

Inspection of a good school: Pear Tree Mead Academy

Pear Tree Mead, Harlow, Essex CM18 7BY

Inspection dates:

21 and 22 February 2023

Outcome

Pear Tree Mead Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pear Tree Academy is a calm and happy place for pupils to learn. Pupils enjoy coming to school, and they look forward to learning. They say learning is fun. Pupils learn and achieve well. Most behave well in the lessons and around the school.

Children in the early years develop strong relationships with staff. This continues as pupils move through the school. Pupils know and understand what bullying is, and they are clear that it rarely happens. Pupils trust adults to deal with issues if they arise. Pupils know who to speak to if they have worries or concerns.

From the early years, children learn life skills such as respect, self-belief, aspiration and resilience, preparing them for the wider world. Pupils in older year groups have leadership roles across the curriculum such as science ambassadors, play leaders, pupil leaders and school council which they value.

Pupils take part in experiences and activity days that raise their aspirations for future careers such as becoming a scientist or a doctor. Pupils enjoy sports, especially the swimming lessons and sports competitions that are on offer. However, they would like more after-school activities to choose from.

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

Leaders provide a curriculum that is well thought through and builds pupils' knowledge in most subjects from early years through to Year 6. Leaders have ensured that staff are well trained and have strong subject knowledge of the subjects they teach. Most lessons build on what pupils have already learned and allow them to apply their learning in more complex ways.

Teachers explain tasks and new content to pupils clearly. This includes for the youngest children in the early years. Staff use effective questioning to help pupils explore their learning. Staff use a range of strategies to check on how well pupils are learning the

intended curriculum. This helps them to identify which pupils need more help or guidance. Teachers successfully adapt their teaching when pupils need extra help so that pupils catch up with their classmates.

In some subjects, leaders' planning does not make clear the exact content that staff need to teach. Staff are not as well trained in these subjects. Subject leaders are not checking regularly how the curriculum is implemented. As a result, pupils do not learn the intended curriculum in these subjects as effectively, and they develop gaps in learning.

Leaders have made reading a priority. Children in early years begin phonics when they start Reception, learning the foundation skills. Teachers have training to teach phonics effectively, and this is regularly revisited. Pupils take books home that are closely matched to the sounds they are learning and help to develop their love of reading. If pupils fall behind, they get the help they need to catch up quickly. Pupils across the school become fluent, confident readers.

Leaders ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have their needs identified in a timely way. Most staff support pupils with SEND well to access the same curriculum as their peers. Occasionally, leaders do not ensure that staff know the precise strategies required to support pupils. Where this occurs, a small number of pupils are not as well supported in lessons and can become frustrated in their learning and lose concentration.

Most pupils behave very well. In the early years, where some children struggle to manage their behaviour, they are helped to understand the importance of good behaviour and kindness. Leaders and staff ensure that they apply the school's behaviour policy consistently and fairly. As they get older, pupils model the school's values such as respect and self-belief. They take turns and work together harmoniously. They show excitement in their learning. Pupils value the rewards systems. They look forward to 'positive notes' that celebrate positive behaviour and success in learning.

Leaders ensure that pupils' wider well-being and development are well supported. Alongside the additional visits, trips and visiting speakers, pupils are also supported to understand the wider world, such as different religions and cultures. Pupils are respectful and thoughtful in their discussions about this learning, and the importance of valuing everyone.

Staff at all levels value working with colleagues across the school. They feel well supported by leaders, and they value the team spirit in the school. Leaders, including governors, consider staff's workload and well-being when making whole school decisions.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff are well trained to identify and report safeguarding concerns. Staff use school systems effectively to record any issues. Leaders use a range of systems to ensure that pupils receive the right help at the right time. Leaders do all they can to ensure that

pupils and their families get the support they need. There is a culture of safeguarding at the school.

Pupils have many opportunities to learn about keeping safe in the curriculum. They learn how to stay safe online and in the wider world. Pupils feel safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some curriculum areas, leaders have not specified in their planning exactly what pupils need to learn. In these areas, staff are not ensuring that pupils have a depth of understanding. Leaders must ensure that curriculum planning sets out clearly what pupils should learn across the years. Leaders must carry out checks on their subject so that they can identify where there are gaps in learning and provide support for staff where needed to teach the curriculum as leaders intend.
- Leaders use several systems for recording information about pupils with SEND. In some cases, information is not shared appropriately with staff. Leaders must have robust systems in place to ensure that staff have the right information to support all pupils with SEND appropriately and make the adaptations needed for pupils to achieve well.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Pear Tree Mead Primary and Nursery School, to be good in September 2011.

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	141304
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10241660
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	476
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Rebecca Harvey
Headteacher	Christine Peden
Website	www.peartreemead.essex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	6 October 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Leaders do not make use of any alternative provision.
- The school has a pre-school class.

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 met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteacher, subject leaders and the assistant special educational needs coordinator.
- The inspector met with five governors, including the chair of the governing body.
- The inspector spoke to staff to discuss workload, well-being and safeguarding.
- 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, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- The inspector looked at other curriculum documentation, including science.
- The inspector spoke with pupils about their learning, safety and behaviour.
- Documentation relating to safeguarding, behaviour, attendance and suspensions were scrutinised by the inspector.
- The inspector took account of the 59 responses to Ofsted Parent view, including the free-text comments.
- The inspector took account of the 41 responses to Ofsted’s staff survey. The inspector spoke to several support staff over the course of the inspection.
- The inspector took account of the 174 responses to Ofsted’s pupil survey. The inspector spoke to several pupils in the playground over the course of the inspection.

Inspection team

Nerrissa Bear, lead inspector

His Majesty’s Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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