

Hightown Primary School

Tunstall Road, Thornhill, Southampton SO19 6AA

Inspection dates

26–27 April 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school is not consistently good. As a result, pupils do not achieve as well as they should in English and mathematics, and too few exceed expectations.
- Not all teaching builds well on pupils' previous learning. Teachers do not always keep an overview of the progress taking place in lessons or act quickly to fill gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills.
- Teaching, particularly for younger pupils, does not include enough opportunities for pupils to develop as independent learners or to demonstrate their learning.
- Not all support staff make a good enough contribution to pupils' learning in lessons.
- Pupils do not always understand the purpose of their lessons or what they are supposed to learn.
- Teaching in the early years does not ensure that pupils are sufficiently well prepared for Year 1. Pupils do not make enough progress in developing their reading and writing skills. Resources are not used well to stimulate and engage pupils.
- The trust directors, despite being generally accurate in their views about the school, do not always check carefully enough the information about the school, to enable them to hold school leaders fully to account.
- Although the school is moving forward under good leadership, those parents that responded to the questionnaire expressed a lack of confidence in the leadership and management of the school.

The school has the following strengths

- Senior leaders are relentless in their commitment to helping the school to get better. This has led to some significant improvements in the school from a very low starting point.
- The strong partnership within the academy trust provides effective support, which is helping to improve the quality of teaching and learning and is strengthening leadership at all levels.
- The behaviour of pupils has been transformed over the past year and is now good. Pupils who join the school with particularly challenging behaviour are managed well by teachers and leaders.
- The personal development and welfare of pupils is a strength of the school. There is particularly good support for the needs of the most vulnerable pupils.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school, so that it is consistently good by:
 - ensuring that learning is always meaningful and purposeful, so that pupils understand what they are supposed to be learning and why
 - challenging pupils' thinking and providing more opportunities for them to demonstrate their understanding and ability to work with increasing levels of independence
 - ensuring that teachers keep an overview of all of the teaching and learning in their class, while making consistently effective use of other adults to support specific pupils in their learning.

- Raise achievement in English and mathematics by:
 - building effectively on pupils' previous learning to ensure that accelerated rates of progress are sustained, especially for the most able
 - ensuring that gaps in pupils' learning are filled quickly and securely.

- Improve the quality of provision in the early years so that pupils are ready for Year 1 by:
 - ensuring that teaching is consistently good and supports pupils in making accelerated progress, especially in reading and writing
 - making sure that all pupils have access to high-quality resources to stimulate them and maximise opportunities for learning.

