

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Palace Fields Primary Academy

Badger Close, Palace Fields, Runcorn, Cheshire WA7 2QW

Inspection date:

26 November 2024

Outcome

Palace Fields Primary Academy has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The head of school is Genna Hitchin. This school is part of The Heath Family Multi-Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), David Donnelly, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Helen Stevenson. There is also an executive headteacher, Sarah Greer, who is responsible for this school and four others.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils see Palace Fields Primary as a community, where everyone is made to feel happy and welcome. They like the friendly, warm atmosphere in school. Pupils have strong relationships with staff. They feel safe to talk to adults at the school if they have any worries or concerns.

The school has high aspirations for pupils' learning. Pupils meet these expectations and achieve well. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those pupils who attend the specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND (specially resourced provision) also make strong gains in their learning.

Staff equip pupils with the skills that they need to resolve any disputes. This approach is becoming increasingly successful. The school is a calm and orderly environment. Pupils conduct themselves sensibly when moving round the school and at breaktimes.

Pupils enjoy trips to places of interest to complement their learning. They have access to a range of extra-curricular clubs, such as judo, volleyball and rugby league, which develop their talents and interests. As part of the school's commitment to broaden pupils' social and cultural awareness, it has a list of essential experiences for pupils to undertake while at primary school. For example, pupils recently created their own products to sell as part of an enterprise project.

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

Since the previous inspection, the school has implemented a new phonics programme. Well-trained staff deliver this programme effectively. In the early years, staff help children to use their phonics knowledge accurately, so that they sound and read simple words confidently. In key stage 1, teachers ensure that the books pupils read are matched to their phonics knowledge. This enables pupils to sound out more complex vocabulary accurately. When necessary, there is effective support for those who fall behind the intended curriculum. This helps these pupils to catch up.

The school has sustained a good quality of education. Across different subjects, it has implemented a well-structured and coherent curriculum. In most subjects, this enables pupils to learn about different topics in depth so that they can remember their learning over time. Staff skilfully explain new concepts well, most notably in mathematics, where pupils have an excellent recall of their prior learning. However, in a small number of subjects, staff do not check on pupils' knowledge well enough. As a result, there are gaps in some pupils' long-term recall in these subjects.

The school assess pupils early to identify if they have any additional needs. This assessment includes their social, emotional and mental health. This ensures that any additional behaviour needs are identified at an early stage. Staff support pupils with SEND effectively in the mainstream classes and in the specially resourced provision to access the curriculum well.

Pupils are enthusiastic learners. They cooperate well. For example, children in the early years work together happily. Staff deal with any disruptions to lessons swiftly and effectively.

Pupils' attendance is high. The school understands well the reasons for pupil absence. It is tenacious in its efforts to ensure that pupils attend more regularly. The school builds supportive relationships with parents and carers. Parents who responded to the Ofsted Parent View are positive about the support that they receive from staff.

Pupils learn about the similarities and differences in how different religions celebrate their beliefs. They know what it means to lead healthy lifestyles and how to maintain healthy relationships. Pupils have a strong understanding of equality, diversity and fundamental British values, which prepare them well for life in modern Britain.

The school engages well with staff to reduce their workload to create a calm and purposeful environment. Teachers enjoy the opportunities to work with other colleagues from the trust. This helps them to continually improve the provision for pupils.

The school actively seeks out the views of parents so that it has an informed view about how well the school is doing. Trustees and members of the local governing board are well informed about the school's effectiveness. They have appropriate systems to assure themselves about the quality of education at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, the arrangements to check on pupils' knowledge do not identify gaps in pupils' recall of key learning well enough. This means that, sometimes, pupils do not remember some of the knowledge that they need to help with their current learning. The school should ensure that it supports staff to identify and address any gaps in pupils' prior knowledge more effectively.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in April 2019.

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	143768
Local authority	Halton
Inspection number	10348355
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	146
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Helen Stevenson
CEO of the trust	David Donnelly
Headteacher	Sarah Greer (executive headteacher) Genna Hitchin (head of school)
Website	www.palacefieldsprimary.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	2 and 3 April 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has a specially resourced provision, which is commissioned by the local authority, for up to 10 pupils with SEND who have cognition and learning difficulties.
- A new headteacher took up post in September 2022 and a new deputy headteacher joined the school in September 2024. Almost all staff joined the school after the previous inspection.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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 spoke to the CEO, the executive headteacher, trustees and members of the local governing board.
- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work in a range of subjects.
- Inspectors discussed the school's approach to behaviour and attendance. They spoke with pupils about behaviour and observed pupils at lunchtime and when moving round the school.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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

Steve Bentham, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Julie Clayton

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2024