

Inspection of Cunningham Hill Junior School

Cell Barnes Lane, St Albans, Hertfordshire AL1 5QJ

Inspection dates: 24 and 26 April 2024

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
The quality of education	Outstanding
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

Until November 2020, the school was exempt from routine inspection because it was judged as outstanding at its previous inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The school has not been inspected under section 5 of the Act since December 2011.

What is it like to attend this school?

The sky is the limit for pupils at this school. Pupils are happy and thrive in a culture of kindness and very high expectations. There are a wealth of opportunities for pupils to try new things during their time here. As a result, pupils are aspirational and committed to the hard work that will secure their success in many different fields.

Pupils are keen to challenge themselves. They develop persistence and resilience. They have confidence that their teachers will help them tackle new skills in small steps so they can be successful. Pupils remember and build on what they learn. As a result, pupils reach very high standards across the curriculum.

Behaviour in lessons and around the school is excellent. Pupils are highly respectful of their teachers and each other. Pupils encourage and support one another. They find their lessons interesting and enjoyable, so they are absorbed in their learning.

Pupils have many opportunities to develop their leadership skills, for example through helping around the school as play leaders or as part of the school council. Older pupils maturely help their younger peers to practise their reading and mathematical skills. Older pupils take pride in ensuring that everyone is included at breaktimes.

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

Together, school leaders at every level have established a clear and consistent vision that underpins their ongoing reflection and improvement. The commitment of leaders to promoting well-being and collaboration includes staff as well as pupils. As a result, they have built a stable, effective team with a shared commitment to providing the best possible outcomes for pupils, both academically and socially.

The ambitious curriculum sets out the knowledge for pupils to learn as they move across the school. The school has considered carefully the most important learning and vocabulary at every stage and made links between subjects. Skilful teachers constantly check how well pupils are understanding and adjust their teaching straight away. As a result, pupils revise and secure key knowledge before being ready to move on and extend their learning.

Pupils have a love of books and a thirst for reading. They are inspired to read high-quality books by the recommendations of their classmates and the librarian. Pupils who fall behind with reading get extra help straight away. They practise reading with a wide selection of finely graded books. They rapidly catch up, and develop as fluent, confident readers.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) get the right help. Teachers anticipate where extra resources or explanations will make tricky concepts easier for pupils with SEND to grasp. They put these in place straight away so that

pupils with SEND are skilfully included in lessons. Staff provide additional, bespoke sessions to develop specific skills. They provide plenty of prompts, praise and encouragement, so that pupils with SEND are confident to participate in learning and social times with their peers. As a result, pupils with SEND achieve highly.

The school vigorously promotes regular, punctual attendance for all pupils. It provides extra support for families who need it, so that pupils can take advantage of the opportunities available to them.

The school has established clear expectations and routines for behaviour. Pupils know and follow the rules. Lessons run smoothly and learning time is maximised. Pupils have a high degree of self-control. They are keen to demonstrate the school motto of 'Do as you would be done by' in their relationships with others.

Pupils are proud to be tolerant and inclusive. They value difference and learn from each other about a range of world cultures. Pupils know about the importance of a healthy diet and exercise. They also rightly prioritise their mental health and well-being. Pupils recognise the value of moderation in all things. An extensive range of extra-curricular activities enables them to develop new skills and talents. This includes karate, orchestra, stop-motion animation and calligraphy. Older pupils run some of these clubs, including at the linked infant school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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	117250
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10294971
Type of school	Junior
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	237
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Rondi Allan
Headteacher	J Elbourne-Cload
Website	https://cunninghamhill.herts.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	8 and 9 December 2011, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, the school joined the Cunningham Hill Schools Federation in September 2020.
- The school does not use any off-site providers of alternative education.

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.
- The inspection started on 24 April 2024. It was paused in line with [Ofsted inspections and visits: Deferring, pausing and gathering additional evidence](#) policy. Inspectors returned on 26 April 2024 to complete the inspection.

- Inspectors met with a range of leaders, including senior leaders, the special educational needs coordinator and governors, including the chair of governors. The lead inspector met with the school effectiveness adviser from the local authority.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took into account the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which leaders have created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of school documents and policies, including the school improvement plan and minutes of the governing body meetings.
- The inspectors considered the views of parents through responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments. Inspectors gathered the views of staff and pupils through Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys, as well as through discussions conducted throughout the inspection.

Inspection team

Lynne Williams, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Laura Hewer	Ofsted Inspector
Caroline Crozier	His Majesty's Inspector
Jonny Wallace	His Majesty's Inspector

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