- Further strengthen the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that the trust directors check for themselves the evidence they receive from school leaders to ensure that they have a completely accurate view of the work of the school and the progress of pupils
 - leaders and directors building on their work with parents and carers, to develop a closer partnership that benefits pupils.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Under the strong and effective leadership of the executive headteacher, senior leaders have established a clear and shared vision for the school. This is focused on accelerating pupils' progress, and ensuring that pupils are safe, ready to learn and feel well supported.
- Senior leaders deal with inadequacies head-on. This has transformed the school so that it now provides a calm and purposeful atmosphere.
- Leaders and managers are united in a common purpose of raising teachers' expectations of pupils and pupils' aspirations of themselves.
- The relentless focus on raising standards and improving the overall effectiveness of the school, from a very low starting point, has led to good improvements in areas, such as in the behaviour of pupils.
- The school's self-evaluation is honest and accurate. This enables leaders and managers to target the few remaining areas of underachievement and weaknesses in teaching and learning.
- The close working partnership with Kanes Hill Primary School is developing leadership capacity and expertise among teachers and leaders at all levels. Consequently, middle managers are developing their role well. They recognise that there is still more to do, such as tracking and monitoring pupils' progress across the curriculum and improving the curriculum at key stage 1.
- The rigorous management of staff performance contributes well to improving the quality of teaching and outcomes for pupils.
- Subject leaders are developing a curriculum that has what they call a 'wow' factor for their pupils. This is so that teaching is not just about the progression of skills but also the promotion of a love for learning. The school also provides opportunities for pupils to go on residential visits to help build their independence, self-confidence and team spirit.
- Leaders and managers promote aspects of fundamental British values in assemblies and the curriculum. Although all staff have completed training about the dangers of extremism and radicalisation, this aspect of the school's work is still in the early stages of development.
- Senior leaders are using additional funding through the pupil premium and sports premium effectively to help raise standards. This has led to an increase in rates of participation in sporting and extra-curricular activities. Disadvantaged pupils are also making better progress this year overall, for example in phonics (letters and the sounds that they make).
- The school is actively pursuing partnership work with a local school to widen pupils' cultural experiences. Links with local churches and visits to mosques and a Sikh temple are used to promote pupils' understanding of a multicultural and multifaith Britain. These links are also used to help pupils to learn about spirituality across different faiths.
- The leadership and management of special educational needs has been strengthened thanks to the partnership work with the trust's inclusion leader. This has led to improved systems to track and monitor pupils. As a result, more of the pupils who have special educational needs or disability are progressing well and better than has previously been the case.
- This is an inclusive school. Leaders and managers ensure that pupils with medical needs as well as those with social, emotional and behavioural problems are supported well within the school and are included in lessons and daily activities.
- Feedback from the staff survey was generally positive. One member of staff wrote: 'Hightown has come a long way on its journey.'
- While senior and middle leaders are improving the quality of teaching and learning in English and mathematics, they have yet to secure consistently good levels of progress and higher standards across the school.
- The majority of parents and carers that responded to the questionnaire do not believe that the school is well led and managed. Senior leaders and directors recognise the need to build more effective relationships with parents and carers for the benefit of pupils.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Between them, the trust directors have experience and expertise in business, finance and education.
 - They challenge the school about the progress it is making, particularly in relation to pupils at the end of Years 2 and 6.
 - Directors are fastidious in checking the school's finances and this includes how additional funding is used and the impact it is having, particularly on disadvantaged pupils.

- The pay committee discusses proposals about staff pay increases and reviews proposals against targets and whether or not these have been met. This includes in relation to the executive headteacher.
- Trust directors have attended training related to child protection, safeguarding and the safer recruitment of staff.
- The views of trust directors' about the strengths and weaknesses of the school are generally accurate. However, some of their reporting about outcomes for pupils is at times overly generous. They do not always check thoroughly enough that the school's documentation aimed at helping to keep pupils safe is all completely up to date.
- The trust directors, while challenging of school leaders, do not always drill down more deeply to check evidence provided by the school in order to ensure that their views about the work of the school are completely accurate.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
 - There are four members of staff designated as safeguarding leads at the school, including for the early years. They have all received the required training, which has been kept up to date.
 - Staff know how to help keep pupils safe from the dangers of radicalisation and extremism.
 - The school keeps appropriate records of concerns raised of a safeguarding nature. However, their work with other agencies is not always recorded. Leaders and managers have not ensured that the impact of the work done to support the needs of pupils who find themselves in the most vulnerable circumstances is always evaluated and recorded.
 - Trust directors ensure that at least one person on any appointment panel has undergone safer recruitment training.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school requires improvement. This is because it is not consistently good across the school.
- Not all teachers, particularly at key stage 1 and in the lower juniors (lower down the school), plan or present work in a way that is sufficiently meaningful to pupils. As a result, the progress of some pupils, including the most able, slows.
- Teachers do not all keep a watchful eye to check that pupils are getting on well with their work and are being well supported by the additional adults working in class.
- Where teaching is weaker, teachers have not ensured that they have provided pupils with clear and specific direction about what is expected of them. Consequently, in a few lessons, some pupils do not understand the purpose of activities and what they are meant to be learning.
- Teaching, lower down the school, does not always challenge pupils' thinking sufficiently well or provide opportunities for them to demonstrate what they have learned, particularly in mathematics. In some cases, pupils are not encouraged to develop the skills required to enable them to work successfully without adult support. Pupils, for example in the lower juniors, do not make enough use of dictionaries or a thesaurus to help them to check their spelling or find synonyms.
- Evidence from the work seen in pupils' books highlights that gaps in pupils' basic skills are not picked up or filled quickly enough, especially for younger pupils. As a result, teaching in Years 4, 5 and 6, has to fill gaps in aspects of the curriculum that have not been sufficiently well taught in previous year groups.
- The work in pupils' books shows that teachers do not all build well on pupils' learning from the previous year. This is particularly the case for the most able.
- The quality of teaching in English is stronger than it is for mathematics at key stage 1. This is because teachers' subject knowledge is more secure in English.
- Although the school has several additional adults often working in lessons to support teaching and learning, they do not always make a good enough contribution to the teaching, particularly at key stage 1. At times, they are not sufficiently well informed or skilled about how best to support the additional needs of pupils.
- The quality of feedback that teachers provide to pupils varies across the school, but is stronger for older pupils at key stage 2 than in the rest of the school.
- Inspectors found evidence of high-quality teaching and learning in Year 6 and in the mixed Year 4 and 5 classes. In one of the Year 4 and 5 lessons observed, pupils were fully captivated by the nature of their

