

Inspection of a good school: Whitchurch Combined School

North Marston Lane, Whitchurch, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire HP22 4JG

Inspection dates:

6 and 7 February 2024

Outcome

Whitchurch Combined School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Whitchurch is a friendly and inclusive school where everyone is appreciated. Pupils enjoy coming to school and thrive. One typical comment from a pupil describes the school as, 'Warm, welcoming and educational.' The school's values of being kind, respectful, proud, resilient and curious are seamlessly intertwined and observed by pupils throughout the building. Pupils feel safe in school and parents agree that they are. Pupils know there is always someone to talk to if they have any worries.

Children in the Reception Year get off to a great start, make friends quickly, and follow the school's routines enthusiastically. The staff have high expectations for pupils' attitudes towards learning and behaviour and the pupils respond positively. Pupils behave well and work hard. Their strong relationships with staff help them develop confidence and resilience. Teachers present learning in engaging and interesting ways to motivate and develop pupils' curiosity.

On the playgrounds, pupils play together well and show respect towards each other. Peer mentors appreciate helping younger pupils at playtimes. The well-planned learning goes beyond the classroom. The school provides a wealth of opportunities for pupils, helping them become well-rounded individuals and citizens. This allows pupils to achieve well beyond the academic subjects.

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

The school has an ambitious and well-sequenced curriculum starting from Reception. It is carefully designed to ensure that pupils develop their knowledge and skills effectively. In mathematics, for example, children in Reception develop a secure grasp of numbers. This prepares them well for later year groups, where pupils confidently perform more intricate calculations involving decimals, fractions and percentages. In history, as another example, pupils secure knowledge of the development of aircraft through sequencing different types on a timeline correctly. While pupils achieve well overall, the school is refining the curriculum in a few subjects so that staff identify the knowledge and skills pupils need to

learn and remember over time more precisely. In these subjects, therefore, pupils are not yet acquiring really deep levels of knowledge.

Staff use their secure subject knowledge to carefully explain learning so that pupils can relate it to what they already know. In lessons, pupils are curious to learn more and enjoy the rich learning experiences. Teachers select precise activities to support pupils' knowledge and skills. For example, younger pupils develop their understanding of 'nearly empty' and 'nearly full' by carefully pouring water into different containers. This creates much meaningful discussion regarding how much water is required to be nearly empty or nearly full.

In lessons, pupils reinforce prior knowledge by connecting it to new learning. Pupils confidently talk about their learning, demonstrating greater understanding over time. They take pride in their work. The school identifies pupils with additional needs quickly, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Adults provide a range of support and adapted tasks to enable these pupils to access the same curriculum as their classmates.

Reading is a top priority for the school. The systematic and vibrant approach to reading and phonics enables pupils to achieve well. Pupils have books that match their reading level to help them become fluent readers. Throughout the school, reading is skilfully threaded through the curriculum. If any pupils need to catch up, staff quickly ensure they receive extra help from well-trained adults. There is an extensive range of activities to capture pupils' interest and imagination. These include 'snuggle up with a book day', book week, reading challenges, 'reading café' and author visits. The school's effective work enables pupils to read widely with confidence and precision.

Pupils access various well-planned and thoughtful opportunities that help them to grow beyond their academic learning. These opportunities include participating in events such as performing at the O2 Arena, sporting events and mini enterprise days. Pupils also benefit from residentials they attend, which they speak highly of. The school offers a range of rich sporting and arts activities, along with after-school clubs, to help pupils to develop their interests and talents. Pupils are encouraged to take on leadership roles, such as becoming junior road safety officers, sports captains and peer mentors.

Pupils understand the importance of aiming high and the need to be resilient. They learn about being safe online and about water, fire and kitchen safety. They learn about different faiths to deepen their understanding of the world's diversity. Pupils know how to keep healthy and active. They learn about different types of families and healthy relationships.

Leaders at all levels are highly committed and constantly strive for improvement. Governors understand and carry out their roles effectively while holding leaders to account. There is a strong team spirit in the school. Staff value the support provided by senior leaders to help them to focus most on teaching effectively.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few subjects, the curriculum has been recently reviewed to ensure that pupils learn the important skills and knowledge in the correct order. As a result, the school is still developing strategies to ensure that pupils secure a rich and deep body of knowledge in these areas. It is too early to see the impact of these changes in full. The school should check that these changes have the desired impact on pupils' learning.

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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in June 2018.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use 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	110333
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10296162
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	211
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Joanne Dallas
Headteacher	Rachel Mobbs
Website	www.whitchurchcombined.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	26 and 27 June 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school runs a breakfast club.
- The school does not currently use any alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement 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 inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector held a wide range of meetings and spoke with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, senior leaders, staff and pupils.
- The inspector spoke with members of the governing body.
- The inspector spoke with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector 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. The inspector also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.

- The inspector met with a range of pupils to discuss their views about the school and talked to pupils during playtimes and in lessons.
- Responses to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online survey for parents, including parents' free-text comments, were considered. The inspector also considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff and pupils. The pupil survey was available to the school, but there were no responses.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: reviewed the single central record; evaluated safer recruitment practices; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; met with the designated safeguarding lead and the deputy safeguarding lead; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

Inspection team

Darren Aisthorpe, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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