

Inspection of an outstanding school: Alban Wood Primary School and Nursery

The Brow, Watford, Hertfordshire WD25 7NX

Inspection dates:

28 and 29 June 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?

Pupils enjoy school. They talk enthusiastically about their learning across a wide range of subjects. Pupils work hard and want to achieve well. They respond to the high expectations that staff have of them. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Pupils are keen to take on responsibilities in school, such as caring for the animals in the 'farm' or representing their peers on school council. Pupils develop their confidence and self-belief. Pupils learn about different cultures and celebrate diversity. They listen carefully to what others have to say. They thoughtfully consider different points of view. Pupils are proud to represent the school in local sports festivals. They value the wider experiences they have that help to make their learning memorable.

Pupils behave well. Relationships between staff and pupils are respectful and positive. Pupils are confident that adults will listen to their worries and help them resolve any concerns they may have. Bullying is rare. When it does happen, incidents are dealt with quickly by adults in school.

Most parents have positive views of the school. They appreciate the caring approach of staff that supports their children's well-being as well as their achievement.

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

Leaders have developed an ambitious curriculum across a broad range of subjects. They have carefully considered what pupils should learn in each subject from the early years to Year 6. Subject leaders are knowledgeable and well informed. Staff receive the training and guidance they need to teach the curriculum well. Teachers plan lessons that help pupils build on what they have learned before. Adults regularly check pupils' learning in

lessons. They quickly address any misunderstandings pupils may have. Staff ensure that pupils have the practice they need to secure important knowledge and deepen their understanding. As a result of this all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, make good progress and achieve well.

Pupils enjoy reading. They talk with interest about the authors they enjoy and the books they read. In the Nursery class, children explore the sounds they can make with their voices from the different shapes they make with their mouths. Working in small groups, children become familiar with the phonics that they will learn more systematically when they join the Reception class. Leaders have recently introduced a new phonics programme. This is building on the effective teaching of phonics that was already in place. Pupils who are at the early stages of learning to read practise and apply their phonics by reading books that are closely matched to the sounds they are learning. This is helping pupils develop their confidence and fluency when they are decoding texts. Pupils who are less confident readers are given additional support to help them catch up. Staff have received training in the new phonics programme. However, staff who provide additional support for less confident readers do not consistently apply the approaches that pupils learn in their phonics lessons. This means that for some pupils this additional support is not having as much impact on their reading progress as it could.

In the early years, children learn the routines that help them to become confident and independent learners. There is a strong focus on getting things right from the start, such as ensuring that children hold their pencils using an appropriate pencil grip and learning to form their letters correctly, so that pupils write fluently when they are older. The early years curriculum supports children well to develop their communication and their mathematical understanding. Adults help children develop their language and deepen their thinking through skilful questioning and discussion. Leaders have worked to maintain the quality of education in the early years during a period of staff change. However, some pupils are not as well prepared for learning in key stage 1 as they could be. Leaders are addressing this to ensure that all pupils make a positive start to their learning in Year 1.

The curriculum supports pupils' wider development well. Pupils learn tolerance and respect for different cultures and beliefs. Pupils can talk confidently about developing healthy relationships and how to keep themselves safe, including online. Pupils learn about the changes that happen as we grow. Older pupils are well informed about the risks related to the use of drugs, including alcohol and smoking.

Governors and the trust assure themselves through regular visits, and by talking with staff and pupils, that leaders' work to improve the school is making a positive difference for all pupils.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding. Leaders make sure that staff receive regular training. This helps keep their knowledge of safeguarding relevant and up to date. Staff

know how to recognise the signs of potential abuse and what to do if they have concerns. Systems for recording and reporting safeguarding concerns are clearly understood. Leaders act promptly to safeguard pupils and families. Leaders work closely with other agencies and are persistent in helping families access the support they need.

Governors and the trust make regular checks to assure themselves that the arrangements for safeguarding are robust.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Staff are developing their practice in implementing the new phonics programme. Additional support for pupils who are at the early stages of learning to read does not consistently build on the strategies that pupils are learning in their phonics sessions. Leaders should provide further training so that all pupils receive appropriate support which enables pupils to practise and apply their phonics knowledge, developing their confidence and fluency in reading.
- Leaders should ensure that the implementation of the curriculum is consistently strong throughout the early years foundation stage, so that all children are well prepared for learning across different subjects in key stage 1.

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 predecessor school, Alban Wood Primary School and Nursery, to be outstanding on 2-3 March 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.

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	144907
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10229081
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	239
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Patrick McAteer
Executive headteacher	Paul Sutton
Headteacher	Hazel Pinder (Head of School)
Website	www.albanwood.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Alban Wood Primary School and Nursery is part of the Agora Learning Partnership (formerly the Herts for Learning Multi Academy Trust) which consists of nine primary schools. Alban Wood Primary School and Nursery joined the trust in September 2017. Alban Wood Primary School and Nursery shares an executive headteacher with The Orchard Primary School, which is also part of the Agora Learning Partnership.
- The executive headteacher, head of school, and the school's leadership team have been appointed since the previous inspection.
- The chair of the academy governing body was appointed to the role in December 2019.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first 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 her evaluation of the school.
- At the time of the inspection, the school was being led by the head of school in the absence of the executive headteacher.

- The inspector spoke to the head of school, and members of the senior leadership team. The inspector spoke with the school improvement partner on the telephone.
- The inspector met with the chair and vice-chair of governors, and the governor responsible for SEND, together with the chair and vice-chair of the trust.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics, and physical education. 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 looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector met with the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) and the early years leader.
- The inspector met with the designated leader for safeguarding, together with the learning mentor, the well-being mentor, and deputy designated safeguarding leaders. The inspector discussed with them the arrangements that are in place to report, record, and follow up safeguarding concerns. They discussed training for staff. They discussed leaders' work with other agencies to support the safeguarding of vulnerable children and families. The inspector reviewed the single central record of pre-employment checks.
- The inspector reviewed leaders' records of incidents of behaviour and bullying.
- The inspector observed pupils while they were learning and playing in the nursery setting.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and during playtimes.
- The inspector visited an assembly.
- The inspector spoke with groups of pupils to gather their views of the school. The inspector also spoke with pupils in the playground.
- The inspector took account of the 40 responses to Ofsted Parent View including the 26 free-text comments.
- The inspector considered the 90 responses to the pupil survey and the 21 responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Katherine Douglas, 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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