

Inspection of a good school: Commonswood Primary & Nursery School

The Commons, The Commons, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire AL7 4RU

Inspection dates:

20–21 November 2019

Outcome

Commonswood Primary and Nursery School continues to be a good school.

There is enough evidence of improved performance to suggest that the school could be judged outstanding if we were to carry out a section 5 inspection now.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils who attend Commonswood are happy and say that the school is a very enjoyable place. Pupils feel safe and they are safe. Bullying is not tolerated. Pupils are confident that adults will deal with any of their concerns or worries.

Pupils enjoy the activities planned by their teachers. They say that it brings learning alive. The Great Fire of London and a recent visit to the RAF museum were particular favourites for pupils.

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the support provided by the school. They praise teachers for being 'exceptional' and 'incredibly caring'. Parents appreciate the strong support provided for children who have particular needs.

Pupils take part in a wide range of school events to enhance their learning. For example, pupils worked with a winning choir from a television series to help them prepare for their Christmas performance. Pupils also engage in enterprise activities raising money for local charities.

Pupils embody the high expectations of staff in their work and behaviour. They pay attention to their teachers and work hard in their lessons. They are keen to do well.

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

The governors know the school very well. Governors are committed to the school's success. They hold leaders firmly to account for continual improvement.

Leaders place a very high focus on the well-being of staff and protect their workload. Staff make good use of the training opportunities that leaders organise.

School leaders have embedded a well-designed and broad curriculum across the school. Curriculum leaders work alongside senior leaders to ensure that the curriculum is inspiring for pupils. Teachers set high expectations for pupils when they are in lessons. Pupils take great pride in their work

Pupils are respectful and polite to all adults and visitors. Pupils are calm and orderly when they move around the school building, for example when they get ready and line up for physical education lessons. Pupils collaborate well together in lessons. This enables them to share ideas and find solutions to complex problems. As a result, pupils have a deep understanding of their learning across different subjects.

Reading is of paramount importance at Commonswood. Staff are well trained and experts in the teaching of phonics. Pupils quickly become fluent, confident, independent readers. Pupils read often, and books are well matched to the sounds that they know. Teachers know when pupils fall behind in their reading. Weaker readers receive intensive support to catch up. Reading is a significant strength of this school.

Leaders' plans for writing and mathematics are well constructed. For example, in mathematics, teachers plan problem-solving activities for pupils. Pupils from a young age use their knowledge to justify the solutions they have found. Leaders are working to ensure that more pupils achieve well in mathematics. They are checking that teachers provide more opportunities for pupils to use their knowledge to solve tricky problems.

Pupils write to the same high standard across the curriculum. Teachers plan opportunities that inspire pupils to write for a range of purposes. They make correct use of their spelling, punctuation and grammar skills, whether writing reports or stories.

Leaders develop pupils' physical education skills very well. Pupils enjoy an exciting range of sporting activities. There is a very high participation of pupils in after-school or lunchtime clubs. These include badminton coaching, football, gymnastics, dodgeball and street dance. Many pupils take part in local and national competitions.

Pupils show a deep awareness of what it means to be a good citizen. They know about democracy and engage with a wide range of faiths and beliefs. This promotes their understanding of different cultures.

Children in the early years are happy and safe. The learning environments, both indoors and outdoors, stimulate their curiosity and imagination. Children are quick to settle to their learning. They sustain their concentration, working with confidence and maturity. They are attentive to adults and play well with their peers.

Staff know each child's starting point. Plans identify what children need to know. All children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), make a good start to their education.

Leaders ensure that pupils with SEND receive excellent support. Adults use resources well to help pupils complete tasks within lessons. Leaders also use external support to develop plans and targets for these pupils. This has enabled pupils to achieve their academic targets.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a very strong culture of safeguarding across the school. Staff are very well trained to fulfil their responsibilities to keep pupils safe. Leaders ensure that staff are vigilant for any signs that pupils are at risk of harm. Adults understand how to record their concerns. Leaders responsible for safeguarding act quickly and seek advice where it is required.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe. This also includes a high awareness of how to stay safe online.

Safe recruitment processes are robust, and records are well maintained.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The teaching of mathematics is secure. Pupils' achievements in mathematics are above the national averages at the end of key stage 1 and 2. Some groups of pupils could achieve more. Leaders should ensure that all pupils embed their problem-solving and reasoning skills so that even more pupils, especially middle prior attainers, achieve greater depth at the end of key stage 2 in mathematics.

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 a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged Commonswood Primary and Nursery School to be good on 16–17 March 2016.

How can I feedback 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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can complain to Ofsted.

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	117378
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10110314
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community school
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	475
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Julie Noakes
Headteacher	Gill Seymour
Website	www.commonswood.herts.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	16–17 March 2016

Information about this school

- This is a larger-than-average primary of 473 pupils aged between 4 to 11, with a nursery provision.
- The school has a higher-than-average percentage of pupils with SEND.
- The school has two nursery classes.
- The school has a breakfast club.

Information about this inspection

- I considered the subjects of reading, writing, mathematics and physical education in depth as part of this inspection. I met with the leaders of these subjects, visited lessons, spoke with pupils and teachers, and looked at pupils' work in books to view the quality of education.
- I also met with the designated safeguarding lead, pupils and a range of staff to check safeguarding arrangements. I also checked the school's processes for checking the suitability of adults who work with pupils and who volunteer to read with pupils and visit the school.

- During this inspection, I met with the headteacher, the chair and vice-chair of the governing body, a local authority representative, the deputy headteacher and curriculum leaders and teaching staff.
- I also considered the 98 responses on Parent View and the 28 responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Rowena Simmons, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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