

Pear tree Spring Primary School

Hydean Way, Stevenage, Hertfordshire SG2 9GG

Inspection dates

15–16 March 2017

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| Overall effectiveness | Good |
| Effectiveness of leadership and management | Good |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Good |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare | Outstanding |
| Outcomes for pupils | Good |
| Early years provision | Outstanding |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Outstanding |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- This is a good and improving school. Leaders and governors have managed the transition from an infant school to a full primary school very well and it is clear that the school is on a firm upward trajectory.
- The headteacher is an experienced and knowledgeable leader. She has a very clear vision for the school and is highly effective in putting her vision into action.
- The headteacher is supported well by an effective senior leadership team. Roles and responsibilities are distributed well, ensuring that all areas of the school are covered fully.
- Pupils make good progress in English, mathematics and a wide range of other subjects.
- Teaching is good throughout the school. Relationships between staff and pupils are strong and this ensures that classrooms are happy and productive places.
- Pupils behave extremely well and show excellent attitudes to learning. They are polite, respectful and courteous towards each other, to adults and to visitors to the school.
- The early years provides children with an outstanding start to their education. The provision is particularly well led and the quality of teaching results in children making rapid progress.
- The school's marking and feedback policy is followed more closely in some classes and year groups than others.
- In some classes and year groups, the challenge provided for the most able pupils is not hard enough. Where this is the case, pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, do not make the rapid progress that they are capable of.
- Governors are not fully effective in holding the school's leaders to account.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve and develop governance so that governors are better able to hold leaders fully to account.
- Increase the proportion of pupils who make rapid progress in English and mathematics, particularly disadvantaged pupils and the most able, by ensuring that the work provided for pupils is always sufficiently challenging.
- Ensure that the school's marking and feedback policy is followed closely throughout the school.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- In recent years, the school has experienced a period of considerable change. In September 2014, the school more than doubled in size, expanding to incorporate the junior school that had previously operated on the same site. The school's leaders and governors have managed these changes very well and the entire school is now clearly good and improving as a result.
- The headteacher has been instrumental in creating this increasingly effective primary school. She has regained the confidence of the parents of pupils in key stage 2. The number of pupils attending the school has risen as the school's reputation has improved. Of the parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, 94% said that they would recommend the school to others.
- The headteacher is supported very well by a knowledgeable and committed senior leadership team. The school's deputy headteachers and assistant headteachers work well together. They share a sense of purpose and a clear vision. Between them the school's leaders ensure that all aspects of the school are well led and managed.
- The pupil premium grant is spent effectively. The funding is spent in a variety of ways to support disadvantaged pupils both academically and more widely. For example, specific programmes are used to encourage faster progress in English and mathematics. The school's family support worker links with both pupils and their parents, providing support and advice as appropriate.
- The primary physical education and sport premium is spent effectively. It is used well both to improve pupils' fitness and to promote healthy lifestyles. For example, the 'golden mile' programme involves all pupils and encourages them to become more physically active. Membership of a local school sports partnership provides opportunities for pupils to participate in a wider range of activities. It also offers chances for members of staff to improve and extend their skills in teaching physical education.
- Provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is led and managed well. The school has two special educational needs coordinators who share the responsibility effectively. Additional funding is used well to meet the needs of individual pupils.
- The school's curriculum is appropriately broad and balanced. The school uses a topic-based approach and finds that this works well. All of the national curriculum subjects are either incorporated into the topics that pupils learn about or taught as separate subjects. Good attention is paid to the arts and humanities, including music, history and geography. Spanish is taught to pupils in key stage 2.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted very well. These aspects pervade every part of school life. Displays around the school are particularly effective in supporting pupils' development in these areas. For example, eye-catching displays about different religions are frequently interactive, allowing pupils to pick up books to look at and to handle artefacts about the subject on display.
- The school promotes British values and prepares pupils for life in modern British society particularly well. The school takes a 'rights-respecting' stance, following the approach

advocated by a major international charity. Leaders have found that this has been effective in encouraging pupils to respect the rights of others and to value all people as individuals. The school celebrates all the main events in the British calendar, such as St George's Day. The school's annual Poppy Festival is particularly effective in helping pupils to understand and appreciate why services of remembrance are held each year. Every pupil in the school makes a poppy that is then displayed with all the others to create a very moving tableau in the grounds.

