

Inspection of a good school: Writtle Infant School

Lodge Road, Writtle, Chelmsford, Essex CM1 3HZ

Inspection dates:

24 and 25 May 2023

Outcome

Writtle Infant School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils personify the school's values of honesty, independence, perseverance, inclusivity and politeness (HIPIP). Learning how to model these values helps pupils meet leaders' and staff's high expectations, for example by listening to staff and showing perseverance to correct a mistake in their classwork. Pupils enjoy learning the range of subjects offered. Overall, they achieve well.

Pupils welcome and involve others in their learning and play. They benefit too from having close ties with the junior school. This includes older pupils supporting younger ones at lunchtime. It also involves Year 2 pupils visiting the junior school ahead of attending it. This helps to ensure a smooth transition.

As pupils treat others kindly, bullying is rare. Pupils are confident in staff's ability to sort out concerns quickly. This helps pupils to feel safe.

There are plenty of extra-curricular activities and trips that are available to all. Each year, pupils experience 10 events, for instance performing for village citizens or partaking in a nearby historical event. Being involved in local goings on helps pupils to be community minded. The extra-curricular clubs, including cricket, dance and football, are very popular. These help pupils to develop their talents and interests.

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

Leaders ensure the curriculum is well structured and focuses precisely on what pupils need to learn. This clarity serves staff well. Staff are well trained, so they are confident in teaching knowledge and skills to pupils. Staff's confidence shows in pupils paying close attention to their learning and typically remembering what they learn. This helps pupils to achieve well.

Teachers regularly check on pupils' understanding in all subjects. This means that any pupils falling behind can be quickly identified. Teachers then provide support to help them

catch up quickly. Leaders have high ambitions for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They expect them to achieve just as well as their peers. Staff are well trained to identify pupils' needs quickly and accurately. Leaders ensure that, for the most part, appropriate support is in place, and they liaise effectively with external agencies as needed.

Leaders place a high priority on teaching pupils to read as soon as they start in the early years. Staff lead daily phonics lessons that teach pupils the sounds letters make in a logical sequence. Most pupils read books that match sounds they know. Pupils who need to catch up are, in the main, quickly identified and provided with extra support. However, leaders have identified that a small number of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND do not learn to read as quickly and fluently as their peers. The current phonics programme does not provide a wide enough range of decodable books to provide the practise these pupils need to become fluent. This means that these pupils do not become as fluent in reading as quickly as most other pupils. Staff promote pupils' love of reading through visiting authors, storytelling and library visits.

Leaders have had a significant impact on raising attendance, particularly for pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils. Pupils' positive attitudes to learning mean little learning time is lost. Children learn what is expected of them and follow routines well. This helps ready them for learning in Year 1.

Leaders' commitment to pupils' personal development is strong. Leaders have created the HIPIP programme. This gives pupils time each week to develop their social skills and team problem-solving. The impact of this programme is clear within the way that pupils behave and interact with others.

Pupils learn lots about their place in the world. Where religious leaders visit the school to take assemblies, pupils understand faiths and beliefs that may differ to their own. Taking part in votes, such as electing school councillors, teaches pupils about the importance of democracy. Pupils enjoy having their voices heard.

Leaders care greatly for their staff. Leaders are approachable, meaning staff feel comfortable asking questions or raising concerns. Teachers appreciate how leaders space out deadlines. This, along with receiving resources and training to do the job well, means teachers have a manageable workload.

The governing body is proactive in holding school leaders to account. This includes governors being actively involved in school leaders' monitoring of the curriculum. This helps governors to have a knowledge of pupils' educational performance.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils feel safe and are safe. They can explain clearly how to keep themselves safe from a range of potential risks. Pupils are confident in talking to adults in the school if they have any concerns.

The culture of safeguarding is robust. Leaders have ensured that all staff and governors are trained to be vigilant to any potential safeguarding concerns. This includes clear processes for safer recruitment and the management of allegations against staff.

Staff identify and report concerns quickly. Leaders then take rapid action to keep pupils safe, involving external agencies as appropriate.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- A small number of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND do not learn to apply their phonics knowledge as well as their peers. The current phonics programme does not provide a wide enough range of books that match the sounds these pupils are learning. These pupils do not get the practise they need to become fluent, accurate readers, so they do not all achieve as highly as they could by the time they transition to junior school. Leaders should ensure that all pupils get sufficient opportunities to read books matched to their phonics knowledge so that all pupils gain the best possible foundation in early reading.

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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in December 2017.

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](#)' 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	114917
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10268640
Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	176
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Esther Burton and Matthew Coffey (Co-Chairs)
Headteacher	Helen Castell
Website	www.writtleinfantschool.com
Date of previous inspection	30 November and 1 December 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- From September 2023, an executive headteacher will oversee Writtle Infant School and Writtle Junior School.
- School leaders do not currently use alternative provision for any pupils.
- There is before- and after-school childcare for pupils who attend the school. It is run by two separately registered and inspected childcare providers.

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 leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector held meetings with leaders, including the headteacher, deputy headteacher, special educational needs coordinator and co-chairs of the governing body.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in the following subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their

learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector also listened to a sample of pupils read to a familiar adult.

- The inspector reviewed the arrangements for safeguarding by scrutinising safeguarding records and policies, meeting separately with leaders and governors, and holding separate discussions with staff and pupils.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and outside during social times.
- The inspector viewed a range of the school's documentation provided at the start of the inspection, including the school improvement plan and minutes from meetings of the governing body.
- The inspector took account of the views expressed via surveys, including Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Rowena Simmons, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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