

Inspection of a good school: Godalming Junior School

Hallam Road, Godalming, Surrey GU7 3HW

Inspection dates:

26 and 27 January 2022

Outcome

Godalming Junior School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Godalming Junior School is a happy and welcoming place. Pupils aim to embody the school's motto of 'love, live, learn'.

Pupils clearly love being in each other's company and are especially friendly and respectful towards each other. They like the 'antibullying stars' who come up with practical solutions should anyone on the playground fall out. Pupils feel safe in school and know that an adult will listen if they have any bigger worries.

Pupils benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including many sporting clubs and competitions. Several pupils proudly wear green 'Blue Peter' badges, awarded for their participation in the 'power, plastics and plants' climate challenge. Themed '10richment' weeks help pupils to reflect thoughtfully about the world. For example, during the recent LGBTQ+ 'hero' week, pupils learned about the achievements of Tom Daley and Alan Turing. Every year, pupils enjoy celebrating national poetry week, when the most popular poem is put on permanent display in 'poetry corner'.

Importantly, pupils relish learning and work hard in their lessons. Leaders and staff have high expectations of all pupils. They have made sure the curriculum is typically well organised and interesting so that it helps prepare pupils well for future learning.

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

Leaders and governors know the school's strengths and areas to improve. They have overseen improvements to the curriculum and ensured that pupils' wider development is impressive. Staff are proud to work at the school and feel well supported by leaders. Parents are extremely positive about the school. As one parent said, 'My children have achieved well emotionally and academically and have thoroughly enjoyed their time there'.

The curriculum is typically well organised. Leaders have thought carefully about what they want pupils to know and remember throughout their time in school. Teachers have strong

knowledge of all the subjects they teach. They make sure that pupils understand how their learning builds on what they already know. Pupils are usually given sufficient time to practice and embed new knowledge and skills. This gives them confidence in their learning and helps them to achieve highly. These strengths are especially evident in mathematics.

In some subjects, for example in history, while individual sequences of learning are well thought through, the overall structure of the curriculum is a little unbalanced. As a result, pupils learn detailed knowledge about some topics, but do not spend quite enough time learning about others. Leaders are rightly addressing this to ensure that pupils have enough time to develop detailed knowledge in all the topics they learn about.

Most pupils have already learned to read when they join the school. Leaders make sure that these pupils further develop their reading skills. They introduce pupils to a broad range of high-quality writing in a range of genres. These pupils develop strong comprehension skills and love reading.

However, when pupils who join the school struggle to read, support is not as well organised as it should be. This year, leaders identified that a higher-than-usual proportion of pupils joining the school in Year 3 had gaps in their phonics knowledge. These pupils are being helped to fill these gaps with extra teaching in phonics. However, pupils are not being given enough time to practise reading the sounds they are learning. The books pupils use to practise reading are too hard for them because they contain sounds pupils have not yet learned. As a result, pupils do not catch up as quickly as they should do.

Pupils who need extra help, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are well supported. Teachers and teaching assistants are well trained in understanding pupils' needs. They skilfully ensure that activities are well matched to help pupils with SEND achieve in line with their peers. For example, in physical education, adults modelled how to move with control. In mathematics, adults' careful explanation, along with additional resources, helped pupils to understand the concept of equivalent fractions.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding. Staff are well trained to recognise the signs that might indicate a concern. They know the procedures they need to follow if they are worried about a pupil.

Safeguarding leaders are knowledgeable about safeguarding risks in the local area. Leaders liaise well with external agencies when a pupil needs extra help to keep safe. Leaders follow safer recruitment procedures when recruiting staff. Leaders make sure that the curriculum helps pupils to keep themselves safe, including when crossing busy roads and when using the internet.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Support for the weakest readers is not organised as well as it could be. As a result, some pupils who have gaps in their phonics knowledge do not get help to improve rapidly enough. The books they use to practise reading are not always well enough matched to the sounds they are learning. Pupils do not practise reading the sounds they know regularly enough. Leaders need to ensure that staff throughout the school have the detailed knowledge of phonics they need to quickly identify and help any pupil with phonics gaps. Leaders need to make sure that pupils have regular access to books that are well matched to the phonics they are learning. This will help the weakest readers to catch up quickly and become speedy, fluent readers.

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 second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good on December 2012.

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	125044
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	10207110
Type of school	Junior
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	237
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Michael Guest
Headteacher	Adam Samson
Website	www.godalming-junior.surrey.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	24 January 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of Godalming Learning Partnership, a group of local schools who work together to share best practice and provide professional development for their staff.
- The school currently uses no alternative provision.

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, deputy headteacher, special educational needs coordinator and members of staff. The inspector also met with members of the governing body and held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.

- The inspector did deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and physical education. For each of these subjects, she held discussions with subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke with staff and pupils and looked at pupils' work. The inspector also spoke to teachers and pupils about learning in other subjects and explored the curriculum in history.
- The inspector met with leaders to discuss pupils' behaviour and the wider opportunities the school provides. She also spoke with pupils about these aspects of the school.
- The inspector looked at the school's safeguarding records and spoke with leaders, staff and governors about safeguarding. She spoke to pupils about the school's work to keep pupils safe.
- The inspector considered responses to Ofsted's surveys for pupils, parents and staff.

Inspection team

Catherine Old, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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