

Inspection of a good school: South Hill Primary School

Heath Lane, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire HP1 1TT

Inspection dates:

2 and 3 July 2024

Outcome

South Hill Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

South Hill Primary School is a nurturing environment in which well-being forms the heart of the school's culture. As a result, pupils are happy, safe and ready to learn. They develop strong relationships with each other and with adults in the school. These caring, positive relationships help ensure that pupils meet the school's high expectations of behaviour.

Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes in lessons and want to do well. They help each other in their learning and develop resilience. For example, in mathematics, when pupils are stuck, they use the classroom resources and ask other pupils to try and find out the answers. Pupils find lessons fun and interesting.

Pupils are proud of the inclusive nature of the school. They talk about pupils who attend the school from different backgrounds and cultures. They celebrate these differences at events such as the school's international day. The annual art exhibition gives all pupils the chance to showcase their work to parents. It is an opportunity for them to do so regardless of their ability. Many parents appreciate the insights given into their children's education through these events and how they show the fantastic relationships that staff and pupils have.

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

The school has developed a broad and ambitious curriculum, including for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school's curriculum clearly sets out what pupils need to know from early years to Year 6. This key knowledge, which includes subject-specific vocabulary, is set out and taught in a well-sequenced way. The school identifies areas where the curriculum is not working well and puts well-considered changes in place to improve pupils' outcomes.

Teachers have secure subject knowledge because of the training they receive. They present new information clearly. Staff regularly check what pupils know and use this information to adapt lessons. However, on occasions, teachers' checks on pupils' understanding are not always accurate. They do not identify precisely gaps in what pupils know and understand. When this happens, pupils do not achieve as well as they could. They struggle to recall and use the knowledge they need to understand more complex concepts.

Pupils love reading. Phonics teaching begins as soon as children start Reception. Staff teach early reading consistently. Pupils develop the skills that they need to read and spell words accurately. They read books that are well matched to the sounds that they have learned. Pupils who struggle to keep up receive the support that they need to catch up quickly. Each morning in Reception, many parents stay to read with their child and other children. There is a buzz of reading in the classrooms and outdoor spaces as the parents and children enjoy reading together. Older pupils read daily and talk enthusiastically about their favourite books.

The school has robust systems in place to quickly identify and support pupils with SEND. Tailored plans clearly identify what will help them to achieve well. This means that, with the support they receive, pupils with SEND progress well.

Children in Reception follow well-established routines. These help children to develop their confidence and important social skills, such as sharing. Through a mix of formal teaching and carefully chosen activities, children gain the knowledge and skills that they need to be ready for learning in Year 1.

Pupils understand the school's '4R' values: reflect, responsibility, resilience and respect. They strive to meet them both in lessons and during social times. They behave well. The school takes effective action when pupils' attendance begins to cause concern.

Pupils' personal development is well considered. They learn about other cultures and the importance of healthy relationships. Opportunities for educational visits and visiting speakers, such as authors, all help to broaden pupils' learning experiences. Pupils develop responsibility as members of the school council or as sports ambassadors. They have a voice in how the school runs. Pupils are proud to represent the school in the local community. They support a local food bank charity and visit residents in a local care home.

Governors make regular visits to the school, which provides them with information to challenge and support leaders effectively. Staff are very proud to work at the school. They appreciate the efforts that leaders make to ensure that their workload is manageable. They know that their well-being is a priority for leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers do not always check accurately what pupils know and understand. As a result, some pupils do not always have a secure understanding of the knowledge that they need to confidently make the next steps in their learning. The school needs to ensure that all staff use assessment effectively in order to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and then use this information to carefully adapt their teaching and inform their planning to help pupils know and remember more.

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 September 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 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	117110
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10323636
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	413
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Hans Peters
Headteacher	Jo Wellbelove
Website	www.southhill.herts.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	18 and 19 September 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the last inspection, the school now has two classes in every year group. The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The current headteacher has been in post since January 2020.
- The school does not currently use any alternative providers.

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 inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in this evaluation of the school.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and art. For each deep dive, the inspector held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- 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 discussed with the school its provision for early years, pupils' personal development, behaviour and SEND.
- The inspector met with representatives of the governing body, including the chair of governors and met with the school's improvement partner.
- The inspector looked at a range of documents, including leaders' priorities for improvement.
- The lead inspector considered the 97 responses and 56 free-text responses received during the inspection to Ofsted's online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View. He also considered the 42 responses to Ofsted's staff survey. There were no responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Wayne Jarvis, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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