

High Hurstwood Church of England Primary School

Chillies Lane, Uckfield, East Sussex TN22 4AD

Inspection dates

23–24 February 2017

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| Overall effectiveness | Outstanding |
| Effectiveness of leadership and management | Outstanding |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Outstanding |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare | Outstanding |
| Outcomes for pupils | Outstanding |
| Early years provision | Good |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Good |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The headteacher, together with staff, has successfully raised standards across the school so that outcomes are now outstanding. Every pupil is treated as an individual and thrives.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make better progress than pupils nationally because teachers plan appropriate activities to help them progress.
- Disadvantaged pupils achieve very well and make more progress than other pupils nationally in reading and mathematics.
- The curriculum is extremely interesting and wide-ranging. Pupils have opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge in different subjects exceptionally well.
- Varied opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills across the curriculum have contributed to rapid improvements in outcomes.
- Teaching is outstanding overall. Teachers are very skilled and ensure that all pupils learn well and are able to make rapid progress over time.
- Occasionally, teachers and other adults give pupils too much or too little support. This can slow pupils' progress in lessons and over time.
- The school works in close partnership with other schools to improve outcomes for pupils.
- Pupils really enjoy coming to school. Attendance has improved and the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent has reduced significantly.
- Behaviour is outstanding. Pupils care deeply about each other, their learning and their school.
- The school is very successful at promoting pupils' welfare including their emotional well-being. Safeguarding procedures are effective.
- Governors make a very strong contribution to the leadership of the school. They are highly ambitious about what leaders, teachers and pupils should achieve.
- Children make a good start to their learning in the early years. There are strong partnerships between school and home.
- Leaders recognise that the early years learning environment needs further development. They have plans to enhance the outside provision to provide children with more opportunities to challenge themselves and to make rapid progress.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop the early years learning environment further, especially outside, so that children are able to challenge themselves in all areas of learning.
- Continue to make effective use of expertise within the school and existing partnerships, so that teaching enables all groups of pupils to make rapid progress across the curriculum.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The headteacher has a strong moral purpose and the determination to do the right thing for every single pupil in her care. She knows each pupil as an individual and ensures that they are making as much progress as possible.
- Parents describe the school as a 'very special community'. For example, a parent who was new to the area wrote, 'We have been warmly welcomed by parents and teachers.' One member of staff described the school's ethos very clearly as one where staff 'very much work for the children and to ensure they reach their full potential, aim for the stars and thrive'.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders have raised their expectations of all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders have redesigned the curriculum to provide greater challenge in a wide range of subjects. Pupils are very well motivated and persevere to meet these high expectations.
- Staff say the headteacher is a 'joy' to work for as she cares deeply about their development. Every teacher has a leadership role within this school. Teachers know the strengths and weaknesses in their area of responsibility and have detailed plans to sustain existing high standards or develop their subject further.
- For example, the leader responsible for English has reflected on the outcomes of national assessments in 2016 and is having a measurable impact on raising current standards in Year 6 and across the school. Meanwhile, the leader responsible for mathematics has led a professional debate with colleagues about the mathematics curriculum to ensure that all pupils are able to excel.
- There is a culture of sharing knowledge and training across the school and with other partnerships, including the teaching school alliance. As a result, the school benefits from a much wider range of expertise to enable leaders and teachers to raise standards further. In addition to this, the headteacher and other teachers are commissioned to lead training and share their outstanding expertise with other schools in the locality.
- The curriculum is interesting and develops a wide range of skills. Pupils really enjoy learning about the different topics and talk fondly about their learning in previous year groups. Experiences such as the opportunity for Year 6 pupils to design, build and race their own kit car leave pupils with lasting memories of an enjoyable and broad education. The science curriculum allows pupils to experience science practically, and sequentially builds pupils' skills in working scientifically as they progress through the school.
- Pupil premium funding has been used most effectively in Years 5 and 6 to provide additional teaching. As a result, in 2016, disadvantaged pupils made better progress than other pupils nationally, especially in reading and mathematics.

