

Inspection of a good school: Gardners Lane Primary School

Gardners Lane, Swindon Road, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire GL51 9JW

Inspection dates: 16 and 17 July 2024

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and feel safe at Gardners Lane Primary School. Most pupils behave well and show positive attitudes towards their learning. Where some pupils struggle to manage their own behaviour, adults act swiftly. This enables pupils to learn without disruption. Pupils appreciate the actions adults take to help them resolve problems. The school is aware of the need to improve school attendance and is working with families to reduce levels of absence. Pupils new to the school quickly feel part of the school community.

The school is ambitious for all pupils to achieve well. Leaders have recently reviewed the curriculum and set out exactly what pupils should know and be able to do. However, in many subjects, this new curriculum is not currently being implemented. Consequently, pupils are not learning as well as they might.

Pupils have a range of opportunities to develop their interests and talents. Sport is highly inclusive at the school. Pupils participate for fun and in good natured competitions. Trips, such as to the local farm, bring the curriculum to life for pupils. Whole school cultural events such as the pantomime, visits to local book shops and guest speakers provide memorable experiences. Pupils enjoy reading to the many volunteers who support the school, including Woody the reading dog.

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

There have recently been significant changes in leadership. New leaders have quickly established an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses in the school. Leaders and those responsible for governance now have a clear, shared vision. They are engaging with external advisors and the local authority to take rapid action. They have begun to make

significant improvements to curriculum design. However, much of this work is at an early stage and the impact is yet to be seen.

Reading is an important part of school life. Pupils regularly enjoy sharing stories, songs and rhymes. The school has a clear approach to teaching phonics. However, in some cases, the teaching does not follow the chosen programme closely enough. This makes it difficult for staff to know when pupils have not grasped a sound. In addition, the support for the weakest readers is not always timely and sufficiently targeted on pupils' phonics gaps. This means that these pupils do not catch up quickly enough. This is a clear priority area for leaders who have begun to access support to enhance their phonics programme.

In some subjects the precise content and the sequencing of the curriculum is clear. In these subject areas teachers plan activities that support pupils to build on their previous knowledge. For example, in mathematics, pupils can recall their knowledge of multiplication when they attempt more complex problem-solving tasks. However, in other subjects, it is not clear exactly what pupils should learn and when. When activities do not have a precise learning focus some pupils do not learn the intended knowledge. This means they fall further behind. Conversely, some pupils do not get sufficiently challenging work to move their learning on. This means they do not achieve all that they are capable of.

The school has systems in place to identify and support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff know their pupils well and are alert to any potential disadvantage pupils may have. The school is aspirational for all pupils to be fully involved. For example, pupils who have English as an additional language have opportunities to share stories and their home language with their new friends. Diversity is celebrated from the moment children join Reception.

The school has recently reviewed the way it supports pupils' personal development. This begins in the early years and continues through the school so that pupils develop an age-appropriate understanding of keeping healthy, positive relationships and life in modern Britain. Pupils learn about the school values and consider what they mean to them. As a result, pupils understand the importance of being tolerant and kind. Adults and pupils have positive relationships. Pupils enthusiastically share their own views and opinions about the school and are keen to be part of improving the school.

Governors are beginning to develop routines to monitor and assure themselves of the quality of education provided. At this point in time however, the school does not have clear oversight of how effectively the curriculum is being implemented in each of the subject areas. This is limiting leaders' ability to evaluate the impact of planned changes on pupils' learning.

Leaders are mindful of staff well-being and workload during this period of change. Staff value the involvement that they have in making improvements to Gardners Lane primary school together.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The approach to teaching early reading is not implemented as effectively as it could be. As a result, weaker readers struggle to develop phonics knowledge and do not regularly have the additional support they need to keep up with their peers. The school must ensure that all staff have the expertise and resources they need to help pupils rapidly improve their reading.
- The curriculum is not being implemented effectively to meet the needs of all pupils. Activities do not always match the intended outcomes or take into consideration pupils' starting points. This means some pupils do not learn the curriculum as successfully as they could. The school should ensure that the curriculum is well matched to pupils' starting points so that all pupils build knowledge securely across all subjects.
- The school has only recently begun to monitor the implementation and impact of the curriculum in all subject areas. This means that leaders are not able to assure themselves that the curriculum is taught as intended or evaluate how well pupils are learning. The school needs to have a clear oversight of each subject area and how well pupils are learning to inform leaders' actions.

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 July 2014.

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	131249
Local authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	10334690
Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	296
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Paul Jones
Headteacher	Tony Larner (Executive Headteacher)
Website	www.gardnerslane.org.uk
Date(s) of previous inspection	16 October 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2025

Information about this school

- The executive headteacher took up post in September 2023. An interim head of school is in place for the period April to July 2024.
- The school is part of Gardners Lane and Oakwood Federation.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- There is a breakfast club led by the school for pupils who attend the school.

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 has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector held discussions with school leaders at all levels. The inspector also spoke with teaching staff, support staff and governors.

- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, and physical education. For each deep dive, the inspector 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 early years provision was considered through the deep dives as well as through an additional visit during the inspection.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school, including at lunchtime and breaktimes.
- The inspector viewed a range of school documentation, including the minutes of the governance meetings, the school's self-evaluation documents and improvement plans.
- 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 pupils' interests first.
- The inspector considered responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, as well as responses to the staff survey and pupil survey.

Inspection team

Sara Berry, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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