mathematical investigation and challenge. In this lesson, pupils learned how to work out the fraction of a given amount. During the course of the lesson, the teacher identified the few pupils who were not confident in their knowledge of times tables and ensured that these pupils revisited the multiplication tables before they started working on fractions. This enabled all pupils to make good progress and use inverse operations confidently to check the accuracy of their answers when working out fractions.

- In Year 6, teaching inspires pupils to want to learn and promotes depth in their learning. The most able benefit from teaching provided by a senior leader from Kanes Hill Primary School to help them to master aspects of mathematics such as using algebra to work out missing numbers of internal angles.
- Teaching in Year 6 contributes well to pupils' cultural development; it inspires pupils to work hard and to do their best. A good example was the opportunity afforded to pupils to view a live production from the Royal Shakespeare Company, by way of commemorating the anniversary of Shakespeare's death. This inspired pupils to want to write, but put their story in a context of their choosing. As a result, one pupil wrote a very engaging start to his story that makes the reader want to find out what happens next: 'All of the world is a galaxy, and all the men and women intelligent time lords; they have their death and their rebirth, and one time lord time travels many times...'
- Pupils told inspectors that teachers make their learning fun and that they appreciate the feedback they receive about their work.
- Although the overall quality of teaching requires improvement, it is improving. In Years 4, 5, and 6, it is securely good.
- The large majority of parents that responded to the questionnaire believe their child is taught well.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupil's personal development and welfare is good.
- There are effective systems in place to ensure that staff understand pupils' personal, social and emotional needs. Consequently, staff are particularly well informed about how to help those pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable.
- Improvements to the school environment have made a significant contribution to pupils feeling valued, supported and safe. Together with teaching, which is improving, this is helping pupils to blossom in their personal development.
- From an early age, pupils at the school are now developing self-confidence and improving their self-esteem.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet.
- Pupils' increased participation in extra-curricular and sporting activities makes a good contribution to their physical development and well-being.
- The school's close links with specialist outside agencies enables staff to access expert guidance, and support to enable them to the needs and emotional well-being of all pupils. This includes pupils with protected characteristics under the Equalities Act 2010.
- There are good links with local secondary schools to help prepare pupils effectively for the next phase of their education.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The vast majority of pupils are considerate, polite, friendly and cooperative.
- They behave equally well in lessons at playtimes and around the school. This contributes to a calm and orderly environment.
- Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe in school and there is no bullying. One pupil stated: 'We don't do bullying.'
- Pupils know who to talk to should they have a concern. They are confident that staff would help them to resolve any disputes that arise with other pupils so that they become friends again.
- Pupils respond well to their teachers' high expectations about how they should behave in lessons.
- Where some pupils struggle to sustain levels of concentration in class, this is generally because the quality of teaching is not good enough. Nevertheless, even in such circumstances the vast majority of pupils remain well behaved.
- Staff are adept at managing the few pupils who arrive at the school with very challenging behaviour and

emotional needs. These pupils are helped to think about their behaviour, to manage their emotions and to develop self-discipline. Despite a good level of success with many pupils, for a very small minority, there is still a way to go.