Governance of the school

- Some governors have been members of the school's, or the predecessor junior school's, governing body for many years. Where this is the case, governors have shown resilience, determination and utter commitment to ensuring the establishment of this happy and successful primary school.
- Governors are well informed about the school. The headteacher provides them with an appropriate range of useful information. Governors use this information well to help them to understand the school's strengths and where it could still be improved.
- The effectiveness of the governing body is developing. Governors provide good support to the school's leaders and visit the school regularly.
- Governors do not yet hold the school's leaders sufficiently to account. They do question the school's leaders, but questions are not challenging nor sharply focused enough to fully hold leaders to account.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school's single central record of pre-employment checks meets statutory requirements. The record is maintained well and there are robust systems in place to ensure that only suitable people are employed to work with children.
- The school uses an electronic system to record concerns about individual pupils. This system is used well. Concerns are recorded in a timely manner and actions taken in response are shown clearly. Pupils' individual electronic files provide strong evidence that appropriate and prompt action is taken, when necessary, to address child protection concerns.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of the physical environment is a notable strength. Throughout the school, classrooms and corridors are extremely well cared for and create an immediate impression that the school is an interesting place where standards are high.
- Teachers have a good level of knowledge of the subjects they teach. This enables them to plan lessons well and to provide clear explanations when they are teaching. Teachers ensure that they scaffold learning appropriately for pupils. That is, they ensure that appropriate levels of support and structure are put in place to enable pupils to be successful at their current level of understanding and expertise.
- Routines in classrooms are well established and clear. This means that pupils know

what to do at any point during the day and they know what is expected of them. As a result, little learning time is lost.

- Teaching assistants have a positive impact on learning. They are used well to support both pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and other pupils. Teaching assistants and teachers work well together and form effective teams.
- Teachers use questioning well in lessons. For example, they ask carefully chosen questions of individually targeted pupils to encourage them to think more deeply about the subject being taught. At other times they ask well-selected questions more generally to assess whether, and to what extent, pupils have understood what they are learning about.
- Relationships between pupils and staff are strong. The atmosphere in classrooms is relaxed and mutually respectful. These good relationships create positive working environments where pupils feel safe to risk making a mistake.
- Teachers plan work at different levels to meet the needs of learners in their classrooms. This system is well established and pupils know and select the level of challenge that is right for them.
- The most able pupils are not provided with sufficient challenge in some classes. Although the 'red hot challenge' is always available, in some classes it is not pitched at a high enough level to make pupils think as deeply as they are able to.
- The school has revised its marking policy so that teachers' comments focus more on helping pupils to understand what they need to do next to improve. The policy is followed more closely in some classes than in others.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Throughout the school, pupils are unfailingly polite, friendly and welcoming. They are confident young people who are keen to talk to visitors about their school and the work that they do.
- Pupils show high levels of respect both to adults and to each other. They listen carefully to each other, take turns and play cooperatively. This creates a very calm and purposeful atmosphere throughout the school.
- Pupils have excellent attitudes to equality. They know that it is wrong to judge someone on the basis of their skin colour or on any other characteristic. In a discussion with the lead inspector, one pupil summed up the group's views on equality by saying, 'Everyone has the same rights.'
- Pupils feel safe at Peartree Spring. They say that there is very little bullying and the school's thorough records confirm this. Pupils have great faith that staff will deal effectively with incidents when they occur.
- Pupils are taught well about how to keep themselves safe. For example, they are taught about e-safety and how to stay safe when using the internet. Pupils are given regular reminders to ensure that safety online has a high profile.

- The school is highly effective in encouraging pupils to develop healthy lifestyles. For example, the strong emphasis on physical education and sport encourages pupils to be more active. Almost all pupils are registered to take part in at least one health-related extra-curricular club. The school is particularly alert to ensuring that pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs are met.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary, both in classrooms and throughout the school. The school's rules are understood well and applied consistently. Pupils know the high standards that are expected of them and respond accordingly. As a result, disruption in lessons is extremely rare.
- Pupils show great pride in their school. The physical environment is of a particularly high quality. All areas of the school are very clean, tidy and well kept. Displays throughout the school show high standards and attention to detail. This gives pupils very clear messages about the importance of looking after their school. They respond accordingly and the building and grounds are free from discarded items and dropped litter as a result.
- Pupils attend school regularly and on time. The school takes firm and decisive action to address issues with attendance when they occur. This is coupled well with appropriate support to families, when necessary. These measures have ensured that no groups of pupils are disadvantaged by low attendance and have led to remarkable improvements in reducing levels of persistent absence for some pupils.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils make good progress at Peartree Spring Primary School. The results in the 2016 national tests do not fully reflect the good and improving outcomes for pupils attending the school. The school did not meet current floor standards as a result of weaknesses in the key stage 2 mathematics results.
- The school was disappointed by the mathematics results. Both attainment and progress were well below the national average. Inspection evidence shows clearly that this result does not give an accurate picture of the quality of outcomes in mathematics throughout the school. Current assessment information, the work in pupils' exercise books and first-hand observations all confirm that pupils are working at an appropriate level for their age and are making good progress.
- Reading is a strength, and pupils' attainment in the key stage 2 national tests was well above average in 2016. A structured approach to the teaching of reading has been employed throughout the school and pupils are making better progress as a result. Pupils make good progress in learning phonics. Results in the Year 1 phonics screening check are similar to the national average.
- Pupils also make good progress in writing. The proportion of pupils in key stage 2 who reached the expected standard in the national tests in 2016 was above the national average. Throughout the school, pupils' exercise books demonstrate clearly the good progress that they make.

