

Inspection of a good school: Birch Hill Primary School

Leppington, Bracknell, Berkshire RG12 7WW

Inspection dates:

1–2 October 2019

Outcome

Birch Hill Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Teachers make lessons interesting. Pupils enjoy learning about other cultures, for example when handling Sikh artefacts. They debate arguments, for example 'for and against' having rules, with enthusiasm. Pupils learn reading, writing and mathematics successfully.

Pupils say they have lots of friends. They feel safe. At lunchtimes, pupils enjoy scrambling over tyres and practising their football skills. Playground buddies help other pupils to join in games and ensure no one gets left out. Pupils fall out occasionally but there is always an adult to help. Bullying is rare.

Most pupils behave well. Staff expect pupils to follow the 'golden' rules to 'be safe, respectful, honest, and ready to learn', both in and out of school. Pupils move around the school sensibly. They are attentive in lessons. Pupils listen carefully and follow instructions. Adults sort out any poor behaviour promptly.

The school is at the centre of the community. Pupils borrow books from the library next door and exhibit work in the local arts centre. Pupils build confidence when performing Shakespeare in a nearby theatre and learn science at the local park. They take part in regular sports events with local schools.

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

Leaders and governors are ambitious for pupils to succeed. The school has just been through a lengthy staffing restructure. Staff are now available to support pupils in lessons more frequently, and to supervise a wider range of activities at lunchtimes. Most staff are positive about these changes and feel well supported by leaders. Staff are protected successfully from excessive workload.

Reading is a high priority for the school. Pupils learn phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) in a logical order, beginning in the Nursery. Any pupils who fall behind get help to catch up quickly. There is a school-wide focus on comprehension skills, such as being

able to retrieve, interpret and predict. Pupils develop these skills progressively. They enjoy reading and listen regularly to a variety of texts read aloud.

Leaders know the school well and have plans to make it even better. They are keen to work closely with parents and carers. They send messages electronically and have regular 'meet the teacher' events. Parents appreciate the learning activities that they can take part in with pupils. Some parents, however, are unhappy with the quality of communication from leaders, and want to know more about how well their children are doing.

Pupils learn quickly. Their learning builds successfully on previous lessons when teaching follows a logical sequence. Staff ask pupils questions to help them recap and to make links in their understanding. Staff give pupils support if work is too hard and make it more difficult when work is too easy. As a result, the level of challenge is just right and disruption to learning is uncommon.

Leaders have planned new topics to link science, geography, history, art, and design technology (DT) together. They have begun to put these new plans in place. The plans ensure that content, skills and vocabulary are taught progressively in these subjects across the school. Leaders are aware that staff will need more support and training to ensure the plans are fully in place by the end of the school year.

Staff understand pupils' additional needs, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff help these pupils take part in lessons successfully. They are given extra support and resources so that they can learn alongside their classmates. Leaders do need, however, to do more to ensure that disadvantaged pupils, and those with SEND, benefit fully from the wider opportunities organised by the school, especially out-of-school activities.

Children in early years settle in quickly when they first start. They enjoy taking part in a variety of activities, for example Nursery children enjoy sharing books in the cosy book nook and Reception children learn to count to 20 in the outdoor playground. Children are taught to be independent and to follow a simplified version of the school's behaviour code. They are well prepared for key stage 1.

Pupils have a wide range of opportunities. They learn how to care for others, for example when sending books to a school in Sierra Leone. Pupils find out about different cultures when listening to visiting speakers such as a rabbi. They experience wonder when watching chicks hatch in school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils are safe at this school. Staff have regular training. They understand what to do if there are concerns about a pupil's well-being. Staff keep safety records up to date and deal with any worries quickly. Leaders make routine checks on new staff and any volunteers who want to help in school.

Leaders have thought about particular risks in the local area. Pupils learn how to stay safe, including when playing outdoors after school and when online. Staff work together successfully with families and local agencies to make sure that pupils get help when it is needed.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have used the national curriculum to create new plans for teaching science, geography, history, art and DT. These subjects are being linked together by topics and a sequence of knowledge, skills and vocabulary. The plans are not yet fully in place. Leaders need to make sure that staff are given the support and training necessary to complete the planning and implementation of these new topics.
- Leaders and governors are determined that all pupils fulfil their potential. However, they need to increase the participation of disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND in curriculum enrichment opportunities, especially those activities that take place out of school time.
- Leaders need to ensure that parents and carers are kept even more up to date about their children's achievement and well-being. This will ensure that all parents can support their children's learning fully.

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 Birch Hill Primary School to be good on 2–3 March 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're 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	109893
Local authority	Bracknell Forest
Inspection number	10111319
Type of school	Primary with a nursery
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	410
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Mrs Pauline Cole
Headteacher	Mr Michael Dillon
Website	www.birchhillprimaryschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	2–3 March 2016

Information about this school

- The nursery admits 3- and 4-year olds.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector looked in detail at reading, mathematics and religious education (RE). This involved talking to subject leaders, visiting lessons, looking at pupils' work, hearing pupils read, and talking to pupils and teachers.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, both deputy headteachers, the special educational needs coordinator, the early years coordinator and the subject leader for RE.
- The inspector met with the chair of the governing body and two other governors.
- The inspector scrutinised the single central record and other documents related to safeguarding, and talked to parents, staff and pupils. The responses to the online questionnaires were also considered.
- The inspector visited most classrooms, including those in early years. They observed pupils during the school day, in the playground and in the dining room and while moving around the school.

- A wide range of documentation was scrutinised, including the school's own evaluation and improvement plan, the headteacher's reports and external reports.

Inspection team

Rosemary Addison, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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