- Attendance levels have improved from having previously been below average to broadly average.
- Just over half of the parents who responded to the questionnaire do not believe that the school makes sure that pupils are well behaved.
- Senior leaders recognise that behaviour at the school used to be very poor. However, the significant improvements to pupils' behaviour are a testament to how far the school has come in the last couple of years.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Outcomes for pupils require improvement because pupils are not yet making the progress of which they are capable in English and mathematics.
- In 2015, the proportion of pupils in Year 1 that did not achieve the expected level in phonics was significantly below average. Furthermore, fewer disadvantaged pupils compared to others had achieved the expected standard.
- In 2015, although standards by the end of key stage 2 were broadly average in reading and writing, they were significantly below average in mathematics. Boys had caught up with the girls and disadvantaged pupils achieved in line with others, as did pupils who have special educational needs or disability. The progress pupils had made, given their starting points, was broadly average in mathematics, reading and writing, but very few, compared to pupils in most schools, had made better than expected progress, particularly in mathematics. The gap between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils reduced in 2015, for the proportion making expected progress. However, the gap increased significantly for those that made more than expected progress, with far fewer disadvantaged pupils making better than expected progress.
- Current rates of progress are better than last year, but are still not good enough throughout the school.
- In Year 1, disadvantaged pupils, although doing better than last year, are not doing as well as others in phonics.
- At key stage 1, the progress pupils make is weaker in Year 1 than it is in Year 2, and pupils are making less progress in mathematics than they are in English in both year groups.
- The progress of those pupils that were most able at the end of Reception last year is not being sufficiently well sustained in Year 1.
- Due to prior gaps in learning, few pupils across key stage 2 are currently set to exceed age-related expectations.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability are not all making sufficient progress at key stage 1.
- The progress of the most able at key stage 1 and lower key stage 2 is not as good as it could be. This is because insufficient account is taken of pupils' prior aptitudes, knowledge and skills, particularly at the start of the school year.
- Nevertheless, rates of progress are improving this year. This is reflected in examples of good work seen in pupils' books across both key stages.
- Progress is accelerating particularly well in English in both key stages 1 and 2, and in mathematics at key stage 2. The exception is where teaching is weaker.
- A forensic analysis of pupils' phonics results from last year enabled leaders to ensure that teaching targeted specific areas of weaknesses in the teaching and learning of phonics. As a result, a higher proportion of pupils are on track to reach the expected standard this year in the phonics screening check.
- The improvements made to pupils' phonics skills are evident in the clear progression they are making with their reading this year, particularly in Years 1 and 3.
- A higher proportion of pupils are on track to achieve age-related expectations, particularly in reading and writing by the end of key stage 1.
- At key stage 2, pupils are making good progress in English and mathematics, particularly in Years 4, 5 and 6.
- Gaps between disadvantaged and other pupils are closing but not consistently well across the school.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability at key stage 2 are achieving as well, if not better, than others.

- The most able are now making good progress at key stage 2, particularly in Year 6.
- A large majority of parents that responded to the questionnaire believe that their child is making good progress.

