

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Prae Wood Primary School

King Harry Lane, St Albans, Hertfordshire AL3 4HZ

Inspection dates:

5 and 6 November 2024

Outcome

Evidence gathered during this ungraded (section 8) inspection suggests that the school's work may have improved significantly across all areas since the previous inspection. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

From the early years through to Year 6, pupils thrive here. They benefit enormously from everything the school has to offer. Pupils achieve highly in all subjects. In addition to their positive academic achievements, the school helps pupils to flourish in their personal and social development. Pupils are extremely well prepared for life beyond school. This includes the move to secondary school.

All staff want the very best for every pupil. Pupils live up to these high expectations in all that they do. Their behaviour is exemplary. Pupils work extremely hard in lessons. They value the various opportunities which help them to learn new things and deepen their knowledge. Pupils are happy, safe and well cared for. They describe Prae Wood as a place where everyone is genuinely valued. The school is a happy, friendly and exciting place to learn.

Rates of pupils' attendance are high. They love coming to school. Many pupils say that the best thing about their school is the 'everyone welcome' ethos. They look forward to the special sessions where leaders come to their classrooms to read to them. Pupils said that this helps them to 'think deeply'. These stories help pupils to reflect on topics such as diversity and equality.

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

Leaders, including governors, have worked very effectively together to build on the school's strengths since the previous inspection.

Staff get to know pupils incredibly well. No time is wasted in identifying and meeting pupils' needs. For example, in the early years, staff are highly skilled at supporting children's language and communication development. They make sure that any gaps in children's learning are spotted and addressed effectively. Staff work closely with parents and other professionals, such as therapists, to ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make great strides in their learning.

The school promotes pupils' attainment of reading, writing and mathematics knowledge very effectively. This all starts in the early years where, for example, staff support children's movement skills in readiness for writing. For instance, children develop their muscle strength and control by moving and controlling different sized balls around the hall using their hands and fingers. They practise using tweezers to pick up and move different objects. The school's reading curriculum is implemented exceptionally well. Pupils become fluent and confident readers. They also develop a love of reading. Pupils enjoy spending their time in the school's newly stocked libraries. Pupils who need more help to catch up with their peers get the support they need.

The school has identified precisely what pupils need to know and when. Staff do a great job at helping pupils to understand how their current learning builds on what they have been taught previously. For example, as pupils start their topic on the Vikings, staff help them to draw on their previous learning about Roman invasions. The school's emphasis on key vocabulary is well embedded. Staff make sure that pupils know and use terminology accurately.

The school provides staff with well-thought-out training. Staff value leaders' efforts to support their well-being and their subject knowledge. In lessons, teachers use this subject expertise very effectively to check pupils' learning and address any misconceptions. They make sure that activities are adjusted so that all pupils access high-quality lessons.

Staff make learning interesting and relevant. Pupils especially like the way staff help them to become 'experts'. For example, in science, pupils learn to become scientific experts on topics such as living things. Pupils delve deeper and research things like fungi, bacteria and viruses. Routinely, pupils get to share their expert knowledge with their classmates. This helps everyone to learn new and interesting things. Across the curriculum, pupils develop in-depth knowledge of the subjects they learn. They become increasingly independent and take ownership of their learning.

Pupils' exemplary behaviour helps everyone to feel settled and safe, including during social times. Pupils take on roles and responsibilities with pride. The 'Prae Wood Parliament' brings together well-established pupil committees that make a real difference to their school. The 'tech tribe', for example, has created leaflets for parents to raise awareness of children spending too much time on smartphones.

Pupils get to learn about themselves and others in meaningful ways. For example, in art, pupils learn about a diverse range of artists and sculptors. In circle times, pupils are taught in an age-appropriate way about concepts such as prejudice and discrimination.

Pupils listen to each other well. They treat views that are different to their own with respect.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in July 2019.

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 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	117315
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10345192
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	453
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing	Tony Fitzpatrick
Headteacher	Jenny Sheppard
Website	www.praewood.herts.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	3 and 4 July 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The governing body manages the school's breakfast and after-school club provision.
- The school makes use of one unregistered 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 his evaluation of the school.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and other senior leaders. He met with a group of governors, including the chair of governors. The inspector held a telephone discussion with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- The inspector met with different groups of pupils and staff. He went on a tour of the school with pupils and joined pupils during social times.
- 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 reviewed the responses to Ofsted Parent View as well as the contributions to Ofsted's online staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Gary Rawlings, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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