

Inspection of a good school: Homer First School and Nursery

Testwood Road, Windsor, Berkshire SL4 5RL

Inspection dates:

6 and 7 October 2021

Outcome

Homer First School and Nursery continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school's values and motto, 'Be kind and work hard', are reflected in everyday life at Homer. Pupils are happy and feel safe. They know that their teachers are always there for them.

During lunch and breaktimes, pupils enjoy playing with their friends. Older pupils love getting active and navigating their way along the outdoor trim trail. Bullying isn't a problem. Pupils told the inspector that any fallings-out or occasional upsets are quickly sorted out. Usually, everyone gets on well together.

Pupils rise to their teachers' high expectations and most behave sensibly. They enjoy school and are interested in what they are learning. Pupils readily get stuck into their tasks and are keen to contribute to discussions. They also like helping out in class and around the school, such as being assembly or register monitors.

Pupils appreciate the many different times they get to read and know how important it is to read every day. Some older pupils described the way they like to lose themselves in a good story. They explained how books can paint a picture in your mind.

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

Leaders have put in place an interesting and varied curriculum. They have focused on improving English and mathematics and pupils continue to do well in these subjects. They have recently introduced a new mathematics curriculum. This has breathed fresh life into the subject and provides clearer guidance for teachers. There is now a more consistent approach to mathematics throughout the school.

Leaders have moved phonics up a gear. Younger pupils now have two phonics sessions every day. This is to reflect pupils' missed schooling during the COVID-19 pandemic and to sort out gaps in their learning. From the start of Nursery, listening to and enjoying stories feature daily. Phonics teaching gets going as soon as children join Reception.

Teachers put in place extra catch-up sessions if they think that pupils are not keeping up. Books are well matched to pupils' reading knowledge. Staff make sure that pupils use their phonics knowledge to work out new words. The school's virtual library provides a good range of audiobooks for pupils to enjoy listening to with their parents and carers at home.

The school's recent restructuring and the pandemic have stalled leaders' curriculum development plans. They have made a good start with physical education and music. However, the school's plans for most subjects do not yet include the detailed knowledge that leaders want pupils to learn and remember. Some important building blocks are being missed out and pupils are not achieving as well as they could. Nonetheless, subject leaders are knowledgeable. They have high ambitions to strengthen the curriculum in their areas of responsibility. Following recent training, governors understand the need to now focus their attention on the curriculum.

This is an inclusive school. The school's provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is carefully thought out. Pupils are supported well in class and teachers adapt activities well to cater for their needs. Staff are kind and sensitive to the social and academic needs of pupils with SEND.

Typically, teaching is engaging and teachers explain new concepts well. During lessons, they regularly go back to check that pupils have understood new content. The 'flashback four' sessions in mathematics help pupils to remember important number facts. However, sometimes activities do not support pupils' learning quite as well as teachers intend. This is because some activities focus pupils' attention on the activity, and not what their teachers want them to learn.

Pupils behave well and the school is a settled, happy community. Pupils like the way everyone is different and that they get to learn about other pupils' customs and beliefs. The school's personal, social and health education curriculum helps pupils to learn how to keep healthy and safe, including when online. Pupils learn about important safety rules, such as not communicating with people they do not know. Before the pandemic, the school offered lots of different clubs. Football has started up again and leaders are keen to get more clubs going as soon as possible.

Staff enjoy working at the school and feel supported by leaders. They appreciate the change to the school's marking policy. Teachers say that this has reduced workload and also improved the feedback they give to pupils and their parents. Many subject leaders are new to role. They value the meeting time leaders are ring-fencing, so they can focus on developing the curriculum.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff and leaders are committed to pupils' well-being and safety. Regular training ensures that staff are knowledgeable about safeguarding arrangements. Leaders make sure that concerns about pupils are noted and followed up. They keep in regular contact with the

local authority's safeguarding team. When needed, they enlist the help of specialist services. Leaders carry out appropriate checks for new staff. However, some aspects of the school's record-keeping are not systematic enough. This includes the record of recruitment checks. Governors have not kept sufficient strategic oversight of this aspect of the school's safeguarding arrangements.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school's curriculum is not yet planned and sequenced well enough in a number of foundation subjects. Some subject plans include broad topic areas but not the key knowledge leaders want pupils to learn and remember. Some important component knowledge is being missed out. This means that pupils are not building on their learning securely year by year. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum for all subjects identifies precisely what knowledge and important concepts they want pupils to learn and remember. It is clear from leaders' plans that they are in the process of improving the curriculum. For this reason, the transitional statements have been applied.
- Governors have only recently turned their attention to the school's wider curriculum. As a result, they do not yet have a good understanding of the quality of the curriculum and how well pupils are learning in foundation subjects. Governors need to implement their plans to improve their knowledge of the school's curriculum so they can sufficiently hold leaders to account for the quality of education.
- Sometimes, learning activities are not well matched to what teachers intend pupils to learn. As a result, some activities lead pupils to divert their attention to the activity and not to the intended learning. Leaders should make sure that learning activities are chosen carefully so they are consistently well matched to the intended learning and do not unintentionally divert pupils' focus.
- Some aspects of safeguarding and record-keeping are not systematic enough and leaders have not kept a close enough check on this. This risks important checks or information being inadvertently omitted. Leaders should take action to ensure that record-keeping is systematic and kept up to date. Leaders and governors need to ensure that they maintain better oversight of this vital aspect of the school's work.

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 May 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.

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	109873
Local authority	Windsor and Maidenhead
Inspection number	10207113
Type of school	First
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	2 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	223
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Lars Swann
Headteacher	Vicky Brand (Co-headteacher) Gemma Sharma (Co-headteacher)
Website	http://www.homerfirstschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	25 January 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has a nursery with provision for two- and three-year-old children.
- Since the previous inspection, the number of pupils on roll has declined. The school has recently reorganised classes in the school. The school now has one class in each school year in Reception, Nursery, Year 2, Year 3 and Year 4. In addition, there are three mixed-age classes of pupils in Reception and Year 1, Years 1 and 2, and Years 3 and 4 respectively.
- The school is led by two co-headteachers. At the time of the inspection, one of the co-headteachers was on maternity leave.
- The school does not currently use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and has taken that into account in her evaluation.

- The inspector met with the co-headteacher and the leaders with responsibility for SEND. At the request of the school, the co-headteacher currently on leave attended some meetings with the other co-headteacher and the inspector.
- The inspector met with three members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- The inspector considered the views of parents through the 40 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and parents' written comments. The inspector also spoke with parents on the morning of the second day of the inspection.
- The inspector took into account the views of staff during meetings with them and met with pupils and spoke with them during lessons and lunchtime. There were no responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys.
- To inspect safeguarding, the inspector reviewed procedures, policies and records, including the school's record of recruitment checks. The inspector met with the designated safeguarding leader (co-headteacher) and spoke with pupils and staff.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics and French. The inspector met with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, met with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector looked at curriculum plans in other subjects and sampled pupils' work in science and history.

Inspection team

Sue Cox, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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