

Inspection of a good school: Great Paxton CofE Primary School

Mount Pleasant, Great Paxton, St Neots, Cambridgeshire PE19 6YJ

Inspection date: 23 February 2023

Outcome

Great Paxton CofE Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

In this small village school, pupils and staff embody the values of friendship, compassion, trust and respect. This supports pupils to feel safe. Pupils are happy to learn and play in the school's warm, welcoming environment.

Pupils follow the positive behaviours that staff model for them. Pupils do their best to meet leaders' high expectations. Pupils are encouraged to become resilient and independent learners. The small number of pupils who find it more challenging to follow instructions are supported well by staff and their consistent and positive approach.

Pupils from all year groups play together well at breaktimes. They learn what bullying is and know to alert a trusted adult if they have any friendship problems. Any issues are sorted out swiftly and instances of bullying are rare.

Pupils enjoy the many enrichment activities that staff plan for them, such as building their own erupting Mount Vesuvius or hunting for minibeasts in the woods. Extra-curricular activities are equally popular. Year 5 pupils appreciate their residential trip to an outdoor adventure centre. The unforgettable 'pyromusical' firework display is a highlight of every autumn term.

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

Leaders have developed a curriculum that is ambitious for all pupils. The content is broken down into ordered steps, so pupils can build on what they have learned before. Curriculum thinking starts in the early years. This prepares children in Reception for what they will learn in Year 1 and beyond. Leaders ensure pupils in the school's mixed-age classes have access to the appropriate curriculum content for their year group. Teachers are adept at catering for the range of pupils' needs. In a small number of subjects, a new curriculum has recently been introduced. Teachers are confident in how to teach the planned curriculum. However, leaders have not checked that the way the curriculum is taught is enabling all pupils to achieve well.

Teachers' subject knowledge is strong. They get support and training if they are unsure about the content they are teaching. Teachers regularly check what pupils know and have remembered. They adapt their teaching to address any gaps in pupils' understanding. During lessons, teachers ask questions to identify pupils who need extra help. They put this in place quickly. From Reception to Year 6, teachers model the subject-specific vocabulary that pupils need to use and understand for each subject or topic.

Pupils enjoy learning because their teachers explain things clearly and help them to understand important knowledge. Pupils generally listen well and learning is rarely disrupted by poor behaviour. Pupils remember what they have been taught previously and are eager to talk about what they know.

Reading is at the heart of the curriculum. Leaders have introduced a new phonics scheme to ensure all pupils learn the sounds and skills they need to become fluent readers. Specific phonics teaching starts as soon as children join Reception. Teachers' familiarity with the new scheme is growing. However, there is some inconsistency in how effectively the programme is taught. Teachers regularly assess the progress that pupils are making with their phonics knowledge. They are quick to spot any pupils who are struggling to keep up. These pupils get the help that they need to catch up.

Older pupils are enthusiastic about reading. They enjoy relaxing with a book in the library, where they can 'read with a view', overlooking the school field. They look forward to whole-class reading lessons where they learn more-complex reading skills and extend their vocabulary.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported. Their needs are identified early. Additional help is given so that pupils with SEND can access the same curriculum as their peers. Where appropriate, advice is sought from external specialists for these pupils so that they get the right support.

Pupils learn about important values such as democracy and tolerance. They celebrate difference and welcome everyone to their school. Pupils' personal development is supported through opportunities to take on roles such as being a member of the school council or being a worship ambassador. There is a range of extra-curricular activities, including cycle skills and drumming. These help pupils to develop their talents and interests.

Governors are supportive of leaders' well-being and workload. Leaders have assigned a well-being ambassador who acts for staff and pupils. Staff feel valued and are proud to work at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a culture of vigilance around safeguarding. Staff know what to do if they have concerns about a child's welfare and are quick to record these. Leaders do not hesitate to contact external agencies for support if this is needed. All required checks are carried out

on staff when they join the school. This ensures that they are safe to work with children. Governors are rigorous in their oversight of safeguarding policies and procedures.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including when online. They trust the adults who work with them. Pupils know to speak up if they have any worries.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, curriculum plans are new. In these subjects, leaders have not fully evaluated the impact of the curriculum on pupils' achievement. Leaders should ensure that they carry out regular checks on both the implementation and effectiveness of these newer curriculum plans, to assure themselves that all pupils achieve consistently well across all subjects.
- Teachers are not sufficiently confident in how to teach the recently introduced phonics programme. There are inconsistencies in teachers' expectations and the teaching approaches that they use. Some pupils are not learning the sounds that they need to know as well as they should. Leaders need to prioritise further staff training and make regular checks to ensure that the phonics programme is having the greatest possible impact on pupils' reading progress.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in July 2013.

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	110815
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10255204
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	110
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Guy Fairbairn
Headteacher	Lee Frost
Website	www.greatpaxton.cambs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	4 July 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- At the time of the last inspection, the school was running a pre-school on site. This closed in July 2022.
- The school offers after-school childcare. This is run by school staff and managed by school leaders.
- At the time of this inspection, school leaders were not making use of any alternative provision.
- The school has a Christian religious character. The school's most recent Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (section 48) took place in October 2019. The next section 48 inspection is not overdue.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this ungraded inspection under section 8 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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, inspectors 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 their work. The lead inspector listened to a sample of pupils read to a familiar adult.
- To inspect safeguarding, an inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead to review records. He scrutinised the single central record of recruitment and vetting checks. Inspectors also spoke to governors, staff and pupils.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of other school documentation and policies, including the school development plan, external reviews of the school and minutes of governing body meetings.
- The lead inspector also met a representative of the local authority to discuss their work with the school.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils from different year groups during lessons and at lunchtime. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire.
- To gather parents' views, inspectors reviewed the 39 responses and 31 free-text responses submitted to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View.
- Inspectors gathered the views of staff by speaking with several of them and reviewing the 11 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Caroline Crozier, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Richard Fordham

Ofsted Inspector

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