Early years provision

requires improvement

- The early years provision requires improvement because by the end of the Reception Year, pupils are not prepared well enough for Year 1.
- Attainment on entry is below that typical for their age, particularly in areas such as language for communication, managing feelings, behaviour, making relationships and in reading and writing.
- Although pupils are currently making good progress in some areas, such as in speaking and listening and in managing their behaviour, their progress requires improvement because it is not good across other areas of learning, especially in reading and writing.
- The proportion of pupils that achieved a good level of development by the end of Reception has been below the national average for the last couple of years. A higher proportion are expected to reach a good level of development this year.
- Disadvantaged pupils currently achieve in line with their peers, but boys continue to lag behind the girls, although not as much as has previously been the case.
- Teaching does not help pupils to make accelerated progress in reading and writing to help them, especially those of lower ability, to achieve well in these areas. Teaching and support staff do not always use a suitable range of resources and strategies to support pupils' learning and development, and to challenge the most able.
- The classrooms are not equally well resourced or stimulating; and, the early years leader recognises that the outdoor learning environment is not sufficiently well used.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability are not always provided with good support for their learning. This is because not all staff are sufficiently aware of pupils' needs and how to support them.
- Pupils pay attention when being shown new skills but are not provided with enough good opportunities to apply these skills.
- The early years leader has produced a clear action plan that identifies the areas in need of improvement. However, the plan does not include targets against which progress can be measured, and disadvantaged pupils are not identified clearly enough as a group.
- Nevertheless, the progress of pupils is now being reviewed regularly. Additional support is provided to staff where needed. However, difficulties in recruitment are hampering the school's efforts to improve the quality of provision in this part of the school.
- Themes have been chosen to engage the interests of boys. Firefighters, for example, were invited into the school with their fire engine. This prompted a lot of excitement among the pupils and encouraged the boys, in particular, to want to write about being a firefighter.
- Staff make effective use of games and encourage pupils to take part in role-play activities. This is helping pupils to make good progress in developing their self-confidence, their ability to make relationships and to talk about their thoughts and feelings.
- Pupils are kept safe and there are high levels of supervision when they are in the playground.
- Pupils learn the importance of eating well and enjoy healthy snacks, such as fruit, at breaktimes.
- The early years leader has correctly identified the need to work more closely with parents to help support the needs of pupils.

School details

Unique reference number	139947
Local authority	Southampton
Inspection number	10011716

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	193
Appropriate authority	The Hinkler Academies Trust
Chair	Ann Langran
Executive headteacher	Sallyanne Stanton
Telephone number	02380 403536
Website	www.hightownsch.net
Email address	info@hightownsch.net

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged and supported by the pupil premium is more than double the national average. The pupil premium provides additional funding for looked after children and pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The vast majority of pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is above average. There are more pupils with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan than in most schools.
- The school became an academy in September 2013 and is part of the Hinkler Academies Trust.
- The executive headteacher, who is a national leader of education, was appointed to the school in 2013. She is also the executive headteacher of Kaneshill Primary School, which is part of the same academy trust.
- The school is struggling to recruit staff, particularly in the early years.
- The school meets the current government floor standards.
- The school has appointed a new headteacher for September 2016.
- The last inspection of the predecessor school was in September 2012. The school was judged to have serious weaknesses.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils working in 11 lessons or part lessons. The majority of these observations were done alongside one of the school's senior leadership team.
- Inspectors listened to pupils from Years 1 and 3 reading. They looked at the work in pupils' books alongside senior leaders, and also looked at displays around the school.
- One of the inspectors spoke informally to parents at the beginning of the first day of the inspection.
- Discussions were held with school leaders, staff, and two of the trust directors, including the chair.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils to seek their views about the school.
- A range of school documentation and policies were reviewed. These included information about pupils' behaviour, their attendance, the progress they are making and the curriculum. Inspectors also looked at a range of the school's policies, including those relating to child protection and safeguarding and equalities. Inspectors reviewed minutes of meetings held by the board of trustees and their sub-committees, the school's self-evaluation, its operational plan and reviews undertaken by an external phase consultant.
- The school's systems for checking the suitability of staff to work with children was scrutinised.
- The content of the school's website was also reviewed.
- Inspectors took account of the 39 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, as well as 18 questionnaires completed by staff.
- The behaviour of pupils was observed in and around the school, including at playtimes.

Inspection team

Gehane Gordelier, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Lynn Martin

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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