Inspection of a good school: Preston Primary School

Back Lane, Preston, Hitchin, Hertfordshire SG4 7UJ

Inspection date: 3 February 2022

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this initial (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a full inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a full (section 5) inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

The pupils at Preston Primary School are keen and caring. They enjoy their lessons and remember a lot of what their teachers share. Although pupils like to read to staff and to adults at home, the reading curriculum does not currently ensure all pupils learn to read well.

Pupils know they can effect change in their school. The recently appointed 'Preston Parliament' has already organised lessons about climate change and arranged intra-school sports events. Pupils know it was not easy for staff to organise after-school clubs during the pandemic. Still, they like the ones running currently and look forward to more starting again in the future.

Pupils behave kindly. They are taught about bullying in assemblies and lessons. Pupils say bullying happens rarely at their school. They say they would tell a member of staff if they experienced bullying. Pupils say staff are kind and good at solving any problems. The care staff show helps pupils feel happy and safe at school.

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

Leaders recognise the shortcomings in their reading programme. They are taking steps to put things right. They are putting in place a phonics programme better suited to pupils' needs. Currently, not all staff have received the relevant training. As a result, the quality of how reading is taught is too uneven. Staff share the new reading books with pupils, but some pupils receive books they cannot read. This is particularly problematic for the few pupils in key stage 2 who are still at the early stages of learning to read. Weaknesses in prior teaching mean these pupils do not remember the two- and three-letter sounds in words.

Governors know what aspects of provision need to be better. They have helped leaders access external advice to support improvements. However, governors are not rigorous enough in how they check these improvements are happening efficiently.

Leaders can evidence greater success elsewhere in their curriculum development. Teachers are clear about what knowledge pupils need to learn. Teachers work hard to design suitable sequences of learning, making use of the curriculum resources shared by leaders. The activities pupils complete help them to remember information over time.

Leaders are currently working with external support to develop their early years provision. Recently, there has been a particular focus on how staff organise the indoor and outdoor learning environment to best support children's learning. There is evidence that this is working better as children join in readily with the activities staff arrange. Staff have been tasked with hearing every child read to strengthen the early reading programme. However, the same inconsistencies in phonics teaching exist where the phonics programme is in the early stages of implementation.

Teachers assess pupils through the revised feedback and marking policy. They now provide clearer instructions or other exemplars to help pupils learn well. They also ensure pupils know what they have done well and what they must do to further improve.

Previously, the systems for identifying and supporting pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) lacked rigour. Leaders have put this right. Now support for pupils with SEND is specific, measurable and time focused. In this way, leaders can check the support pupils with SEND receive will help them to achieve their best.

Leaders actively look for ways to broaden pupils' experiences. For example, teachers organise local trips to complement pupils' learning well. Pupils spoke excitedly about a trip to the local church where they learned about the history of their village. Trips like these help pupils feel part of their local community. They also help pupils learn knowledge and skills they might apply to other learning.

From Reception to Year 6, pupils' behaviour is courteous and kind. Staff instil the behaviours they wish to see in pupils. Collective worship is used to share stories that teach pupils about important traits, such as trying new things and not giving up. Pupils like the recognition they receive in the weekly assembly for demonstrating these behaviours.

There are respectful relationships among leaders, staff and parents. Parents appreciate the kindness staff show them and their children. One parent summed up the thoughts of many in saying, 'The school may be small, but it definitely has a big heart.' Parents remarked particularly on the support they and their children received from staff during periods of remote learning. Staff say they feel valued by leaders. They say leaders will organise training to help staff achieve their career goals. Governors check regularly that school leaders and their staff are being supported well to manage their workload.

In discussion with the headteacher, the inspectors agreed that early reading and the role of governance may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders arrange informative training for staff. Staff say the weekly meeting focusing on aspects of safeguarding helps them remain vigilant. They know what to look for to identify a pupil at risk of harm. Staff swiftly report their concerns. Leaders follow up on these concerns appropriately. Leaders manage support for vulnerable pupils and their families well. Pupils say they feel comfortable raising concerns in school. They say they can talk to a trusted adult about their worries or write and share them with the 'worry monster' for their teacher to read.

Leaders ensure the necessary checks are completed on those individuals working or volunteering in the school. There were some issues regarding checks on agency staff, but leaders addressed these during the inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The recently adopted early reading programme is in the initial stages of implementation. Not all staff have received the training to implement it well. Some pupils receive books they cannot read. Leaders must ensure all staff receive training to ensure they teach and assess pupils' reading accurately and to a high standard, providing pupils with books that will help them become proficient readers.
- Governors know what improvements they want leaders to make to the school, but their systems for checking these are happening quickly and lack rigour. Leaders' plans for improvement lack the necessary precision. Governors cannot use these plans to hold school leaders to account effectively for school improvement. Leaders, including governors, must make sure that they share precise priorities for school improvement. Governors must also make sure that plans for development include clear, measurable targets against which governors can check the effectiveness of leaders' work to bring about necessary improvements.

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 a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in June 2012.

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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can complain to Ofsted.

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	117403
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10212396
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	74
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Mark Hart
Headteacher	Jacomina Luitingh
Website	www.prestonjmi.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	14 March 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Preston Primary School is a Church of England school. It is part of the Diocese of St Albans.
- The religious character of the school was inspected under section 48 of the Education Act (2005) in October 2017 and was judged to be good.

Information about this inspection

- 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 held meetings with the headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator, a representative from the local authority, a representative from the diocese and several governors.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and history.
- For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, 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 also heard several pupils read to a familiar adult.

- The lead inspector reviewed a range of school documentation and policies, including minutes of governing body meetings, reports from external advisers, the school's self-evaluation form and the school improvement plan.
- To inspect safeguarding, the lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead and reviewed records. The lead inspector met with the school secretary to scrutinise the single central record of recruitment and vetting checks. Inspectors also spoke with governors, staff and pupils.
- Inspectors spent time observing and speaking to pupils, including those who attend the before-school club.
- Inspectors gathered parents' views by reviewing the 38 responses and 29 free-text responses submitted to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View.
- Inspectors gathered staff members' views by speaking to several of them.

Inspection team

Daniel Short, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Charlie Fordham	Her Majesty's Inspector

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