

Inspection of an outstanding school: John Hellins Primary School

Brownswood Drive, Potterspur, Towcester, Northamptonshire NN12 7PG

Inspection dates: 17 and 18 May 2022

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of outstanding 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?

John Hellins Primary School is a very happy school. Pupils, parents, carers and staff say so. It is clear to see that pupils love their learning. Teachers have high expectations of them. Pupils want to do well and demonstrate the school's ethos of 'being the best we can be'.

Pupils' behaviour across the school is calm and sensible. At social times, they enjoy many activities and play happily together. Pupils have trusting relationships with school staff. They say that they feel safe. Leaders and school staff help pupils to sort out any problems they may have. Pupils say that bullying is rare. They trust that adults would stop any unkind behaviour straight away.

Pupils enjoy taking on responsibilities. They love looking after the school rabbits and chickens. Pupils develop their sense of responsibility by looking after their class garden plots. The school council leads fundraising events to buy books for the school and raise money for charities.

Parents value very much the warm and welcoming culture that the school provides. One parent's comment summed up how many feel: 'John Hellins is an amazing school. The teachers are so supportive and really care about the children.'

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

Leaders sequence the most important knowledge and vocabulary that they want pupils to know and remember in all subjects. They have developed an ambitious curriculum that helps to build up pupils' knowledge in a logical way. Subject leaders have strong expertise and work effectively as a team. In a few subjects, the full impact of this well-planned curriculum is yet to be seen. For a few pupils, knowledge in these subjects is less secure.

This is because the curriculum is not fully embedded, partially due to the impact of COVID-19.

Leaders check that the planned curriculum is being delivered well. Staff access regular training to keep their subject-specific knowledge up to date. They work well with other colleagues, including colleagues from other schools, to share ideas and expertise.

Teachers know their pupils well. They provide regular opportunities for pupils to recall prior learning. For example, in phonics lessons, pupils revisit the sounds they have learned daily. In mathematics, pupils regularly practise their multiplication tables.

Children in the early years get off to a great start. They begin their journey of learning to read as soon as they start school in the Reception class. Teachers follow a consistent approach to teaching new letters and sounds. They make sure pupils read books matched to the sounds they know. They adapt their approach, if necessary, to help pupils keep up. Any pupils who struggle receive additional support. Pupils are excited about the new library that is being built. They enjoy reading and listening to stories being read to them by their teachers. Reading is a top priority in school. Pupils understand why it is important to be able to read. They become fluent and confident readers.

Leaders identify pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) quickly. Leaders work with teachers and parents to provide support for pupils. Teachers break knowledge into smaller chunks to help pupils with SEND understand it. Teaching assistants support these pupils in the classrooms so that they can learn alongside their peers. However, some pupils' learning plans are not always precise enough in identifying their needs. They are sometimes too general. This means that a small number of pupils with SEND do not always achieve as highly as they might.

Teachers in the school are very skilled in their delivery of the curriculum. They have secure subject knowledge. All pupils show a real interest and curiosity in their learning. Teachers have encouraged pupils to be inquisitive and hungry to find out more. Pupils are motivated and behave well in class. Their positive attitudes and respect for each other mean that everyone can learn without distraction. Pupils speak about their learning with confidence.

Leaders have a strong focus on the development of the whole child. Pupils enjoy many activities beyond the classroom that support their personal development. These opportunities include outdoor learning, visitors to the school and exciting whole-school trips, including trips to Rushmere Park. Older pupils learn how to respectfully present their views and opinions. For example, in Year 6, pupils debate which religion loves their god more. Pupils enjoy activities that encourage a healthy lifestyle. These include sporting events and after-school clubs.

Governors are well informed about the school's priorities. Effective systems are in place to hold leaders to account. Staff are overwhelmingly positive about leaders' consideration of their well-being and workload.

In discussion with the headteacher, the inspector agreed that target setting for pupils with SEND and monitoring the impact of the curriculum may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders take their safeguarding duties seriously. They are diligent in their processes and procedures. All staff receive appropriate training to safeguard pupils' welfare. Staff know how to spot signs and report any concerns, however small, to leaders. Leaders work with different external agencies to get the right help for pupils and their families. Governors ensure appropriate checks are in place for the safe recruitment of staff.

Pupils have named trusted adults who they can report any worries to. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including online. The curriculum includes sensitively designed lessons to teach pupils about safeguarding.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum identifies the key knowledge and essential vocabulary that pupils should learn, and when. It is well sequenced. However, in some subjects, the curriculum is not yet fully embedded. A few pupils cannot consistently recall what they have been taught in those subjects. Subject leaders have not yet checked the impact of the curriculum on pupils' long-term memory. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum is fully embedded in all subjects and enables pupils to know and remember more as they progress through the school.
- A small number of targets in individual learning plans are not precise enough for pupils with SEND to make rapid progress and achieve exceptionally well. The small number of targets set for these pupils are too general and lack precision. As a result, some pupils with SEND do not achieve as highly as they should. Leaders should ensure that all pupils' targets are exact enough and monitored, to ensure they are able to achieve as highly as they could.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. 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 first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in October 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 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	121851
Local authority	West Northamptonshire
Inspection number	10229086
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	208
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Alan Davies
Headteacher	Jodie Matthews
Website	www.johnhellins.co.uk/
Date of previous inspection	18 and 19 October 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school uses one unregistered alternative provider.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school has 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.
- During the inspection, the inspector met with the headteacher, the assistant headteachers and a range of staff.
- The inspector met with members of the governing body and spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of the school's arrangements for safeguarding, the inspector reviewed school policies, procedures and records. The inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead and spoke with staff, governors and pupils about the school's approach to keeping pupils safe.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and religious education. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders to discuss the

curriculum, spoke with teachers, and spoke with pupils about their learning. The inspector visited lessons and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.

- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school. She considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments. The inspector met with groups of staff and pupils, and considered responses to Ofsted's surveys.

Inspection team

Kirsty Norbury, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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