

Inspection of a good school: Fir Tree Junior School

Radnor Road, Wallingford, Oxfordshire OX10 0NY

Inspection dates:

6 and 7 July 2022

Outcome

Fir Tree Junior School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive at this friendly, welcoming school. Leaders place the school values of respect, tolerance, courage, friendship, perseverance and responsibility at the heart of their work, reinforcing them through assemblies and lessons. Pupils understand the importance of the values by seeing how they are demonstrated in the lives of inspirational people. As one pupil said, 'Our values are important as these are what we need to be successful in life when we are adults'.

Leaders aspire for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to achieve well. They make appropriate adaptations in lessons to ensure that all pupils understand what they are learning.

Pupils behave well. They are taught to show high levels of consideration towards their peers and towards other people. Bullying is not tolerated. On the rare occasions that bullying happens, adults deal with it quickly and effectively.

Pupils enjoy making a difference to their school, the local community and the wider world. They are rightly proud that they grow fruit and vegetables in the school allotment for use in school dinners. Pupils have raised money for both local and international causes, including a local animal rescue centre and funding tree planting for a community in Tanzania.

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

Leaders have designed a broad and ambitious curriculum. They have identified the essential knowledge and skills that pupils need to learn in all subjects. In most subjects, they have made sure that this knowledge is taught in a clear sequence over time. This means pupils can make connections between topics to help them remember their learning well. Subject leaders' strong subject knowledge means that they are well on the way to ensuring that whole curriculum is implemented effectively.

However, teachers' subject knowledge is not consistently strong across the whole curriculum. Where subject knowledge is strong, teachers set tasks that help all pupils to achieve well. In history, for example, teachers routinely make references to previous learning when explaining new ideas. They check pupils' understanding regularly and adapt activities to ensure that all pupils, including those with SEND, learn as well as they could. However, this is not the case in all subjects. Sometimes, teachers do not set tasks that help pupils to achieve well. Leaders rightly recognise what they need to do to iron out these inconsistencies.

Leaders prioritise reading. They are passionate about ensuring that all pupils learn to love reading and can read well. Teachers use carefully chosen, high-quality texts to teach comprehension and extend pupils' vocabulary. Books are everywhere in the school and pupils value the very well-stocked library. As one pupil stated, 'In our library there is a book for everything and for everyone. We have so much to choose from'. Pupils at the early stages of learning to read, learn phonics using a structured programme. Pupils following this programme read books which are closely matched to the sounds they know. This allows them to learn to read quickly.

Pupils are calm, focused and engaged in lessons. When taking part in discussions, pupils listen and respond to each other well. They are polite and well mannered to each other and to adults.

The school's work to support pupils' wider development is a strength. Leaders systematically plan opportunities into the curriculum to enrich pupils' education. Pupils thoroughly enjoy their weekly forest school and gardening sessions. They experience several purposeful trips. These include visiting a hospital to learn first aid, attending a local citizenship event run by the emergency services, and visits to museums. All pupils learn to play a variety of musical instruments, including the recorder, the cornet and the guitar. Careers guidance begins early for pupils at Fir Tree. Leaders encourage high aspirations by organising opportunities for pupils to meet people from different trades, professions and the armed forces.

Leaders and governors work well together to continually improve the school. Staff value the support they receive from leaders to manage their workload. Staff and parents say that senior leaders are approachable and communicate well.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have established a strong culture of safeguarding. There are clear and comprehensive systems in place to identify pupils who are at risk of harm. Record-keeping is thorough and systematic. Leaders tackle all concerns about pupils as soon as they are identified. Leaders make sure that children and families in need of additional support access this quickly when they need it.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. They have a clear, age-appropriate

knowledge of how to stay safe online and when out and about in the community. They know where to go for help if they need to.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers' subject knowledge is not as strong in some subjects as others. Where this is the case, pupils do not always learn as well as they could. Leaders need to strengthen teachers' pedagogical content knowledge so that they ensure pupils learn and remember the intended curriculum.

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 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, Fir Tree Junior School, to be good in November 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	145649
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10238331
Type of school	Junior
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	225
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Kathy Winrow
Headteacher	Nilofer Khan
Website	www.firtreejuniors.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- This is a two-form entry, smaller-than-average junior school.
- It is an academy in the Oxford Diocesan School's Trust.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspector carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

- 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.
- During the inspection, the inspector met with the headteacher, senior leaders, the chief executive officer and a school improvement adviser from the Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust, and seven members of the governing body, including the co-chairs of governors. The inspector also met with the chair of the board of trustees.
- Deep dives were carried out in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. 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 reviewed the arrangements for safeguarding by scrutinising safeguarding records and interviewing staff, and through discussions with pupils.
- The views of parents and carers were considered through their responses to Ofsted Parent View. They 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

Sue Keeling, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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