

Inspection of Beech Hyde Primary School and Nursery

Nurseries Road, Wheathampstead, St. Albans, Hertfordshire AL4 8TP

Inspection dates: 28 and 29 September 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils get to meet a range of animal characters. These help them learn about positive mindsets. They include a bee and a tortoise. The bee helps with teamwork, and the tortoise with resilience. Pupils feel happy and safe as they all learn about 'start telling other people' (STOP). Pupils know that caring staff will listen and help.

Everyone is expected to share and be kind. Children in Reception learn about this through role play. Pupils do not see bullying as an issue. They are tolerant and respectful towards each other. Pupils regularly learn about other cultures and faiths, democracy, and celebrating difference. Any pupil who arrives at the school is quickly made to feel welcome.

There is the same, typically high, ambition for everyone. All pupils are included in lessons, as learning is well adapted to meet their needs. On rare occasions when behaviour needs to be challenged, this is done in a calm but firm way.

Pupils get opportunities to develop their talents and interests. These include being part of the eco warriors club or the school council.

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

Leaders have ensured a broad and balanced curriculum is in place. Leaders have typically ensured staff have been well trained to deliver the curriculum. For example, in mathematics, leaders have ensured staff have been effectively trained in the school's new mastery approach.

Generally, pupils learn well. They connect the knowledge they gather over time. This is because teachers support them to do this through well-sequenced plans for learning. Teachers model learning, give clear explanations and ensure pupils understand subject-specific words. For example, in mathematics, physical and pictorial resources are used to support pupils to fully understand teachers' explanations. In small pockets of the curriculum, pupils do not retain learning as well. This is because the same level of planning and training for how pupils connect and secure knowledge has not taken place.

In early years foundation stage (EYFS), the curriculum prepares pupils well for key stage 1. Strong connections have been made between subject areas. Leaders clearly communicate the most effective strategies to support children's special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). As a result, staff have the support they need to enable them to adapt what they do to ensure children with SEND participate in learning alongside other pupils.

Leaders identified that during the COVID-19 pandemic, some pupils fell behind with their reading and developed gaps in their reading knowledge. To address this, leaders implemented a new and consistent approach to the teaching of phonics.

Staff have been fully trained to use this approach. As a result, staff support pupils effectively to decode and blend sounds. They match the books pupils read to the words pupils can decode. This helps pupils to develop their reading ability.

Leaders have identified which pupils still have gaps in their reading knowledge. These pupils receive intensive support to help them catch up. Despite this support, a small minority of pupils still do not read with age-appropriate fluency.

Pupils enjoy reading, and get to visit the library regularly to change their reading books. Reading is taught through a mixture of whole-class texts and guided reading focusing on extracts. This gives pupils access to a range of genres and different types of text. However, some of these texts have not been chosen as well as they might have been, and consequently they do not inspire all pupils to love reading.

Leaders have taken action to implement a restorative approach to managing behaviour. This approach is consistently implemented, so pupils behave in a calm and orderly way. The personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum is highly effective in ensuring pupils learn about difference and treating each other kindly. This begins in EYFS, where pupils learn about sharing and taking turns. Pupils learn about British values, such as democracy, by arguing a case and then voting on it. They learn about relationships in an age-appropriate way.

There are a range of extra-curricular opportunities on offer, including a successful girls' football team. Trips and visits give pupils experiences they might not otherwise get, such as a residential trip away from home.

The trust has effectively addressed a variety of areas of need from the predecessor school. This includes the quality of leadership. Governance now provides effective challenge and support. Staff feel leaders are supportive and visible. Leaders consider staff workload and well-being appropriately, so staff are positive about leaders' actions. Leaders' relationships with parents are generally positive, but some parents would like leaders to better support them in helping their children with learning at home.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff have received appropriate training to ensure they can effectively identify pupils at risk of harm. Leaders ensure that safeguarding is a regular agenda item in staff meetings, so topical updates are communicated throughout the year. Pupils are confident to report any worries or concerns to staff.

Leaders have moved to an electronic system of recording concerns. This ensures that referrals are effectively recorded and followed up. Leaders work proactively with external agencies to secure the support families need.

Appropriate safer recruitment checks are carried out and are effectively recorded in the single central record. Governors have defined safeguarding responsibilities. Effective school processes are in place to handle any allegations against staff.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- A minority of pupils have gaps in their reading ability, which were amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic. Leaders have put in place specific interventions to help close these gaps and support these pupils to catch up. However, in a minority of cases these gaps have not been closed, and pupils do not read with the fluency they should. This is because these interventions have not had enough impact, and these pupils have not developed a love of reading. Leaders need to ensure that they consistently monitor the impact of these interventions on closing pupils' reading gaps. Leaders also need to ensure these pupils have access to a reading spine of connected, high-quality texts to support them to develop a love of reading.
- In pockets of the curriculum, teachers do not plan learning that is connected and sequenced well enough. In these pockets, pupils do not connect and retain key subject-specific knowledge well enough. Leaders need to ensure that all learning is effectively planned and sequenced, and that teachers enable pupils to connect and retain this knowledge across the curriculum.

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	145487
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10241328
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	167
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Margaret Chapman
Headteacher	Karen Thomas
Website	beechhyde.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The acting headteacher took up her post in September 2022. She was employed within the same trust previously.
- The school is part of Atlas Multi Academy Trust. The school converted to become an academy in February 2017.
- The school has before- and after-school provision run by a separately registered and inspected childcare provider.

Information about this inspection

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

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: early reading, mathematics, science and history. For each deep dive, inspectors met with curriculum leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- Inspectors conducted meetings with members of the governing body and the trust, and leaders of provision for PSHE, SEND, behaviour and attendance, EYFS and safeguarding. Inspectors also observed breaktimes and lunchtimes and met parents after school. Inspectors visited assembly, and art, PSHE, physical education and religious education lessons.
- Inspectors explored the school's safeguarding culture through viewing safeguarding records and procedures, meeting with a range of pupils and staff and talking to safeguarding leaders.
- Inspectors considered the 33 responses and 24 free-text responses made by parents to the survey, Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors also considered 16 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire and 30 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

James Chester, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Nerrissa Bear

His Majesty's Inspector

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