

Inspection of a good school: Windermere Primary School

Windermere Avenue, St. Albans, Hertfordshire AL1 5QP

Inspection dates:

22 and 23 November 2023

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 enjoy their time at Windermere Primary School. Adults greet them each morning checking that they are ready to learn. Pupils welcome this. It makes them feel safe. Pupils attend school regularly. They use words such as 'friendly' and 'happy' to describe their school.

Pupils are keen to learn. They understand what adults expect of them. Generally, pupils behave well. At times a few pupils do become over excitable. They need extra reminders to ensure that they listen to their teachers. This helps them to do achieve their best in lessons.

The school provides a good range of opportunities to develop pupils' interests. Pupils enjoy participating in sporting activities and going on school trips. Class cake sales raise funds so pupils can select their own choice of activity.

The school is ambitious for how well pupils achieve. However, many pupils have gaps in their knowledge. This is because pupils did not benefit from a well-constructed curriculum in the past. New staff have now ensured that all subjects are effectively planned. This is starting to help pupils become more successful in their learning.

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

The school has undergone a period of staff turnover. New staff have quickly recognised weaknesses in the curriculum and made changes. These changes are in their early stages of implementation. This means that the ambitions of the curriculum are not yet fully realised. The school has not had enough time to check how well their new curriculum programmes are working.

The new subject plans identify the key knowledge pupils need to know and remember. Learning begins strongly in the early years. Adults support children well in developing their language. Well planned activities promote children's speaking and listening. Pupils continue to engage in their learning through their study of different topics. For example, in history, pupils were able to recall what life was like in the stone age and how people lived. Teachers have not had time and training to develop the expertise they need to deliver all subjects well. In some subjects, teachers do not readily identify the gaps in pupils' knowledge. This means pupils are not successfully building on what they have previously learned. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Plans are not well adapted to meet the needs of pupils with SEND in all areas of the curriculum. Pupils with SEND do not achieve as well as they could in these subjects.

The school's assessment strategies are more effective in mathematics and reading. In these subjects, assessment is more precise. Information helps teachers to identify gaps and provide the support pupils need. In other areas of the curriculum, this is not as well developed. Leaders do not have sufficient information about how well pupils achieve across the foundation subjects.

The school has introduced a new phonics programme. The approaches are starting to address weaknesses in pupils' phonic knowledge. Adults carefully check what pupils remember. They provide extra help for those who need support with their reading. However, the implementation of the new strategies is not consistent. This means pupils who struggle with reading are not catching up quickly enough. The love of reading is well promoted in school. Pupils aim to achieve twenty-five reads of their reading books. It means they can choose a new book to keep for themselves.

Pupils follow the school routines well. They are caring of one another and will happily 'buddy up' to help a peer with their play. Pupils are polite and courteous. They willingly share games during break and lunch times.

The school provides effective support for pupils' wider development. Pupils learn to understand about diversity in their school and local communities. Pupils develop ideas of democracy through votes for house captains or working on the pupil council. They willingly share ideas and respect the views of others.

In a short time, new staff have built a collaborative approach to help improve the school. Staff appreciate how leaders manage their workload through this period of change.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The legacy of weaker teaching in phonics has led to gaps in pupils' phonic knowledge. Those pupils who find it difficult to read are not catching up quickly enough. This is because they are not confident in using their phonics to read accurately. Leaders should ensure that the additional help provided for these pupils is working effectively so that more pupils are reading confidently by the end of key stage 1.
- Leaders have only recently revised their curriculum programmes for some foundation subjects. Teachers do not yet have secure subject knowledge needed to teach the intended curriculum effectively. This means that pupils do not consistently build their learning to what they already know, including those pupils with SEND. Leaders should ensure that all staff receive the professional development to build their subject knowledge and to address gaps in pupils' knowledge.
- The school does not have clear assessment. This means teachers do not have a clear picture of what pupils have previously learned. Leaders should ensure that assessment is used more effectively in foundation subjects to check that pupils are learning the intended curriculum.
- The turbulence in staffing has led to recent changes in subject leadership. There has not been adequate opportunity for new leaders to check how well their curriculum plans are working. Leaders should ensure time is provided to monitor the effectiveness of their plans so that pupils make the best possible progress across all areas of the curriculum.

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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in 15–16 March 2018.

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	117217
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10294967
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	173
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Joanne Perry
Headteacher	Sarah Gilliver
Website	http://www.windermere.herts.sch.uk
Date(s) of previous inspection	15 – 16 March 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher was appointed to her post in September 2022. The deputy headteacher joined the school in September 2023.
- The school manages a breakfast club before school. An external organisation runs an after-school care club.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

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. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken this into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, senior leaders, teachers, and governors, including the chair of governors. The lead inspector also met with parents informally as they collected their child at the end of the day.

- The inspector met with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at a range of children's work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: reviewed the single central record, took account of the views of leaders and staff; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors took account of the views of parents through their responses to the online survey, Parent View and parents' free-text comments. Inspectors also considered responses to the Ofsted staff survey.

Inspection team

Steve Mellors, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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