

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Pembury School

Lower Green Road, Pembury, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN2 4EB

Inspection dates:

22 and 23 October 2024

Outcome

Pembury School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

With its high expectations, this school gets pupils happily involved and immersed in school life, inside and outside of the classroom. Pupils develop a keen interest, curiosity and enjoyment in their learning. Adults help them to tackle often-demanding tasks successfully. Pupils' positive achievement stretches beyond academic subjects. The school also supports pupils to become proactive citizens in the school community. It inspires them to reflect carefully about their responsibilities in the wider world.

The school takes developing pupils' leadership skills very seriously. Pupils are given a strong say in many things that affect them. It is pupils themselves who often recruit and train the next generation to responsible positions, such as 'anti-bullying ambassador'. Through this approach, the school aims to equip pupils with the confidence and understanding to continue making a difference in the future.

Breaktimes are active, social and fun times. The school plans these opportunities carefully. Pupils have a plentiful supply of imaginative equipment and resources across the school's large site. They use these creatively and productively, developing everything from their imaginations to their communication, negotiation and teamwork skills. Alternatively, pupils eagerly but patiently wait in line to lose themselves in a book in the school's new rainforest library.

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

The school knows itself and its many strengths well. It has responded robustly to the previously identified areas for improvement. The school is also realistic and determined about systematically tackling areas where there is still more to do. The school is rightly

uncompromising in wanting the very best for pupils. Securing further improvement alongside a reasonable staff workload is rightly an ongoing focus.

Pupils achieve well. They enthusiastically recall their learning across subjects. Pupils love their 'class projects', which are deliberately designed to help them make links in their learning. Pupils take care to use correct subject-specific vocabulary, rising to the school's high expectations. For example, in mathematics, pupils are equipped with the technical vocabulary to explain their thinking. The mathematics curriculum provides an effective balance of different opportunities that secures pupils' strong progress. This includes enough practice for pupils to become fluent in their calculations. Pupils are also frequently required to use their mathematical understanding to tackle work where the answer, or how to get it, is not immediately obvious.

Children and staff have coped admirably with a tricky start to the year after the Reception classrooms were flooded and unusable. The school rightly prioritised helping children to settle quickly, despite this bumpy beginning. This has enabled children to quickly take the first important steps in their learning. Now that everyone is back in their proper environment, staff are focused on successfully making up for lost time.

The school's teaching of reading is rigorous and effective. A relentless consistency in the school's approach to phonics promotes pupils' confidence, knowledge and skills to read and spell well. Pupils who need a little more time and help to succeed in their reading are identified quickly and supported well for as long as it takes.

Many pupils convey a real passion for writing. This is reflected in the obvious care and quality that shines through their work across subjects. The well-designed curriculum ensures that the early foundations necessary to write accurately and fluently are firmly established by the end of key stage 1. This enables older pupils to develop real flair and character in their writing, with often-impressive results.

From the outset, teachers typically teach in a way that is supportive for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Teachers' demonstrations and explanations are clear and precise. For example, they take care to design visual resources that will be easily accessible to all. Teachers are mindful about giving all pupils enough thinking time to answer a question. The school also makes helpful adaptations for particular pupils, catering for pupils' carefully identified learning, sensory and other needs.

Lessons are focused and purposeful. Pupils' positive behaviour and concentration mean that little time, if any, is wasted. Teachers use a range of helpful strategies to check pupils' understanding of curriculum content. However, not all staff are sufficiently skilful at gathering and using the resulting information to optimise choices about what to do next to best support pupils' learning.

The school prioritises offering pupils the pastoral care and emotional support that they need to flourish. It has a tight and effective ongoing strategy for making sure that pupils rarely miss school. Pupils value the school's rich range of carefully selected trips and activities. They are understandably proud of how the school inspires them to regularly

lead their own assemblies about the issues that matter to them, for example around equality.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- On occasion, the school does not make sure that pupils' knowledge is secure before moving them on to more complex work. This sometimes leaves some pupils struggling unhelpfully with tasks, or with gaps in their knowledge or errors in their understanding. The school should ensure that all staff are sufficiently skilled at using effective techniques for checking pupils' understanding and adapting what they do next as a result to improve pupils' learning.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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 for overall effectiveness in February 2015.

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	118280
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10341474
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	405
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Philip Drew
Headteacher	Hannah Walters
Website	www.pembury.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	26 February 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher was appointed since the previous inspection.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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 throughout the inspection with the headteacher and the deputy headteacher. These senior leaders joined the inspector during his visits to classrooms. The inspector also met with the assistant headteacher, who is the SEND coordinator.
- The inspector visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. He also met with teachers.

- 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 met with the chair of governors and two other governors. He also spoke with a representative of the local authority on the telephone.
- The inspector considered the views expressed in the online inspection surveys returned by pupils and staff. He also took account of the responses submitted to Ofsted Parent View. The inspector noted the views expressed in an email sent by a parent to Ofsted endorsing the school's work.

Inspection team

Clive Dunn, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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