

Inspection of a good school: Newtown School

Berkhampstead Road, Chesham, Buckinghamshire HP5 3AT

Inspection dates:

26 and 27 March 2024

Outcome

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy at this vibrant community school. They feel safe and know the school's values of curiosity, care and courage securely. One pupil summarised the thoughts of others, saying, 'Real courage is taking part in all of school life and never giving up.' Pupils are enthused by the many extra-curricular activities they take part in. After-school and lunchtime clubs inspire pupils, such as multi-sports, book club and entrepreneurs' club. Pupils have many opportunities to develop their talents and interests. Disadvantaged pupils respond to targeted opportunities, such as music lessons, successfully. A rich, carefully planned programme of trips and visiting speakers helps pupils to grow in confidence and their understanding of the world.

The school has a newly appointed leadership team who have very high expectations for what all pupils can achieve. Pupils are increasingly secure in reading and are strengthening their learning across other subjects. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have their needs identified quickly and this helps them to achieve well. However, some of what the school intends pupils to learn is still being refined and is not yet implemented consistently well. As a result, some pupils do not yet learn as well as they should.

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

In some lessons, staff do not have high enough expectations for pupils' behaviour. There is a lack of consistency in approaches to behaviour management, which means that pupils do not always know and follow the school's rules and routines. Some pupils' behaviour disrupts the learning of others and pupils do not always have clear enough boundaries to guide them in remaining focused on their learning. As a result, the curriculum is not implemented as effectively as it should be.

Pupils who have more challenging behaviour are supported well by the school, including working with external agencies where necessary. Suspensions are used fairly and appropriately. More serious behaviour incidents have reduced significantly recently. Most pupils have high levels of attendance. The school knows pupils and families very well and works closely to support pupils if they begin to have lower attendance than their peers.

Pupils learn to read effectively. Many pupils have additional barriers to their learning, such as some pupils who speak English as an additional language and some with SEND. The school's new approach to teaching phonics has helped all pupils to quickly embed new learning. Staff have very secure phonics subject knowledge. They share materials and model the pronunciation of sounds accurately. Staff assess pupils' knowledge and understanding and adapt the phonics programme to meet all pupils' needs. Books match closely to the sounds that pupils have learned. If any pupils fall behind, they catch up to their peers quickly. In early years, children rightly focus on the first stages of learning sounds and quickly develop a love of songs and rhyme through highly engaging and creative approaches.

The school's wider curriculum is not yet fully developed. Although the school's focus on reading is already having a strong impact on pupils' learning and the quality of education, in subjects such as geography, the school has not identified the precise steps of knowledge that they want pupils to learn or how these should be taught. Subjects are at different stages of development, with further work needed to identify specifically what pupils need to learn. In mathematics, the curriculum is planned more effectively, but not implemented well overall yet. Some successful approaches to teaching and learning are not used consistently by all staff across the school. As a result, pupils are less secure in some of the essential knowledge that they need, and pupils' outcomes in mathematics are not as high as they should be.

Governors know the priorities of the school and support leaders effectively. They check in regularly with staff and help to ensure that they manage workload successfully. Staff have strong dedication to supporting the community, and governors maintain a focus on this while supporting and challenging the school effectively. Staff build successful links with the community at every opportunity. The school celebrates festivals such as Easter, Diwali and Eid, for example, by sharing traditional food and learning about important people and objects from different religions. Parents are unanimous in their appreciation of the school's commitment to all pupils. One parent highlighted what was a common view of many, saying, 'Newtown is a delightful and inclusive school where all children feel happy.'

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Not all staff have high enough expectations for pupils' behaviour. As a result, low-level disruption is not always addressed quickly enough, and some lesson time is not used

as effectively as it should be. The school needs to ensure that all staff consistently manage behaviour well and help all pupils to know established routines and expectations clearly.

- In some subjects, the school is still developing the curriculum to identify the precise cumulative knowledge that they want pupils to learn and how this should be implemented. This leads to pupils having gaps in their knowledge. The school should ensure that clear cumulative knowledge is in place for all curriculum subjects with agreed approaches of how to teach and help all pupils to learn well.
- Approaches to teaching mathematics are not consistently effective across the school. Pupils' outcomes are not yet consistently good in mathematics, therefore. The school must continue to develop consistent and effective pedagogical approaches, ensuring that all staff develop the expertise that they need while maintaining a focus on improving pupils' outcomes.

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 October 2014

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	110217
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10296151
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	2 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	228
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Anthony Fortgang
Headteacher	Hayley England
Website	www.newtown.education
Date of previous inspection	25 September 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school appointed a new headteacher and implemented a new leadership team in September 2023.
- The school currently uses no alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, the staff and the members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. The inspector also met with a representative from the local authority and other leaders within the school.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject

leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and, where possible, looked at samples of pupils' work.

- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: 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.
- The inspector considered the views of parents shared through Ofsted Parent View. He gathered the views of pupils and staff through surveys, interviews and discussions conducted throughout the inspection.
- The inspector reviewed a range of the school's documentation, including self-evaluation reports, minutes of governing body meetings and behaviour incident logs.

Inspection team

Carl McCarthy, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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