- Leaders and governors ensure that funding they receive for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is used effectively. They contribute additional funds from the budget where necessary to provide additional support for pupils to help them make rapid progress.
- The sport premium has been used extremely well. Enthusiastic and motivational leadership in this area has contributed to higher levels of participation and success in a much wider range of sports and competitions. Additionally, older pupils learn how to coach their peers in new sports, such as dodge ball, as part of a local partnership project.
- Pupils are aware of fundamental British values such as democracy and tolerance. They can explain real-life examples of how these values are part of the school's ethos. Pupils explain how everyone and anyone would be welcomed and supported in their school, whatever their background.

Governance

- The governing body is highly ambitious and sets out to achieve continuous improvement in all areas of the school's work. Governors have supported and challenged the headteacher to make successful improvements over time. They know the school's strengths and weaknesses very well and contribute to an evaluation of the school's effectiveness that is realistic and based on evidence. Governors are clear that they want all pupils, including those who are vulnerable in any way, to leave the school very well prepared for the next stage of their education and life in modern Britain.
- Governors relentlessly challenge leaders about safeguarding, standards and attendance. They check that resources are used very well for the best interests of all pupils. Governors visit the school regularly to check developments for themselves and make sensible recommendations to leaders about what could be improved further. They request additional information from leaders when they have concerns about the school's performance. Governors carefully check that recommendations related to teachers' pay are linked to performance.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The headteacher is the designated lead for safeguarding and uses her knowledge and positive relationships with the pupils and their families to help keep them safe. Supported by the assistant headteacher, she works effectively with other agencies and professionals to support the most vulnerable pupils. When appropriate services are not available, she will commission them herself. When she finds the service provided by other agencies falls short of her expectations, she will challenge them.
- Training for staff and governors is up to date and relevant, and record-keeping in this area is very thorough. Recruitment checks for staff are carried out in line with statutory requirements.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Teaching at High Hurstwood is characterised by high expectations, warm and positive relationships, and an obvious enjoyment of learning. There is a consistency of approach between teachers who share classes and throughout the school, which helps pupils to learn and achieve very well.
- The use of 'learning partners' to build confidence when pupils discuss ideas, and displays on the walls to stimulate pupils' use of vocabulary and understanding of concepts, works very well. In key stage 1, pupils were observed independently improving the poems they were writing about their mums. They sensibly shared ideas with their friends and used the displays around the classroom to help them choose better or more appropriate vocabulary.
- Assessment information is accurate. Teachers check the accuracy of their assessments with each other and with colleagues in other schools. They use the information to plan the precise next steps in learning for their class. Additionally, assessment information is used very well to plan interventions for those pupils who are at risk of falling behind.
- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge. By effortlessly modelling their love of language, mastery of everything mathematical or passion for sport, teachers inspire pupils to challenge themselves and develop new skills.
- Teachers give pupils simple and effective feedback that helps them to make rapid progress. Pupils know what they need to do to improve their work. They are reflective and persevere.
- Teaching assistants are evidently skilled at supporting individual pupils and small groups who need additional help to make good progress. For example, a group of older pupils were helped to understand line graphs about a journey to Brighton by acting out the journey first. Although overall the work of teaching assistants helps pupils to make strong progress, there are occasions where they are less proficient at moving learning on quickly enough.
- Highly effective teaching of reading leads to above-average outcomes at the end of each key stage. Younger pupils apply their phonics skills well in their own reading and writing, while older pupils enjoy reading books from a wide range of genres.
- Teachers are constantly raising expectations to improve pupils' writing. A Year 5 and 6 lesson typified the approach. Pupils were given real Victorian artefacts and photographs to stimulate their description of a historical crime scene. The teacher expertly used her own writing and constant questioning to stimulate and improve the pupils' writing. As a result, pupils produced high-quality writing using powerful vocabulary and a range of grammar and punctuation techniques effectively. When one pupil was disturbed by the howling wind outside, the teacher suggested she incorporate the wind in her description.
- Pupils' writing skills are applied exceptionally well across the curriculum and especially in history, geography and religious education. In design technology, pupils write impressive plans before making their products and well-structured evaluations afterwards.

