowledge and skills. In all lessons across the school, teachers present information skilfully, using subject-specific language.

Overall, pupils achieve well. Teachers plan activities that help pupils make connections between topics and remember their learning. However, this is not yet embedded across all subjects. Teachers do not always revisit and recap knowledge and skills learned previously. Teachers do not always systematically check that pupils have remembered key knowledge and skills. This means that pupils, including those with SEND, do not always learn as much as they could.

The teaching of early reading is a high priority. The school knows that it unlocks pupils' learning. The school seeks to inspire pupils to discover the joy of reading. Expert staff teach phonics consistently well. Books match the sounds pupils know. This helps pupils gain confidence and practise reading precisely. Where necessary, staff support pupils to catch up quickly. Well-trained Year 5 and Year 6 'buddies' provide younger children with welcome support for reading. Books feature at the heart of every classroom. The inspiring library is a focal point and fosters a love of reading. Year 6 relish the opportunity to develop leadership skills by becoming librarians. The annual bedtime story event that they organise is popular. This teaches older pupils vital organisation skills and fosters much-cherished friendships across the year groups.

Principles for pupils' behaviour grow out of the school values. Kindness, respect, curiosity and honesty characterise the strong relationships and behaviour that is common across all year groups. Pupils respond positively to the high expectations of behaviour that staff have of them. They demonstrate good manners throughout the day. Lessons are calm and purposeful. Pupils listen to each other in lessons respectfully and celebrate each other's success willingly. They know that staff deal with them fairly and consistently.

Well-planned and carefully coordinated opportunities to promote pupils' wider development permeate throughout the school. Pupils experience a broad range of activities designed to develop critical social and emotional knowledge and skills. Pupils passionately recognise that their school is inclusive. They embrace cultural and personal differences. One pupil, typical of many, proudly explained how, 'Everyone is normal (different) in their own way.' Pupils value the outdoor learning that features prominently. They recognise how it promotes positive physical and mental health. Many pupils enjoy attending extra-curricular clubs, including sports clubs, choir and the popular rock music club. Carefully planned visits to local museums and further afield, to places such as Windsor Castle and a local outdoor learning venue, extend and broaden pupils' knowledge and understanding of the world around them.

Staff are very positive about the school and are proud to work here. Despite significant changes and challenges faced by the school community, the school continues to thrive. Relationships between staff are strong. Governors support leaders effectively to continue to improve the school. Leaders consider staff workload carefully. Families speak highly of the school. They appreciate the care and support given to their children as they grow.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- A small number of subjects require further refinement. This means that pupils' learning is not as deep as it could be in these areas. The school should make sure that the curriculum is fully effective across all subjects.
- Assessment is underdeveloped. As a result, staff do not consistently check pupils' understanding to ensure that learning builds over time. The school should continue to refine their assessment strategies to ensure that pupils are given sufficient opportunity to know more and remember more in all 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 November 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	109788
Local authority	Reading
Inspection number	10287817
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	403
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Pamela Jacobs (co-chair) Bethan Burge (co-chair)
Headteacher	Fiona Swain
Website	www.thehillprimary.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	11 April 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, the school has had several new senior leaders. The executive headteacher has been in post since September 2023.
- The co-chairs of the governing body have been in post since the beginning of October 2023.
- 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. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector held meetings with senior leaders of the school, governors and representatives of the local authority commissioned school improvement team.

- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, science and art. 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 inspector: 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.
- The inspector considered a range of documentation provided by the school. This included the school's self-evaluation, published information about pupils' performance and minutes of governing body meetings.
- The inspector spoke to a wide range of pupils and observed their behaviour in lessons and at social times.
- The inspector considered responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire, including free-text responses. They also took account of the responses to the staff and pupil surveys and gathered the views of parents, staff and pupils throughout the inspection.

Inspection team

Linda Culling, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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