

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Warden Park Primary Academy

New England Road, Haywards Heath, West Sussex RH16 3JR

Inspection dates:

14 and 15 January 2025

Outcome

Evidence gathered during this ungraded (section 8) inspection suggests that aspects of the school's work may not be as strong as at the time of the previous inspection. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Elizabeth Brodie. This school is part of Sussex Learning Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Jonathan Morris, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Jonathan Ash-Edwards.

What is it like to attend this school?

This school is a happy and harmonious community. Pupils of all ages are curious, enthusiastic and try hard in lessons. From the start in Nursery, the school has high expectations of children's capabilities and behaviour. Lessons are calm and focused. Pupils are proud to explain what they learn and remember from previous topics.

The school promotes a keen sense that everyone has a part to play in creating such a positive community. The warm, friendly atmosphere in school is testament to the school's success. Pupils' conduct around the school is polite and respectful. Older pupils have a wealth of leadership roles to aspire to. They understand the purpose of these roles, responding maturely to the trust that the school places in them.

The school is committed to helping all pupils have the best possible future life chances. In terms of pupils' attitudes, personal qualities and character, the school is already very successful. However, there is more to do to place pupils well academically as they move on to their next schools. Recent leavers have often not secured the English and mathematics knowledge and skills that they should. The school is already taking appropriate steps to address this.

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

In recent years, a large proportion of pupils have not reached the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2. The action the school is taking in response is well considered. This is because it has unpicked why attainment is low to help determine what to do. However, important aspects of the resulting improvement work are relatively recent or not securely embedded. For example, a sharper focus on strengthening pupils' understanding and fluency in mathematics remains a work in progress.

Children enjoy a positive start to school in early years. For example, in Nursery, children are immersed into a world of books. Sparking their imaginations, adults promote and develop children's language, imaginative play and understanding of stories. A systematic approach to teaching early reading gathers traction from the start of Reception. The school has tightened its approach to checking and responding quickly to help pupils who fall behind to catch up. Older pupils speak enthusiastically about their class authors and enjoy a range of high-quality novels.

Since the previous inspection, the school has developed its curriculum effectively. Pupils develop the fundamental building blocks of writing from early years onwards. Across subjects, there is a strong focus on clearly identified knowledge and vocabulary. Teachers emphasise what pupils should remember, and pupils are proud to explain what they have learned.

While teachers generally follow the intended curriculum content reliably, there is more to do to hone classroom practice. Sometimes tasks do not lead readily to the intended learning, or they are not clearly demonstrated or adapted to meet the needs of all pupils. Teachers are not consistently adept at checking pupils' understanding. Consequently, some pupils lose valuable time because they are unsure what to do or have misunderstood. The school gives staff with subject responsibilities the time and support to help improve practice. The impact of this, and ongoing training for staff, is demonstrated in the developments already seen. However, there is more to do to embed these consistently.

The school deploys widespread support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The systematic approach to identifying and assessing their needs includes working with a range of professionals, parents and carers. Pupils access a range of special equipment and resources to aid their focus and attention and be successful in tasks.

Attendance rates have markedly improved since the time of the COVID-19 pandemic. The school has been tenacious in improving the attendance of pupils who are frequently absent. It is successful at working closely and creatively with families to make sure pupils are in school as much as possible.

Promoting pupils' wider development is central to the school's ethos. The school fosters an understanding and awareness of others that encourages pupils to be kind and empathetic citizens. Pupils gain a secure understanding of healthy and safe living. Extensive pastoral support is sensitively tailored to pupils' needs.

The trust and school work closely and constructively together. There is a programmed approach to this work and a strong sense of unity. Those responsible for governance are committed to the school and their work to oversee it. However, they have not made sufficient use of available comparisons about how the school is doing academically compared to other schools nationally to hold the school to account.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In 2024, outcomes of national tests at the end of key stage 2 were significantly below average in reading, writing and mathematics. This has meant that too many pupils have not been prepared as well as they should for their secondary education. The school should ensure that its strategies to raise attainment are implemented rigorously and reliably, and check that they are making the difference intended.
- The quality with which some of the school's teaching strategies are adopted is too variable. This variability is sometimes about how well tasks are designed, demonstrated and/or adapted for the intended purpose. At other times, teachers do not check pupils' understanding carefully and adjust their teaching accordingly. These inconsistencies mean that pupils do not learn as well as they should. The school should ensure that classroom practice is consistently of sufficient quality to promote effective learning for all pupils.
- Those responsible for governance rely too heavily on the local context to interpret the school's performance. They do not use available information that statistically compares the school's context and performance with other schools nationally. This means they are less well equipped than they should be to challenge the school and hold it to account. Trustees and the local governing body should ensure that they are familiar with available information about how the school compares with other schools nationally and use this in their work to hold the school to account constructively.

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 June 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	137211
Local authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	10341685
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	462
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Jonathan Ash-Edwards
CEO of the trust	Jonathan Morris
Headteacher	Elizabeth Brodie
Website	www.wardenparkprimary.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	24 June 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Warden Park Primary Academy is part of the Sussex Learning Trust.
- The headteacher has been appointed since the previous inspection.
- The school provides wraparound childcare through a before- and after-school club.
- The school's nursery admits children from the age of two.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.
- The trust has plans in place to work towards meeting the government's non-statutory minimum expectation for the length of the school week.

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 discussions with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the CEO and the deputy CEO of the trust. He also spoke with other leaders and staff.
- The inspector met with the chair of trustees, the chair of the local governing body, and other trustees and governors.
- The inspector visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. He also visited the wraparound provision.
- 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 considered the views expressed in the online inspection surveys returned by staff. He also took account of the responses submitted by parents and carers to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, as well as an email sent by a parent.

Inspection team

Clive Dunn, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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