

Inspection of a good school: Colney Heath Junior Mixed Infant and Nursery School

High Street, Colney Heath, St Albans, Hertfordshire AL4 0NP

Inspection dates:

6–7 November 2019

Outcome

Colney Heath Junior Mixed Infant and Nursery School continues to be a good school. However, inspectors have some concerns that standards may be declining, as set out below.

What is it like to attend this school?

Colney Heath Junior Mixed Infant and Nursery School has a strong sense of community. One pupil told me, 'It feels like your family.' Pupils understand and demonstrate the school's values: care, work, respect and listen. Pupils behave well in the classroom and on the playground.

Staff encourage the pupils to work hard. Pupils make use of different approaches in their learning, for example 'stickability' when tasks are challenging. I saw pupils willingly answer questions and think hard about what they were learning. However, pupils do not read as well as they should. Teachers are not consistently effective when they teach reading. Too many pupils do not achieve the national expectations by the end of key stage 1.

Pupils take on different leadership roles with enthusiasm. School councillors are proud of their contributions to school life. Pupils work well together and support one another. Older pupils act as buddies to help younger pupils settle when they start school.

Pupils told me that they feel safe in school. They said they like their teachers because they would help them if they had concerns. Pupils understand the different forms bullying can take. However, they say that it is rare in their school.

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

Leaders are clear about what they want the curriculum to achieve. The 'Colney Heath Child' is at the heart of the school's curriculum aims. However, leaders' plans for many subjects are at an early stage. Where these are in place, such as in history, there is a

clear sequence of what pupils need to know. The use of the local area is central to each topic, ensuring that pupils develop their knowledge of where they live.

Children make a good start to learning phonics in early years. Many children are confident in using their knowledge to tackle unfamiliar words. Teachers do not build on this in key stage 1. Some pupils do not make enough progress in phonics. The words in pupils' reading books do not match the sounds they know. Leaders have not checked teaching to ensure that it is of a consistently high quality.

Pupils read widely. They told me that you could become a 'star reader' if you read frequently. However, the approach to teaching reading is not consistent. Some teachers do not know how to plan activities that build pupils' understanding of reading. This means that pupils, especially those that struggle, are not achieving as well as they should with their reading.

In mathematics, leaders have mapped out pupils' learning. Teachers teach concepts in sequence to build pupils' understanding. Teachers ensure that pupils remember by checking what they know. For example, in one class, pupils explained familiar mathematical terms and applied them to a choice of different numbers.

Many staff are new to their leadership roles. They are receiving support to develop their knowledge and skills. They do not know how well improvement plans are working across the school. Some plans are new. There has not been enough time to check whether they are being used successfully.

The new leader for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) has made a good start. She uses expertise from outside the school to create clear plans for pupils with SEND. Specific interventions are well planned and checked to ensure that they are working. This means more pupils are achieving their personal targets.

Pupils enjoy school. They speak enthusiastically about the range of clubs on offer. Leaders ensure that disadvantaged pupils participate in clubs. The musical talents of pupils are well developed, for example through school performances and opportunities for all Year 3 pupils to learn to play the violin.

There is a well-planned environment for children in early years. Adults make effective use of children's experiences to build on what they know. There are opportunities to explore and be curious about the world around them. Adults sensitively question children. They check children's understanding of numbers and counting skills. For example, while making cakes for a party, children were constantly asked about the number of cakes they were making for the occasion.

Routines are clear and help children with their confidence and independence. Children are happy in their relationships with one another and with their teachers.

New governors are providing stronger accountability for leaders. Governors understand their roles well and check how well the school is performing. Staff appreciate the team ethic encouraged by leaders, and are proud to work at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders understand the importance of keeping pupils safe. There is a high priority placed on staff training. Regular briefings and questions help to maintain adults' understanding of safeguarding matters. As a result, staff know how to spot signs that may worry them about a pupil's welfare. Leaders deal with concerns appropriately. They ensure that vulnerable pupils receive the support they need.

The checks made on new staff and those that visit the school are rigorous. Governors ensure that the records of these checks are up to date and well maintained.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The plans for the foundation subjects are not well developed. Leaders have not identified the most important content for every subject that pupils need to know. Leaders should ensure that plans for all subjects include the specific knowledge they want pupils to know and remember. Teachers have not attended training in the foundation subjects recently. Leaders should make sure that teachers have the knowledge and skills to teach the foundation subjects well.
- Too many pupils are not confident in their reading by the end of key stage 1. Teachers do not address gaps quickly enough for those pupils who fall behind. The books that pupils read do not match the sounds they have been taught. Not all adults who teach reading have a clear enough understanding of how to teach phonics well. Leaders must ensure that teachers have a consistent understanding of how to teach phonics effectively. Leaders must check that teaching is of a high quality so that pupils who have fallen behind catch up quickly.
- There is an inconsistent approach to teaching reading across key stage 2. This means that pupils are not achieving equally well across different year groups. Leaders must provide guidance so that teachers understand how to teach reading effectively. Leaders must check that the reading curriculum is delivered consistently well so that pupils' rate of progress is good across all year groups.
- Some leaders have new areas of responsibility. They do not understand how to evaluate the impact of their plans. They do not know how well pupils are building their knowledge through the achievement of curricular goals. Leaders need to ensure that new leaders develop the skills and knowledge to fulfil their roles effectively.

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 a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in February 2016.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

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	117145
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10110267
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	206
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Bruce Wilson
Headteacher	Pete Rose
Website	www.colneyheath.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	4–5 February 2016

Information about this school

- The school is an averaged-sized primary school.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The school manages and runs a breakfast club.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, subject leaders (including the special educational needs coordinator), and other members of staff. The inspector also spoke with a group of school governors, including the chair of the governing body. A meeting was also held with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school, including at lunchtimes. Discussions were held with different groups of pupils. The inspector also took account of 37 responses from the Ofsted questionnaire for pupils.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, improvement plans and safeguarding documents. I also evaluated information relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance.

- The inspector had informal discussions with parents and carers as they brought their children to school in the morning. The inspector took account of 96 responses on Parent View, Ofsted online questionnaire, as well as 94 free-text responses.
- The inspector looked in depth at early reading, mathematics and science. In each subject, inspection activities included discussions with the curriculum leader, visits to lessons, discussions with teachers, scrutiny of pupils' work and discussions with pupils.

Inspection team

Steve Mellors, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
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