

Inspection of Northfields Infants and Nursery School

Burley, Letchworth Garden City, Hertfordshire SG6 4PT

Inspection dates: 30 April and 1 May 2024

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?

Pupils at Northfields welcome visitors with smiles and are keen to tell you about their school. They are enthusiastic learners, answering and asking questions often. Pupils and staff have friendly and respectful relationships. This means pupils feel able to speak to staff if they have any worries.

Pupils live up to teachers' expectations of them in terms of behaviour. Most listen well to others in the classroom. They are kind to each other and have safe and happy playtimes.

Pupils learn to read well because the reading curriculum has improved. However, some pupils are not making as much progress in other subjects because teachers' expectations of what pupils can do are not high enough.

Pupils can be elected to important school groups, such as the school council and the eco-committee. This helps them learn about and practice democracy.

Pupils have many opportunities to learn about diversity. For instance, in history, they learn about women of colour from the past who have achieved highly in science and mathematics. They know that all people are different and that this should be celebrated.

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

Since the previous inspection, the school has developed its curriculum. Some subjects have been well structured, while others are still in the early stages of development. In well-structured subjects, teachers show secure subject knowledge. They explain tasks clearly to pupils and adapt some learning tasks. This means that pupils can complete the learning activities confidently. As a result, pupils' knowledge of these subjects is developing well. However, a number of other subjects require further development. The school does not rigorously check how well pupils learn the planned curriculum. Teachers do not always address misconceptions. This means some pupils make less progress than others.

In the early years, a well-structured curriculum is in place for all areas of learning. Staff focus sharply on developing children's communication and language skills. This prepares children securely for their future learning in key stage 1 and beyond. However, in some subjects, the school does not always securely build on this positive start.

Pupils enjoy books and reading. The school has made it a priority to teach pupils to read. Children in Nursery learn beginning letter sounds. They also share and enjoy stories and books. This helps children to enjoy reading. In phonics sessions, pupils learn to form letters and spell words. Pupils who fall behind have targeted support to improve their knowledge. Most pupils achieve well in reading.

In some subjects, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive effective, targeted support. In Nursery, some pupils have speech and language and communication needs. The school uses successful strategies to improve children's language and communication. This helps them when they are learning to read and write. The school also has some pupils who have more complex SEND needs. These pupils learn a bespoke curriculum, which matches their identified needs. However, in some subjects, some pupils with SEND do not have effective adapted learning tasks. This means that they are not able to complete work independently and need to wait for guidance. This causes a loss of learning time where pupils are not developing their knowledge.

Pupils behave well. The school has a compassionate approach to helping pupils manage their feelings. Pupils learn to understand why they feel a certain way. Staff then help them manage these with sensible strategies. This helps pupils take responsibility for their actions. This begins in Nursery and Reception. Where the children get along well with each other, they also share and focus on tasks well.

The school has ensured that pupils learn about different faiths and cultures. Pupils understand that everyone is unique. This includes knowing about and understanding different disabilities. Pupils are clear about staying safe, including having trusted adults who they can ask for help and guidance.

Governors carry out all statutory duties. They ensure staff well-being is a high priority, and staff appreciate this. Currently, in some subjects across key stage 1, pupils do not achieve as well as they could. Some areas that were identified at the last inspection have not been addressed effectively. Occasionally, the school relies on others to provide direction. This means that sometimes leaders do not make positive changes until guided or supported. Governors are not currently holding leaders accountable either quickly or precisely enough for some issues identified at the previous inspection, particularly areas that refer to some core subjects. This impacts negatively on pupils' outcomes and their readiness for the next stage of their learning.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There are inconsistencies in the teaching in some subjects across key stage 1, including writing. Pedagogical practices do not always support, and a lack of formative assessment does not ensure that misconceptions are addressed quickly enough to improve outcomes. This means that pupils' knowledge does not develop as quickly as it could. The school needs to ensure that teachers are using the school's intended teaching approaches and assessment procedures.

- In some subjects, pupils with SEND do not have access to appropriate adaptations. For example, some are not able to record their thinking independently. This means they must wait for support, and they lose time when they could be developing and consolidating their knowledge. The school needs to ensure that pupils with SEND can record their learning effectively and help to build their independence.
- The school has not acted swiftly enough to ensure that all the recommendations made at the last inspection have been implemented, particularly regarding the teaching of some aspects of some core subjects, particularly making sure teachers have high expectations in terms of the quality of work produced by pupils and the progress they make. The school needs to ensure that improvement actions address these areas quickly and 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	117223
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10294968
Type of school	Infant and Nursery
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	157
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Joanna Heneker
Headteacher	Rob Dell
Website	www.northfields.herts.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	6 and 7 December 2022, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not use any alternative provider of education.
- The school has its own breakfast and after-school club.

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.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, history 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.

- The inspectors also gathered further information about the quality of education in writing and personal, social, health and economic education by meeting with leaders, looking at pupils' workbooks and talking to pupils.
- 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, including attendance, that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspectors examined a range of documents provided by the school, including development plans and the school's self-evaluation form.
- The inspectors also met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, school-based curriculum leaders and the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator.
- The lead inspector also met with representatives from the governing body, including the chair of the governing body.
- The inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including free-text responses. They also considered the online staff survey. The inspectors also spoke to pupils to obtain their opinions.
- The team inspector talked to parents at the school gate after school.

Inspection team

Jessie Linsley, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Michael Scott

Ofsted Inspector

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