

Inspection of Wheatcroft Primary School

Stanstead Road, Hertford, Hertfordshire SG13 7HQ

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 November 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy to come to school and attend regularly. Pupils who join the school at different points in the year receive a warm welcome. Children in the early years, and pupils who are new to the school, settle quickly into the routines of learning.

Pupils understand and follow their school values to 'be kind, respectful, determined, responsible and ready to learn'. They demonstrate these values in lessons and when supporting one another.

Staff expect pupils to behave well. As a result, lessons are rarely disrupted. Pupils maintain their positive behaviour during playtimes and lunchtimes.

Pupils feel safe and well supported. Pupils know that any concerns they may have will be listened to and taken seriously. They know that staff expect them to do their best. Pupils rise to these expectations and achieve well, overall. Pupils value the recognition they receive for working hard and doing well.

Pupils enjoy participating in diverse trips and visits and find inspiration in members of the local community during champion assemblies. They express a desire for the school to expand its extracurricular clubs. Pupils carry out extra responsibilities with pride. These include being 'green bees', who support recycling, school council members and reading buddies.

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

The school has designed a well-ordered curriculum so that pupils' learning builds logically on what they already know and remember. It is ambitious, including for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school seeks out and plans opportunities to enrich pupils' educational experiences, for example through trips and workshops. In reading, mathematics and early years, the school has benefited from external support, resulting in positive improvements for pupils. However, some subject leaders lack adequate training and opportunities to effectively assess pupils' achievements in their respective leadership areas.

Teachers check regularly how well pupils are learning, so that they can adapt teaching to address any gaps in knowledge. The needs of pupils with SEND are accurately identified. Teachers use effective strategies and well-chosen resources to enable these pupils to successfully learn the same curriculum as their peers. Across the school, pupils are attentive in lessons. Staff provide careful support for those pupils who find it more difficult to concentrate in lessons. Staff model calm, respectful and caring relationships.

The profile of reading has been raised. The school chooses that everyone studies the same text at the start of the year. This helps foster a shared love of reading among the pupils. Older pupils support younger ones to become more confident readers. Pupils enjoy hearing their teachers read texts out loud. They happily talk

about their favourite authors and books. Most pupils read regularly. Older pupils would like to have the opportunity to take library books home to read.

The phonics programme has been strengthened, supported by specialised training for staff to deliver it effectively. Pupils start to learn phonics when they are ready. They build their phonics knowledge securely all the way through key stage 1. Where gaps are identified, pupils receive carefully targeted support to ensure that they catch up. From the early years upwards, staff make sure that pupils read books that match the sounds they know.

Children settle quickly into the early years with the support of a carefully planned transition programme. They listen well to their teachers and engage happily. The early years learning environment has undergone recent redevelopment. It is designed to provide strong support for children as they begin their education. Children are encouraged to follow the school values, such as being responsible and ready to learn.

The school is an inclusive community. Pupils learn about diversity and appreciate what makes us unique. Pupils are knowledgeable about British values, such as democracy and the rule of law. They learn how to be safe and healthy, including when online.

While many parents view the school positively, a number of parents feel that communication about changes and their children's progress is lacking. This results in some dissatisfaction, as not all parents consistently understand how to best support their children.

Most staff enjoy working at the school. They value the support they receive. When new initiatives are introduced, staff are given the training they need to implement the changes. Staff workload and well-being are taken into account. Leaders understand what the school does well and how it needs to improve. Governors hold leaders to account effectively for the school's performance.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Subject leaders do not have the resources and training they need to undertake their roles as effectively as they could. This limits their ability to determine the next steps for their subjects. The school should ensure that it provides subject leaders with the training and guidance they need to identify how to improve the quality of education in their subjects.

- A number of parents do not feel well informed about their children's learning or understand the changes happening in the school. The school should improve how it communicates effectively with parents, so that parents can work positively with the school and they fully understand what the school is doing to support their children's education and well-being.

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	117328
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10287097
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	316
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Daniel Hewitt
Headteacher	Debbie Miller
Website	www.wheatcroft.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	27 March 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not use the services of any alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- 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. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, other senior leaders, subject leaders, the special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator, governors, and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors spoke to the designated safeguarding lead to discuss the school's procedures for keeping pupils safe. Inspectors considered the school's recruitment procedures, staff induction and training, records of concern and engagement with

external agencies. Inspectors spoke with staff and pupils throughout the inspection to gauge their views of the school.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, science and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector heard pupils from key stage 1 and key stage 2 read to a member of staff.
- The lead inspector reviewed a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan.
- Pupils' behaviour was considered at various times of the day, including in lessons, around the school and at breaktime. The school's records on behaviour were also considered.
- To gather the views of pupils, inspectors spoke to groups of pupils, including in lessons and at breaktime.
- Inspectors spoke with parents and considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. The lead inspector also considered other correspondence received from parents during the inspection.
- To gather the views of staff, inspectors spoke to several staff and took account of responses to the Ofsted staff survey.
- 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.

Inspection team

Simon Eardley, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Nina Kemp	Ofsted Inspector
Lynda Walker	Ofsted Inspector

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