

Inspection of Purwell Primary School

Fairfield Way, Hitchin, Hertfordshire SG4 0PU

Inspection dates:	24 and 25 September 2024
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and feel safe in their school. They know that adults will help if they have any worries. Breaktimes are lively and sociable. Pupils understand and typically meet the school's high expectations, as set out in 'The Purwell Way'. As a result, most pupils are kind, behave well and want to do their best. They are proud of their work and enjoy opportunities to share their success with others.

In the early years, children settle into routines quickly. They enjoy the stories and rhymes that they experience together. Older pupils speak excitedly about the books that they are reading. They know that reading is important to their future success. Pupils who need extra help, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are supported to achieve well across subjects.

Pupils are polite and welcoming. Older pupils watch out for their younger peers, for example in their roles as canteen helpers. Pupils' wider interests are catered for through a range of clubs and activities. There is something for everyone, including for children in the early years. Ongoing improvements to pupils' school experiences mean that they are prepared effectively for secondary education by the end of Year 6.

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

The school has come a long way on its improvement journey. Strategies to continue to raise standards are having a positive impact, including on pupils' reading, writing and mathematics. The curriculum is well thought out and ambitious. The small steps that pupils need to learn are mapped out carefully in a logical order.

Pupils are keen to do well in lessons. Teachers correct misconceptions quickly. They keep pupils on track through regular questioning and checks on their learning. Consequently, pupils remember more of what they have been taught. Despite the previous challenge of staffing changes, pupils' achievement overall is improving. However, the delivery of the curriculum is still being evaluated by the school. Occasionally, activities in lessons are not matched as well as they could be to what pupils know and can do. A few pupils are not moved on quickly enough to the next stage. Where this happens, pupils sometimes do not learn as much as they could.

The school's special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) ensures that staff have the information and training that they need to help all pupils. Pupils with SEND get the right support through careful adaptations to the curriculum. Those pupils who speak English as an additional language achieve well as they work alongside their peers.

The reading curriculum is well established and effective. Staff expertise is refreshed through ongoing training. In the early years, children learn letters and their sounds with enthusiasm. Pupils in all year groups enjoy daily reading. They are encouraged to read regularly at home. The support for pupils who fall behind builds their confidence, as their reading accuracy and fluency continue to improve.

In the early years, children are supported to develop their communication and language skills effectively. From the outset, the youngest children build good relationships together. Pupils look out for each other. They make friends easily. Bullying is rare. The 'Purwell Way' is woven through the daily life of the school. This makes a positive difference to pupils' learning. From the Nursery onwards, pupils know what is expected of them. Most rise to the challenge. While typically pupils attend school regularly, some do not attend as often as they should. The school works closely with families to secure improvements for these pupils.

The school's values, including perseverance, honesty and equity, are well established. The friendly atmosphere ensures that new pupils settle in quickly. Pupils understand the importance of respecting others' differences. They know how to keep safe, including online. Opportunities to take on pupil responsibilities are valued. Visits, activities and residential enhance pupils' learning experiences. Children in the Reception class, for example, were excited about the 'wizard workshop'. Older pupils spoke enthusiastically about their trips.

Governors have successfully raised their level of challenge and support. As a result, the school continues to improve. Working closely with leaders, governors understand what is going well and where further changes are needed. Staff improve their practice through ongoing training and professional development. They recognise that their well-being is a priority for the school.

Relationships between the school and families are typically positive. However, a minority of parents feel that aspects of communication are not strong, or prompt, enough. Some feel that they are not kept informed of the reasons for any changes the school has made.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Not all staff are confident in delivering the intended curriculum. Occasionally, activities are not matched well to pupils' knowledge or what they can do. This means that some pupils do not move on to the next stage as quickly as they could or learn as deeply as they should. The school should prioritise the ongoing evaluation of curriculum implementation so that support can be targeted precisely to match staff's continued professional development needs.
- A few parents feel that communication with the school is not as strong as it needs to be. In such cases, parents feel that contact between school and home is too slow and decisions are not clearly explained. The school should extend its work to strengthen communications so that relationships with all parents are effective.

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	117224
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10345177
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	167
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Gareth Bates
Headteacher	Richard Cano
Website	www.purwell.herts.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	18 and 19 October 2022, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Information about this school

- The school does not use any alternative education provisions.
- Since the previous inspection, an increasing number of pupils who speak English as an additional language join and leave the school at different points during the year.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors conducted deep dives in the following subjects: English, including reading, history, mathematics and science. To complete each deep dive, they discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons and spoke with teachers. They also spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at samples of their work.
- A wider sample of curriculum plans were considered beyond the deep dives across a range of subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors looked at safeguarding policies; the school's record of pre-employment checks on new staff; and a sample of child protection files. They 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.
- The lead inspector spoke with a group of governors, including the chair of governors, the vice-chair and a parent governor.
- The lead inspector also spoke on the telephone with the school's effectiveness adviser who works closely with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, who is also the designated safeguarding lead, and the deputy designated safeguarding lead. The inspectors held further meetings with the school's SENCo, other leaders, school staff and groups of pupils.
- The documents checked included behaviour logs, attendance records, minutes of governors' meetings, school improvement plans and school policies.
- There were 72 responses to the online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, which were considered alongside the free-text responses from parents.
- Inspectors also took account of responses to the school's own questionnaires for staff and parents.

Inspection team

Christine Dick, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Julie Lawrence

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