

Inspection of a good school: Parsons Down Infant School

Herons Way, Thatcham, Berkshire RG19 3SR

Inspection date: 21 May 2024

Outcome

Parsons Down Infant School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and secure. They enjoy learning because pupils are at the centre of all that the school does. There are high levels of care for all pupils. Pupils feel safe because they trust the adults who look after them. Relationships are strong at all levels, reflecting the school's well-understood and deep-rooted mantra: 'be safe, be kind, be respectful'.

Young children make an excellent start to school. They are very well supported to settle quickly and make friends. Staff are sensitive to children's individual needs so that their first experience of school is positive. Parents' comments, such as, 'My son loves coming to school,' show how much they appreciate this level of care.

Pupils work hard in lessons to reach the high expectations set by their teachers in learning and behaviour. The achievement of all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), is improving across all areas of learning. Pupils enjoy the challenges set by their teachers. As a result, low-level disruption is infrequent. Pupils are tolerant and accepting of one another. Bullying is rare. If it does happen, the school deals with incidents swiftly and effectively.

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

The school is developing an ambitious curriculum, placing pupils at its centre. In early years, the foundation curriculum is very well sequenced. It focuses on learning through play, encouraging all aspects of physical development. This is supported effectively by a well-resourced and purposeful outside area. As a result, the youngest pupils develop good attitudes to learning straight away.

Teachers plan lessons that ensure high levels of pupils' engagement and involvement. Pupils really enjoy learning and find it exciting and purposeful. For example, in design and technology in Year 1, they learn how to sew. In Year 2, pupils learn the safe way to cut different types of vegetables. In lessons, teachers regularly check on pupils' understanding. They provide swift support for any pupils who are falling behind. In most

subjects, planning is sequenced appropriately, allowing pupils to build on what they already know and understand. In some subjects other than English, mathematics and science, this is not as precise as the school would like it to be. As a result, pupils' knowledge is not built on as effectively as it could be and they do not achieve as well as they could.

The school makes reading a priority, as a key basic skill to all learning. Phonics across the school is taught effectively. Well-trained teachers and support staff have good subject knowledge. As a result, the initial sounds that are learned at the start in Reception class are effectively built on. This structured approach makes sure that pupils are ready for the challenges of Years 1 and 2. Pupils develop a love of reading by listening to class stories that they help to choose. Reading is further promoted by events such as World Book Day and the opening of a brand new library.

The mathematics curriculum has been developed and now focuses on the right things. The school has taken the right action to address a drop in pupils' outcomes over time. This is proving effective, and pupils' achievement is improving. Pupils remember more by undertaking activities such as reviewing previous learning regularly. There are some opportunities for pupils to apply their knowledge to solving problems. However, this is currently underdeveloped. As a result, some pupils are unable to deepen their understanding and therefore make as much progress as they could.

The school has well-defined procedures for identifying pupils with SEND. This makes sure that these pupils get the help that they need. There are many programmes that run in the school to help with pupils' emotional development and learning. The 'SEAL' programme runs during lunchtime for pupils who feel anxious or vulnerable.

Pupils speak with enthusiasm about their teachers and about their learning. They always try to behave well, and enjoy school. This is reflected in increasing levels of attendance. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves and others safe, for example by learning how to cross the road, how to stay safe on the internet and about different aspects of water safety. They are proud of their school. The absolute pinnacle of responsibility is to be part of the school or the 'eco' committees. Here, they can contribute their ideas for improving the school. Pupils are taught to be empathetic. To illustrate this, one pupil commented, 'Everyone in this school is important.' Memorable experiences, such as the visit to Rushall Farm, bring the whole school together as a community.

Staff trust school leaders. They appreciate the support they receive and opportunities to develop professionally. They are regularly consulted on changes that might affect their workload. Teachers are given time to complete tasks, which contributes significantly to their overall well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There are not enough opportunities for pupils to use their learning in mathematics and apply this to other contexts. Some pupils are unable to deepen their knowledge so that they can achieve more. The school should ensure that these opportunities are identified so that pupils can use their knowledge of mathematics in more problem-solving and reasoning tasks.
- The knowledge and vocabulary the school want pupils to learn are not precisely identified in some foundation subjects as well as they could be. This is leading to some pupils having gaps in their knowledge, or not being able to build on what they already know really effectively. The school should make sure that the necessary knowledge it wants pupils to learn is accurately identified and clearly sequenced.

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 January 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 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	109875
Local authority	West Berkshire
Inspection number	10321766
Type of school	Infant
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	90
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Marilyn Cornwell
Headteacher	Catherine Bull
Website	www.pdp.w-berks.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	15 and 16 January 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher was appointed in January 2019.
- No pupils are currently attending any alternative provision.
- The Infant School moved into the same building as the Junior School in September 2022.
- The school is part of the Parsons Down Partnership of Schools, a hard federation with a shared governing body.
- The school manages its own before-school and after-school care 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. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- The inspectors met with senior leaders, staff, pupils and representatives of the local governing body, including the chair of governors. In addition, they spoke to a representative of the local authority by telephone.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and design and technology. They discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, teachers and pupils, visited lessons and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspectors considered responses to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire. They also took account of the responses to the confidential staff questionnaire, as well as the views of pupils gathered throughout the inspection.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: 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.

Inspection team

Bill James, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Lynn Powell

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