- Pupils make good progress across a wide range of subjects, not only in English and mathematics. For example, scientific enquiry is promoted well in all year groups and pupils' good progress is clearly evident.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their individual starting points. Their progress is tracked and monitored closely. Appropriate and effective support is put in place for pupils where necessary. Previously low-attaining pupils are also given the support they need to help them to catch up. As a result of this support, a good proportion of pupils are making rapid progress.
- The most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, make good progress throughout the school. However, variability in the challenge provided for pupils means that the proportion who are making rapid progress varies between classes and year groups.
- Provision for disadvantaged pupils is good and this enables them to make good progress. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, particularly the most able disadvantaged pupils, who make rapid progress varies between classes and year groups.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- The environment in the early years is a particular strength. All three of the Reception classrooms are bright, stimulating and welcoming. There are well-planned and enticing areas covering all seven aspects of learning in the early years curriculum. For example, one classroom has a 'construction' area that uses a recently released film as its theme. This appropriately used gesture to acknowledge popular culture is effective in encouraging children to explore this area of learning.
- Leadership in early years is very strong. Leaders have a comprehensive understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. They have ensured that areas for development are addressed swiftly. For example, the early years curriculum was reviewed and adapted to ensure that it meets the needs of boys and girls equally.
- Children receive a rich, broad and balanced education in early years. Staff focus well on developing children's speaking and listening skills and this enables children to settle quickly, become secure in the environment and be ready to learn.
- Staff are rigorous in assessing children's progress regularly. This enables them to plan their teaching to match individual children's needs closely. Appropriate learning activities are planned that encourage children to become independent, motivated and curious learners. For example, during the inspection, children dressed as princes and princesses and learned how to talk, act and dance in their role, before taking part in a special ball and banquet.
- Staff focus strongly on developing children's social and emotional skills when they first start school. As a result, children quickly learn the school's rules and routines. Children show good levels of concentration and persevere with tasks for extended periods of time. They respond quickly to instructions from adults and cooperate well with each other.
- Overall, children enter the school with skills and abilities that are below those that are typical of their age. The proportion of children who reach a good level of development

by the end of the Reception Year is on a clear rising trend and was above the national average in 2016. This demonstrates the outstanding progress children make during their time in early years. Children are prepared well for Year 1.

- Parents are encouraged to be fully involved with their children's learning in the early years. They contribute to the school's initial assessment of their child and take part in a range of transition activities before they start school. Staff are working on developing better working relationships with a small number of parents who have not yet formed the same level of connection with the school.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 117206 |
| Local authority | Hertfordshire |
| Inspection number | 10025571 |

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 4 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 590 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Carol Pape |
| Headteacher | Teresa Skeggs |
| Telephone number | 01438 233900 |
| Website | www.peartreespring.herts.sch.uk |
| Email address | admin@peartreespring.herts.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 13–14 January 2009 |

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school has changed significantly since it was last inspected eight years ago. At the time of the previous inspection, Peartree was an infant school, with pupils attending the school from Reception until Year 2. The junior school that shared the same site closed on 31 August 2014. The infant school extended its age range to include key stage 2 pupils on 1 September 2014.
- Prior to its closure, the predecessor junior school was inspected in February 2014 and was judged to require improvement. The school had been in a category of concern and was judged to require special measures, from September 2012 until this point.
- The school did not meet current floor standards in 2016. These are the minimum standards, set by the government, for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors gathered a range of evidence to judge the quality of teaching and learning over time. Inspectors observed parts of 21 lessons, some jointly with the headteacher.
- Inspectors looked closely at the work in pupils' exercise books. They listened to pupils read and talked to them about their work.
- Inspectors looked at a range of the school's documents, including assessment information.
- Inspectors checked the school's single central record of pre-employment checks and other documentation concerned with the safer recruitment of staff and volunteers.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and other leaders, a group of pupils, governors and staff. Inspectors spoke with pupils throughout the day and with parents before school in the morning. The lead inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority on the telephone.
- Inspectors took into account 81 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire.

Inspection team

| | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|
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| Sean Powell | Ofsted Inspector |
| Lucy Bates | Ofsted Inspector |
| Christine Redpath | Ofsted Inspector |
| Jane Crow | Ofsted Inspector |

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