

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Margaret Wix Primary School

High Oaks, St Albans, Hertfordshire AL3 6EL

Inspection date:

17 December 2024

Outcome

Evidence gathered during this ungraded (section 8) inspection suggests that the school's work may have improved significantly across all areas since the previous inspection. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils excel and thrive here because of the high level of care the school provides. This results in pupils feeling very happy and safe. They become respectful and responsible members of the school. Parents and carers reflect this in their overwhelmingly positive views. Comments such as the school 'could not be more inclusive and welcoming' are rightly commonplace.

Behaviour is exemplary. Pupils know the 'learning powers' that underpin everything they do. The school is highly inclusive. Pupils help each other with their learning in lessons. At social times, pupils from all year groups play together. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) that attend the school's specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND.

The school is ambitious for what pupils can achieve, including the substantial cohort of pupils with SEND. From the Nursery upwards, clear routines support children to develop an eagerness for learning. This helps pupils to achieve highly.

There is strong pupil engagement with the school's extensive range of leadership and enrichment opportunities. Pupil leaders make meaningful contributions to the school and local community. They are proud of how they have reduced food waste by changing school menus and of their support for local charities and food banks.

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

The school has developed an ambitious curriculum, which clearly defines the important knowledge that pupils need to know. It is carefully planned to build pupils' understanding

over time. Staff teach the curriculum consistently, meeting the school's high expectations. They provide opportunities for pupils to apply what they have learned in lessons. In physical education (PE), for example, pupils worked in pairs to apply their learning of mirroring, matching, canon and interval to provide a 'champion gymnast' performance.

Staff have strong subject knowledge. They regularly check pupils' understanding. Staff quickly intervene to close gaps or address misunderstandings in learning. This helps pupils to develop their knowledge and confidence. Pupils consistently produce high-quality work across all subjects. From an early age, the standard of handwriting and letter formation is high. Pupils act on teachers' guidance to improve their work further.

The school ensures that reading is not a barrier to pupils' learning across the curriculum. A high number of pupils join the school part-way through an academic year. Many of these are at an early stage of learning English. The school checks pupils' reading ability on arrival. It puts in place highly effective support for any pupils that need help. As a result, pupils quickly become confident, fluent readers. In Nursery, children develop their communication and language skills through carefully chosen activities. Well-trained adults teach the schools' phonics programme effectively from the start of the Reception Year. Across the school, pupils develop a love of reading and talk successfully about their favourite books and authors.

The school provides excellent support for pupils with SEND. This helps these pupils to thrive. Individual needs of pupils are quickly identified by well-trained staff. They adapt their teaching and put strategies in place with a high level of consistency across the school. This means that pupils with SEND access the same learning as their peers successfully. Pupils in the specially resourced provision receive skilful support that helps them to access the full curriculum. As a result of this support, many pupils in the specially resourced provision access some learning in mainstream classes.

In the early years, children interact with each other and adults extremely positively. There are clear routines in place. Children wait for others to have their turn. Staff ensure that all activities are deliberately planned to develop strong foundations in children's learning in preparation for key stage 1.

There are rigorous systems in place to ensure that pupils' attendance is high. The school has strong, positive relationships with families. Staff work successfully with them to help overcome potential barriers and issues.

The school's approach to pupils' wider development is carefully and deliberately planned. Pupils celebrate each other's successes through whole-school assemblies. They learn how to value and respect difference and link this to their knowledge of fundamental British values. Trips and visitors to school are a core component of the curriculum. These broad, rich experiences mean that pupils are well prepared for life beyond school.

Leaders, including governors, are proud of the progress the school has made. They are not complacent and look to improve standards further. Governors know the school well and provide insightful challenge and support. Staff, at all levels, are very proud to work at

the school. They know that their workload is always considered. They describe the school as 'a small school with a big heart'.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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 for overall effectiveness in 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 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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and

pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	117188
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10366647
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	149
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Val Male
Headteacher	Claire Gibbs
Website	www.margaretwix.herts.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	19 and 20 November 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The current headteacher was appointed in April 2021.
- There has been a significant change in the members of the governing body since the previous inspection.
- The school has a specially resourced provision, specialising in supporting pupils with autism and speech, language and communication needs.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. During the inspection, the inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders.
- The lead inspector met members of the local governing body, including the chair of governors. He met with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors considered a range of documentation, including leaders' evaluation of the school, the school's behaviour, bullying and attendance analysis and logs, the school improvement plan and minutes of governing body meetings.
- Inspectors considered the views of staff and parents who responded to Ofsted's surveys, including responses to Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Wayne Jarvis, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Michele Geddes

Ofsted Inspector

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