

Inspection of Pixies Hill Primary School

Hazeldell Road, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire HP1 2BY

Inspection dates: 25 and 26 April 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a happy and welcoming school. Pupils benefit from a broad and rich curriculum that extends their experience and stimulates their interests. Pupils are keen to share their learning. They achieve well. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Pupils of all ages readily explain the importance of values such as friendship, kindness, teamwork and respect. They talk about how their learning equips them to make positive choices and take responsibility for their actions. They describe empathy as 'putting themselves in other people's shoes'. They understand how important it is that everyone feels valued and included in school.

Pupils are courteous and kind. They behave well in lessons and at breaktimes. Relationships between pupils and adults are warm and respectful. Pupils feel safe in school. They are confident that adults listen to them and help them resolve any worries they may have. Bullying is very rare. When it happens, it is dealt with quickly.

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school. They value staff's dedication to their children's learning and well-being. They appreciate the work of leaders and staff to create an ethos and environment in which their children flourish.

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

Leaders have thoughtfully constructed the school's curriculum across the full range of subjects. In each subject, leaders have carefully considered the important knowledge that pupils should learn from the early years to Year 6. Some aspects of the curriculum are new. Subject leaders provide helpful guidance and support to staff to enable them to teach these subjects well.

Teachers plan lessons that build on what pupils have learned before. In lessons, staff check that pupils have secured their knowledge before they move on to new learning. They make sure that pupils have opportunities to practise and apply their learning so that they deepen their knowledge and understanding. This helps all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, to achieve well across the range of subjects that they study. A small number of pupils have not developed their accuracy in handwriting, spelling and punctuation as well as they should. This is impacting on their writing fluency, which means that their written work sometimes does not reflect what they know and understand.

Reading is promoted well across the school. Leaders have put in place a systematic approach to teaching phonics and early reading. They make sure that staff have the training and guidance they need to teach reading well. Children learn phonics from the start of the Reception Year. Daily phonics practice helps all pupils who are at the early stages of learning to read to secure their phonics knowledge. They read books that are closely matched to the phonics they know. This helps them to practise and

apply their phonics knowledge to read texts. Pupils quickly become confident readers. Pupils who are at risk of falling behind in their reading are given the help they need to catch up quickly. This includes older pupils who are not yet confident and fluent readers.

Pupils talk enthusiastically about the books they read. Well-chosen texts broaden pupils' reading knowledge and experience of different authors. Pupils consider the choices authors make when they are depicting a particular character or mood. This deepens their understanding of the books they read. Older pupils particularly enjoy comparing the books they are reading now with books they have read in the past.

The provision for pupils' personal development is exceptional. Leaders' 'values curriculum' is purposefully threaded through all aspects of the school's work. Concepts such as diversity, equality and democracy are given a high profile. Pupils deepen their understanding of their role as responsible citizens. They contribute positively to the life of the school through the work of the school council and well-being committee. Leaders actively promote opportunities for all pupils to participate in a wide range of extra-curricular activities that develop pupils' interests and aspirations.

Staff are positive about leaders' consideration for their workload and well-being. Governors bring relevant knowledge and experience to their role. Their strategic focus is formed through first-hand experience of the school and its community. They hold leaders effectively to account for the quality of education pupils receive.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding is at the forefront of everybody's mind. Staff are knowledgeable and vigilant. They receive regular safeguarding training. They know how important it is to alert leaders to any concerns that a pupil may be at risk of harm. Leaders act promptly and work closely with other agencies to ensure that pupils and families access the support they need. Pupils learn to keep themselves and others safe, including online.

Governors regularly check on the school's safeguarding arrangements to assure themselves that systems are robust and that all staff contribute positively to the school's safeguarding culture.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- A small number of pupils do not write fluently and with accuracy. This is limiting the quality of their writing in English and in other subjects. Leaders should ensure

that there is a consistent approach to supporting pupils to become confident and fluent writers.

- Some aspects of the curriculum are new. Staff are developing their confidence in teaching the curriculum in these subjects. Leaders should ensure that staff receive the guidance and support they need to deepen their subject knowledge and develop their teaching approaches so that all pupils achieve exceptionally well across the full range of subjects that they study.

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	117256
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10287096
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	210
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Kaye Cartwright
Headteacher	Martin Smith
Website	www.pixieshill.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	8 February 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The previous graded inspection of the school took place in June 2014, when the school was judged to be good. The ungraded inspection in February 2018 confirmed that the school continued to be a good school.
- The chair of governors was appointed to the role in September 2021.
- The school runs a breakfast club for pupils who are registered at the school.
- No pupils attend alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken this into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and senior leaders. The lead inspector met with the chair of governors, the vice-chair of governors and two members of the governing body.
- The lead inspector spoke on the telephone with a representative from the local authority and the school's improvement partner to discuss their work with the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, music and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors scrutinised the single central record and met with the designated leader to review the arrangements that are in place to safeguard pupils and staff. Inspectors scrutinised leaders' safeguarding records. Inspectors reviewed records of safeguarding training and spoke with staff about the safeguarding training and guidance they receive. Inspectors spoke with leaders, governors and staff about their work to keep pupils safe.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, at breaktimes and at lunch. Inspectors spoke with pupils who were attending the breakfast club. Inspectors met with pupils to gather their views and experiences of school.
- Inspectors reviewed school policies and documentation, including information that is published on the school's website.
- Inspectors reviewed the 69 responses submitted to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, together with the 48 free-text comments. Inspectors also considered the 18 responses to the staff survey and the 112 responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Katherine Douglas, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Wendy Varney	His Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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