Inspection of a good school: Hobletts Manor Infants' School

Adeyfield Road, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire HP2 5JS

Inspection dates: 20 and 21 June 2023

Outcome

Hobletts Manor Infants' School continues to be a good school. There is enough evidence of improved performance to suggest that the school could be judged outstanding if we were to carry out a graded (section 5) inspection now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils make a strong start to their education at Hobletts Manor Infant School. It is a calm and purposeful place to learn. Pupils are happy here. They are friendly and confident talking to adults.

Pupils learn an interesting curriculum which encourages them to think of themselves creatively and scientifically. They enjoy their lessons. Teachers give pupils lots of help and encouragement. Pupils learn to read fluently and confidently. They enjoy taking home their 'learn to read' and 'love to read' books. They work hard and take great pride in their learning. Those who need it get additional support to help them learn successfully.

Pupils know that 'kind thoughts, kind words, kind actions' are important. They show this through excellent behaviour. Pupils, parents and carers agree that bullying rarely happens and are confident that staff deal with it effectively. Pupils feel safe in school.

There are lots of clubs and other activities for pupils to take part in. They enjoy using the school's grounds for exciting activities.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about how the school supports their children. One parent, typical of many, commented that the school has 'a wonderfully supportive and nurturing environment under which my children have flourished'.

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

Leaders understand the needs of their pupils very well and have focused improvements on securing the best outcomes for them. They have designed a curriculum which is broad, balanced and ambitious. Leaders have set out the important knowledge they want pupils to learn from early years to Year 2. Leaders have high expectations of what pupils should

know and understand. Pupils learn the subject content of foundation subjects in depth. They systematically develop their skills. For example, pupils develop drawing and painting skills in art. They then express themselves creatively in their finished pieces. Leaders know that improvements in a few curriculum areas have not yet worked through the whole school.

Teachers deliver the planned curriculum well. They use their subject expertise to explain new ideas clearly. They encourage discussion and help pupils to talk about their thinking. Teachers work together to design interesting lessons that help pupils to learn effectively. Teachers have a very good knowledge of what pupils can do. They use observations and checks on learning to carefully adjust their teaching. Leaders break down the curriculum into small steps. For instance, this particularly helps in mathematics, where teachers quickly spot and correct pupils' misconceptions.

Leaders have established a strong culture of reading across the school. The teaching of phonics is effective in supporting pupils to learn to read fluently. Children in early years rapidly learn to blend sounds into words independently. They know how to use techniques such as 'robot arms' to help them. Teachers quickly identify pupils who fall behind. They ensure that they get the help they need to catch up and become confident readers. Pupils read books matched to their reading ability. From early years, carefully planned reading and writing activities help pupils build secure, subject-specific vocabulary.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is a strength. Teachers skilfully adapt their teaching to meet pupils' needs. Pupils with SEND are fully integrated into their classes. They access the same curriculum as their peers. Some pupils have bespoke support. This helps remove barriers to learning. Skilled adults provide effective additional support. Pupils with SEND are successful in their learning and achieve well.

Children in early years quickly adapt to routines and expectations of how to behave. Staff consistently reinforce a culture of positive behaviour around the school. Pupils behave extremely well in lessons and around the school. They are kind and understanding when other pupils occasionally find it difficult to control their emotions.

Leaders have put in place a carefully considered programme of personal development. Pupils learn about relationships, different cultures and religions. They are well supported to try new things and to communicate well with others. Additional activities strengthen pupils' understanding of the curriculum. These include visitors to the school or visits to local places of interest.

Leaders combine their strong drive for continual improvement with care and compassion for staff and pupils. Staff speak very highly of the support they get for their development and their welfare.

Governors take their responsibilities very seriously. They understand the school's strengths and priorities. They use this information to provide effective challenge and support to leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that pupils' safety and welfare are a priority for everyone. They have established a strong and shared culture of vigilance and care for pupils. Staff are well trained to spot and record any safeguarding concerns. Detailed records show that leaders take timely and effective action to address concerns. They provide appropriate support in school.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe and know they can talk to adults if they have any worries.

Appropriate checks are in place to ensure that adults are suitable to work in the school. Records of these checks are accurate and regularly monitored. Governors carry out their statutory safeguarding duties diligently.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders' carefully considered improvements in a few curriculum areas have not worked through the whole school. This means that older pupils have not routinely benefited from the same consistent and rich experience that younger pupils are now receiving. Leaders should continue their work refining the way in which the curriculum is delivered, ensuring that pupils build secure subject-specific knowledge in all areas.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in April 2014.

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' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	117197
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10288453
Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	216
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Martin Botha
Headteacher	Susan Dyer
Website	www.hoblettsinfants.com
Date of previous inspection	23 January 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school provides a breakfast club and an after-school club.
- Leaders do not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in his evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and other leaders, the chair and members of the governing body and the school improvement adviser from the local authority.
- The lead inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and art. For each deep dive, the lead inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and pupils and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector listened to some pupils read to a familiar adult.

- To inspect safeguarding, the lead inspector scrutinised the school's safeguarding policy, the single central record of background checks on adults at the school and discussed a sample of child protection records with leaders. The lead inspector also spoke with governors, leaders, staff and pupils about safeguarding practices at the school.
- The lead inspector reviewed a range of other documentation, including school policies, leaders' evaluations and development plans and records concerning pupils with SEND.
- The lead inspector observed pupils' behaviour around the school and in lessons and spoke with groups of pupils to understand what it is like to be a pupil in this school.
- The lead inspector met with members of staff to discuss the school's work and considered responses to the confidential Ofsted staff survey.
- The lead inspector considered the views of parents, including 76 responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and 40 free-text comments submitted during the inspection.

Inspection team

John Constable, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector

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