

Inspection of a good school: Northern Junior School

Richmond Rise, Portchester, Fareham, Hampshire PO16 8DG

Inspection dates:

3–4 December 2019

Outcome

Northern Junior School continues to be a good school.

However, the inspector has some concerns that standards may be declining, as set out below.

What is it like to attend this school?

Northern Junior is a happy school. Pupils are proud to be here. The stunning grounds are an attractive place to learn and are put to good use. The popular gardening clubs, supported by members of the local community, have won the school category in 'Fareham in Bloom' for several years. Pupils told me about the slow-worms that live in the compost bins. They show great fascination for these reptiles and their chosen habitat.

Many pupils said how friendly other children are. One pupil commented, 'Everyone in this school has really good friends. No one is on their own.' Bullying incidents are rare. Pupils are confident that staff deal with any problems immediately. Pupils feel safe in school.

At the time of the last inspection, leaders were asked to improve pupils' attention in lessons. Leaders have been very successful here. Their expectations for behaviour are clear. Pupils behave very well and have excellent manners. Pupils revel in the leadership roles on offer, such as those of senior pupils and ambassadors, wearing their badges with pride. They love being role models to younger pupils.

Most pupils achieve well by the end of key stage 2. However, leaders know that some pupils could do even better.

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

Northern Junior has an increasing roll. This affects the organisation of the classes year on year as the school moves from mixed-age to single-age classes. As a result, the curriculum needs continual development. Leaders have started to review the curriculum to ensure that pupils know and remember more. However, at times, some teachers' subject knowledge is not secure and this confuses pupils.

Pupils study a wide range of subjects. Some subjects are well planned, such as writing, science and art. Leaders and teachers make learning exciting for pupils. For example, in a

Year 5 and Year 6 science lesson, pupils were making periscopes. This helped them understand how light travels and sparked their curiosity about the subject. Leaders know, however, that there is still work to be done to ensure that the order in which knowledge and skills are taught in subjects such as reading, music and computing is precise.

Leaders know exactly what they want pupils to learn in mathematics. However, not all teachers consistently follow leaders' plans. Some steps in learning are missed. This means that some pupils are being taught knowledge that is too hard for them. Leaders have had more success in supporting teachers to plan mathematics lessons that challenge the most able pupils.

Leaders make sure that pupils read for pleasure, both in school and at home. 'Reading heroes', volunteers from the local community, regularly hear pupils read. Pupils who join in Year 3 with an insecure knowledge of phonics are swiftly identified. Daily phonics lessons enable them to catch up. However, there are some gaps in pupils' comprehension skills and knowledge. This is because the reading curriculum is not yet fully planned. For example, pupils in lower key stage 2 cannot recognise different forms of poetry as the national curriculum requires. Outcomes in reading are not as strong as they are in writing and mathematics. Leaders have plans in place to strengthen the teaching of reading.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are fully included in the life of the school. Staff provide precise support for pupils with education, health and care (EHC) plans. However, lessons are not always adapted well enough for lower-attaining pupils and some pupils with SEND, and they struggle.

Leaders ensure that they prepare pupils for the world they live in. Pupils work hard and play happily together. They learn to respect themselves, others and the environment. Pupils told me how they are learning about global warming, working out how they can help. Recent philosophy training helps staff encourage pupils to have thoughts on a wide range of moral and ethical issues. There are many clubs that pupils can attend, such as football and guitar club, widening their interests and experiences further.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The executive headteacher ensures that all members of staff have pupils' well-being and pastoral needs at the forefront of their minds. Listening to pupils is important to everyone. Staff are well trained in all aspects of safeguarding and always act in the best interests of pupils. They are vigilant to anything that might be upsetting a pupil in their care. Safeguarding records are detailed. Leaders act quickly to get the right support for pupils. All appropriate checks are in place prior to staff and volunteers working with pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Planning for some subjects such as science and art is well developed. However, the content in other subjects, such as reading, computing and music, is not yet fully sequenced. Leaders need to continue their work in ensuring that all subjects, including reading, meet the full aims of the national curriculum and that learning builds consistently well on pupils' knowledge over time.
- Sometimes, teachers do not use the plans that leaders intend they should. This means that pupils' knowledge is not always built in precisely the right order. Leaders need to ensure that the intended curriculum is consistently implemented, particularly in mathematics, and that all staff have the subject knowledge they need to teach the content well in all subjects.
- Leaders have started to give teachers the training and support they need to be able to adapt the curriculum well for lower-attaining pupils and pupils with SEND. Provision for pupils with EHC plans is well considered and ambitious. Leaders need to ensure that teachers have appropriate strategies to adapt lessons across subjects for all lower-attaining pupils and pupils with SEND.

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 school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, 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 convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged Northern Junior School to be good in May 2016.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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 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	115935
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	10111381
Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	193
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Andrew Papanicolaou
Headteacher	John Bailey (Executive Headteacher) Amelia Cripps (Head of School)
Website	www.northern-jun.hants.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	10–11 May 2016

Information about this school

- The school is part of a federation with Northern Infant School. The two schools have the same governing body. An executive headteacher works across the federation.
- The executive headteacher joined the federation in April 2018.
- The school has an increasing roll. Currently, Year 3 and Year 4 pupils are taught as single-age classes, and Year 5 and Year 6 pupils as mixed-aged classes. The school will have all single-age classes by September 2020.

Information about this inspection

- During this inspection, I met with the executive headteacher and the head of school. I met with the chair of the governing body and two further governors and spoke to a representative from the local authority on the telephone. Discussions were also held with teachers and support staff, including the school's special educational needs coordinator.
- I did deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and science. This involved speaking to subject leaders, teachers and pupils. I visited lessons and looked at pupils' work and leaders' planning. I also heard some pupils read.

- To inspect safeguarding, I met with the school's designated safeguarding leads, spoke to staff, governors and pupils, checked recruitment procedures and looked at safeguarding records and policies.
- I considered the 23 responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire, including 14 free-text comments. In addition, 20 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for staff were considered, as were 33 responses to Ofsted's online pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

Lea Hannam, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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