Inspection of a good school: Derwent Primary School

Hitchin Road, Henlow, Bedfordshire SG16 6BA

Inspection dates: 11 and 12 July 2023

Outcome

Derwent Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils talk positively about life at school. They have adapted well as pupil numbers, and the building, grow. They are welcoming to joining pupils and like making friends. Those pupils in the new building are settling in well to their classrooms. Pupils are looking forward to having all the facilities and clubs back up and running now the building work is complete. However, they have still enjoyed residentials, taking part in sports tournaments, singing and joining in with football club.

Pupils at this school want to succeed. They achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics. Some of their favourite lessons are art, design and technology, and computing. Pupils like their teachers. They appreciate it when staff give them points for their work. They know what teachers expect from them. Some pupils would like some of the work they are given to be even harder.

Pupils know the school rules and values. Most pupils follow these well. Pupils, even the very youngest, focus on lessons and pay attention. There are a few pupils who need reminders of how to play sensibly. Pupils are confident that teachers will sort this out. They also know that teachers take any bullying worries seriously.

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

Leaders, including governors, have steered the school well through a period of expansion. New senior leaders have acted promptly to update curriculum subjects to ensure that expectations of what pupils need to know and remember are raised. Leaders have also revised the curriculum to make sure pupils acquire knowledge in the most logical order.

Leaders and teachers share an ambitious vision for the school. They are committed to putting these curriculum updates into action. Work on this has already started. Leaders are knowledgeable. They support staff with training on how best to teach these subjects. Teachers have responded positively to this, but they are still getting to grips with these

changes. This means that some pupils are not yet acquiring knowledge in the detail or depth that leaders intend in some recently reviewed subjects.

Pupils study all subjects and teachers ensure that they cover the agreed curriuclum. Teachers check pupils' understanding regularly and address any misconceptions. They are getting better at adapting activities to meet the needs of their specific class, including for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). However, this support is not always of a consistently high quality. Also, some pupils, including pupils with SEND, are sometimes set work that is not ambitious enough, or does not take enough into account what they know already. Therefore, pupils do not always achieve what they are capable of in these foundation subjects.

Reading is a key focus. A clearly defined reading programme is now in place. Reading books are matched to pupils' reading ability. Pupils learn to read as soon as they start Nursery. Children throughout the early years can read appropriately for their age. In Reception, learning is linked to a high-quality text each week. In the rest of the school, regular reading activities and interventions mean that most pupils become fluent readers quickly. Pupils who need extra help with reading are supported to catch up. However, some pupils do not read a wide enough range of texts. As a result, leaders have now identified which texts pupils will read in which year groups. This is to help develop pupils' vocabulary and to encourage more reading for pleasure.

Children in early years concentrate well and follow adults' instructions. They are co-operative and know how to take turns. Older pupils also pay attention in lessons. Leaders have recently introduced a new behaviour policy to ensure that staff are consistent in dealing with any unwanted behaviours. Pupils are getting used to this new approach. Adults follow this policy and deal with incidents fairly. Pupils still feel that some pupils are not always as kind as they would like at breaktimes. Leaders have started to address these concerns.

Leaders are currently reviewing the wider opportunities available to pupils. They have re-introduced a drama club. Some pupils have experienced sports festivals such as athletics, quick cricket and basketball. Pupils volunteer to litter pick. They understand about healthy living. They are taught how to challenge stereotypes and not discriminate. They know what respect means.

Staff enjoy working here and the vast majority welcome the changes. They appreciate the support leaders give them. They feel listened to and valued.

Governors know the school well and hold leaders to account. They are developing their strategy for the next period of the school's growth. They understand their statutory duties.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils are safe and know how to stay safe. They have regular lessons on online safety. They know about drugs misuse and healthy relationships. Visits from the police and the fire service remind pupils how to manage risk. Pupils have trusted adults to talk to. Staff have regular safeguarding training and know how to report concerns. Leaders have a robust system in place for recording and tracking these concerns. Leaders act promptly to support pupils and seek external advice as appropriate. Governors provide effective oversight of safeguarding, including ensuring that all required checks are carried out on adults who work in school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers are still getting used to the recent curriculum updates and are not always clear what pupils have learned already in previous years. Therefore, teachers currently do not build enough on prior learning in some foundation subjects, which limits the level of detailed knowledge pupils gain. Leaders must ensure that teachers are systematic in checking, and then building on, what pupils already know, in order to deepen pupils' understanding and meet the ambitious aims of the curriculum.
- Some teachers are not consistently adapting learning to meet the specific requirements of their class. This means some pupils, including pupils with SEND, do not always have work precisely matched to their needs. Leaders need to continue to provide bespoke subject knowledge and pedagogical training for staff to ensure that all pupils are provided with learning activities suitably adapted for them.
- In some subjects, some pupils are set work that is not ambitious enough. This means that, in these subjects, not all pupils are achieving as well as they could. Leaders need to ensure that all staff are clear on the expected outcomes for all pupils, especially in the updated foundation subjects, and check that these high expectations are matched in the work teachers set for pupils.

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 January 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	109457
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	10288420
Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	270
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair of governing body	Andrew Jackson
Executive Headteacher	Samantha Barlow
Website	www.derwentlower.net
Date of previous inspection	6 February 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This school joined a hard federation with Southill Lower School in 2019.
- Since the last inspection, the school has moved from being a lower school to being a primary school. This is the first year it has had a Year 6 cohort.
- The school has also undergone an extensive building programme under the Building Schools for the Future programme. The new school building opened in April 2023 for key stage 2.
- The numbers on roll are increasing rapidly as the school moves from one form to two form entry.
- The executive headteacher took up her post in January 2023. There is also a newly appointed head of school and assistant headteacher.
- The school runs a nursery on site for children aged 3 and 4.
- There is also an on-site before- and after-school provision run by the school.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The lead inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The lead inspector held meetings with the executive headteacher, head of school, assistant headteachers, special educational needs manager, subject leaders, teachers and some support staff.
- The lead inspector carried out deep dives in the following subjects: early reading, mathematics and art. For each deep dive, the lead inspector spoke to subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke with pupils, looked at pupils' workbooks and spoke with teachers. The lead inspector also heard pupils read to a familiar adult.
- The lead inspector looked at a range of pupils' work from other subject areas and spoke to pupils about their work in these subjects.
- The lead inspector met representatives from the governing body and the school's improvement partner.
- The lead inspector scrutinised a range of documentation including the school's own self-evaluation information and the school development plan.
- The lead inspector looked at the arrangements for safeguarding, including the single central record of recruitment checks. The lead inspector spoke with leaders and staff about the systems and processes to support safeguarding, and the school's safeguarding ethos.
- The lead inspector considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including 47 free-text comments from parents. The lead inspector also considered the 30 responses to Ofsted's survey for school staff. There were 72 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey. During the inspection, the lead inspector also spoke with pupils across the school.

Inspection team

Sara Boyce, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector

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