- In mathematics, pupils are making strong progress in developing their calculation skills and fluency. Highly effective teaching is helping pupils to develop their problem-solving and reasoning skills very well. Teachers expertly use their questioning skills to deepen pupils' understanding. They challenge pupils to attempt increasingly complex problems to deepen their learning.
- Leaders' evaluations of the quality of teaching are accurate. They constantly find ways to help teachers improve even further so that pupils can continue to achieve very well.
- Overall, pupils are very complimentary about their teachers and their lessons. However, some pupils told the inspector that on a few occasions their teachers explain things too much when they want to get on and work independently.
- Parents are highly positive about the quality of teaching and the nurturing, welcoming environment. They find teachers are very approachable and happy to help their child in any way. Parents appreciate the information they receive about their child's progress. The school provides parents with useful information about the curriculum and how they can support their child's learning at home.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils have a wide range of responsibilities around the school. Older pupils enjoy being special 'buddies' to younger pupils in the school. Pupils demonstrate care and affection towards their younger peers.
- Pupils take an active role to keep each other safe. They recognise when their friends are feeling sad and need support.
- Support for vulnerable pupils and their families is exceptionally strong. Targeted, sensitive support to improve pupils' emotional well-being is highly effective. This enables these pupils to be ready to make progress and thrive in their learning.
- Pupils report that bullying is very rare and when it happens they are confident that staff deal with it really well. Furthermore, pupils are taking an active role in promoting a strong anti-bullying, tolerant culture in the school.
- The wide range of physical activities, provided using the sport premium, and the range of healthy meals available contribute very positively to pupils' physical well-being.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- The inspector wholeheartedly agreed with one parent who wrote, 'The school has a very caring, happy ethos and this is reflected in how the children look after and help each other.'
- Pupils take great pride in their school and in their work. For example, they understand their teachers' high expectations of their handwriting and the way they present their work.

- Behaviour in class is extremely positive and pupils work well together. They support and challenge each other well, for example when working with their 'learning partners'.
- Around the school and on the playground, behaviour is of a very high standard, even on very windy days.
- Extremely effective support for the few pupils who find it more difficult to manage their emotions and behaviour has led to significant improvements over time. Pupils reflect sensibly on their behaviour and have a growing understanding of how to self-manage this.
- Attendance is continuing to improve due to the effective actions taken by leaders. The number of pupils who are persistently absent has decreased rapidly. The headteacher monitors carefully the attendance of those pupils who have not attended regularly enough in the past.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Without exception, leaders and teachers have the highest ambitions for their pupils and set them challenging targets to achieve. However, due to the small size and different make-up of each year group, it is difficult to make year-on-year comparisons about outcomes.
- Over the last three years, pupils have made strong progress from their starting points through key stage 2 in reading and mathematics. Progress in writing also improved rapidly in 2015 due to highly effective teaching.
- In 2016, national assessments at the end of key stage 2 changed and higher standards were introduced. From low starting points, many pupils made accelerated progress in reading and mathematics to reach the new expected and higher standards.
- In 2015 and 2016, disadvantaged pupils in key stage 2 achieved better outcomes than other pupils nationally in reading and mathematics. This is because pupil premium funding is used exceptionally well to accelerate progress and diminish differences in attainment.
- In 2016, key stage 2 pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities made better progress than pupils nationally because of the extremely well-tailored provision. This provision remains in place for current pupils and is reviewed regularly.
- Overall progress in writing for the 2016 key stage 2 pupils was not quite as strong as it was in reading and mathematics but was still similar to the national average. Some pupils who had special educational needs and/or disabilities had fallen behind over time in spelling and therefore could not demonstrate writing skills at a greater depth. Current Year 6 pupils are already producing written work that exemplifies these higher standards.
- Key stage 1 pupils made much faster progress than their peers nationally in 2016. The proportion of pupils achieving or exceeding the new age-related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics was much higher than found nationally.
- Attainment in the Year 1 phonics screening check has improved significantly in recent years and has been sustained above the national average.

- School assessment information shows that the vast majority of current pupils are on track to achieve their challenging end-of-year targets. Work in their books confirms that they are making strong progress, developing their knowledge, skills and understanding in a wide range of subjects including English, mathematics, science, religious education and design technology.
- Current pupils throughout the school are making rapid progress in writing. The curriculum has been reviewed to further develop spelling skills without losing the focus on composition and effect. Pupils' strong writing skills are exhibited very powerfully in pupils' history and geography work, where they write at length to demonstrate their understanding.
- Throughout the curriculum, the most able pupils are challenged and required to think deeply, justify their opinions and give reasoned answers. This is deepening their learning and helping them to make good progress.
- The headteacher carries out effective tracking of interventions for pupils who have fallen behind. The tracking shows that these pupils are making the necessary progress to help them catch up with their peers.
- The school's staff do all that they can to prepare pupils socially and academically for the next stage of their education. One parent wrote that her daughter is 'exceedingly well prepared for the transition to secondary school'.

