

Inspection of Purwell Primary School

Fairfield Way, Hitchin, Hertfordshire SG4 0PU

Inspection dates: 18 and 19 October 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Purwell Primary enjoy their time at school. They feel safe and value the opportunities presented to them. The curriculum pupils follow is developing rapidly. This is to make sure they have relevant lessons that help them build strong knowledge. At this stage, the quality of education pupils experience is varied. This means they remember more of what they learn in mathematics and English than they do in most other subject areas.

The knowledge pupils develop about their own physical and mental health is secure. Regular classroom discussions and relevant assemblies help them to explore important social issues. This includes learning about a range of cultures and faiths and how to form healthy, respectful relationships. Pupils talk confidently about how to spot when they are anxious. They know actions they can take to stay calm and where they can get additional support, if needed.

Pupils are well looked after. They are assured that adults care about them. Pupils say adults give them 'care and attention'. If they have particular worries, there is high-quality pastoral support available. Pupils are confident that adults are quick to respond to sort out serious incidents of poor behaviour, including bullying.

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

Leaders have a clear vision for high expectations that is starting to improve pupils' learning in the school. This is most evident in the development of the English and mathematics curriculums. There are also clear expectations for the support pupils receive for their personal development.

In all subjects that pupils study, leaders have set out the specific content they want pupils to know. Where the curriculum is more established, teachers accurately check what pupils know. They also check for misconceptions that pupils may have. Teachers use these checks to adapt lessons and help pupils to revisit key knowledge they have not remembered. However, teachers do not do this as well in less well-developed areas of the curriculum. In these subjects, pupils do not securely remember the important knowledge they need for their future learning. As a result, pupils have gaps in their knowledge.

Leaders have high aspirations for meeting the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils with SEND experience the same variation in the curriculum as their peers. Despite this, teachers have developed their expertise to meet the needs of all pupils. This leads to precise plans that ensure that pupils with specific needs are supported to access the same broad range of subject lessons.

All staff have contributed to improvements in the reading curriculum. This includes establishing a new scheme to teach phonics. Younger pupils have daily opportunities to learn and practise using the key sounds they need to read well. There is also

targeted support to help those who are at risk of falling behind. Typically, this means pupils are developing the knowledge that will help them read texts across the curriculum. Pupils apply this knowledge well when reading. They practise using carefully chosen books that match their current abilities. As a result, pupils are developing confidence and fluency with reading. Sometimes, the expertise of staff who support pupils to learn to read is not consistently secure. This can limit the progress some pupils make.

In the early years, children benefit from a reviewed approach to learning and play. Although many routines are new, there is already an established focus to develop children's social and emotional skills. Staff in the setting do not make effective use of every opportunity to help children practise and apply what they have been learning. The staff are rapidly developing their expertise to address this. They are accessing external support to make sure that all interactions with children lead to impactful learning.

Pupils are polite and typically cooperate well with adults in school. On occasions, low-level poor conduct disrupts learning. Staff do not always address this effectively enough. Leaders have a clear strategy in place to improve this and establish clear expectations across the school for both pupils and staff.

The work to develop pupils' wider attitudes and personal development is a strength. All staff are committed to this work. This leads to a wide range of opportunities for pupils, including trips out of school and access to interesting clubs.

Since the previous inspection, governors have worked closely with leaders to bring about impactful changes. However, governors have not held leaders to account for all developments in the school, including updates to key policies. This has led to some variation in the quality of practices in the school.

Staff appreciate the changes made in the last year to bring about consistency and reduce any unnecessary workload. Parents share how they value the way teachers show commitment to the wider development and nurture of their children.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have established a culture where all adults take responsibility for keeping pupils safe. There are established routines that staff follow to share concerns about pupils. Leaders keep these detailed records securely and take effective action to respond to concerns raised. This includes accessing external professional support as required.

Leaders have also made sure that pupils know of the importance to share with an adult if they are worried. Pupils have lessons and assemblies that give them the knowledge to keep themselves safe. This includes information about road and water safety and advice to keep them safe when playing games online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The expertise of staff teaching phonics and supporting pupils to read is not consistently embedded. This means some staff do not provide the best possible learning activities to help pupils learn in the most efficient way. Leaders should continue to embed the phonics programme, ensuring that all staff are consistently highly skilled and confident at supporting pupils to learn to read.
- Teachers' use of assessment is varied in quality. This results in pupils securing their knowledge better in some areas of the curriculum than others. Leaders must ensure that teachers accurately and routinely check what pupils understand and remember in all subjects. They should provide training and support for teachers as needed. Leaders should ensure that teachers adapt lessons to ensure that any gaps in knowledge are addressed.
- Governors have not consistently held leaders to account for all developments and policy changes. This has led to some variation in quality in provision. Governors should ensure they acquire the skills and expertise to fully challenge and support leaders.

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	117224
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10240092
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	180
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Gareth Bates
Headteacher	Richard Cano
Website	www.purwell.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	28 and 29 September 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Leaders do not currently use any alternative provision to meet the needs of pupils.

Information about this inspection

The inspector(s) carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, the assistant headteacher, the early years leader and the special educational needs coordinator.
- Inspectors met with the chair of the governing body to discuss governance.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in four subjects: early reading, history, mathematics and music. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum documentation, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with

teachers, spoke with pupils about their learning and, where relevant, looked at samples of pupils' work.

- The lead inspector met with the headteacher, who is the school's designated safeguarding leader, the school's business manager and other staff to discuss safeguarding.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation during the inspection, including curriculum plans, school development plans, safeguarding and behaviour records.
- Inspectors considered 57 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including parents' free-text comments. Inspectors also considered the 19 responses to Ofsted's staff survey. Inspectors also spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences of school life and their learning in lessons, to understand what it is like to be a pupil in their school. Inspectors also observed the behaviour of pupils across the school site.

Inspection team

Kristian Hewitt, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Craige Brown

Ofsted Inspector

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