Early years provision

Good

- Children make a good start to their school life in the Reception Year. All groups of children make good progress from broadly typical starting points.
- In recent years, the proportion of pupils achieving a good level of development has risen and is now consistently above the national average. This means that children are prepared well for the next stage of their learning in Year 1.
- Communication with parents both before children start school and through the Reception Year is regular and very helpful. For example, parents record 'Wows from home' to share with school staff that document key moments in learning and life. One parent wrote, 'The feedback and documentation we receive is excellent.'
- Children with low starting points often make rapid progress to catch up with their peers. For example, carefully planned intervention programmes help children progress from early mark making to writing full sentences. Any special educational needs are identified early and appropriate provision is put in place.
- The most able children typically make good progress to exceed the early learning goals although, in 2016, none of the children exceeded the early learning goal in writing.
- Changes in staffing and leadership of the early years during the current academic year have not had an adverse impact on children's learning. Safeguarding procedures are effective and children's welfare is of paramount importance.

- Children are inquisitive, they ask questions and show interest and enjoyment in their learning. For example, children made sensible predictions and asked good questions about the inside of a passion fruit when they were learning about different fruits. However, adults sometimes miss opportunities to develop children's language skills by encouraging them to express their ideas in full sentences.
- Children's phonics skills are very well developed. In a whole class lesson, children were able to build simple words from their letter sounds to make short sentences. While in their free flow session, pupils hunted in the sandpit to find word cards and objects containing the grapheme 'oi', such as coins.
- Number skills are developed well through practical activities such as games on a giant number line and counting down from five to launch a rocket.
- Learning journey books document many memorable learning opportunities throughout the year, including activities using large apparatus in the hall to promote physical development and confidence.
- Work is still ongoing to develop an environment that promotes all areas of learning exceptionally well both inside and outside. As a result, children do not have enough opportunities to select challenging activities and resources for themselves to deepen their learning. School leaders are aware of this and are developing plans to improve the outside learning environment.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 114507 |
| Local authority | East Sussex |
| Inspection number | 10024754 |

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary controlled |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 103 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Sarah Hayden |
| Headteacher | Jane Cook |
| Telephone number | 01825 733 231 |
| Website | www.highhurstwood.e-sussex.sch.uk |
| Email address | office@highhurstwood.e-sussex.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 18–19 January 2012 |

Information about this school

- High Hurstwood is much smaller than the average-sized primary school. Pupils are currently organised into four classes: a Reception class, a Year 1 and 2 class, a Year 3 and 4 class, and a Year 5 and 6 class.
- The proportion of pupils who are entitled to free school meals is much smaller than that found nationally. Around 5% of the pupils currently on roll have been adopted from care.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. In 2016, half of the Year 6 cohort had special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The overwhelming majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds.

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school meets the government floor standards that set out the minimum expectations for primary schools.
- The school is a strategic partner in the St Mark's Teaching School Alliance and is a member of the Village Schools' Alliance and the Wealden Education Improvement Partnership.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited all classes a number of times during the inspection to observe learning, talk to pupils about their work and look at pupils' workbooks. The majority of the observations were carried out with the headteacher.
- The inspector met with the headteacher frequently during the inspection. He also held discussions with other school leaders and a group of teachers. He looked at a wide range of pupils' work with teachers.
- The inspector met with six governors including the chair of the governing body and held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. He held a further conversation with the chair of the governing body on the second day of the inspection.
- To gain their views of the school, the inspector spoke informally to pupils in lessons, around the school and on the playground. He was given a tour of the school by some Year 5 pupils and he heard some pupils from Year 2 and Year 6 read.
- A range of documentation relating to safeguarding, pupils' achievement, behaviour, attendance, teaching, leadership and governance was scrutinised.
- The inspector spoke to parents on the playground at the start of the inspection and considered 44 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. He also read 11 letters from parents.
- The inspector considered 15 responses to the online staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Lee Selby, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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