

Hightown Primary School

Tunstall Road, Thornhill, Southampton, Hampshire SO19 6AA

Inspection dates

9–10 May 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher and acting deputy headteacher have brought much needed stability to the school. This, combined with the effective support and challenge from the executive principal, has led to rapid improvements. Consequently, pupils' outcomes are rising steadily.
- The school has very recently joined the Inspire Learning Partnership. The trustees have offered good-quality support, both for the transition into the partnership and for improving teaching in the school. Trustees rightly recognise the importance of focusing on outcomes and building relationships with parents and carers.
- Teaching has improved since the previous inspection and is now good. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve, and plan interesting lessons that capture pupils' imagination and desire to learn.
- Assessment information is used effectively and work is mostly well matched to pupils' abilities. However, this is not consistently the case, especially for most-able pupils, some of whom do not make as much progress as they could.
- Early years provision has improved significantly since the last inspection and is now good. Children make a confident start to their time at school; they are well taught and make good progress in their learning.
- Pupils' personal development is good. Pupils are proud to be part of the school, and enjoy the opportunities they have to take roles of responsibility. They show high levels of care for one another.
- Middle leaders, most of whom are new to their roles, are beginning to develop their roles more effectively. Developing sustainable middle leadership is a high priority in the school.
- Outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics are steadily improving across the school. Current work in books shows that pupils are making good progress. The learning of most-able pupils is improving, but more of these pupils could be working at greater depth of understanding.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities achieve well. Extensive and good-quality support during lessons ensure that these pupils are confident and do well.
- The curriculum effectively meets the needs of pupils. Leaders recognise that they need to provide pupils with more opportunities to use their writing and mathematical skills in other subjects.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They enjoy school and this is reflected in the increasing levels of attendance.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes further by making sure that teachers:
 - use assessment information effectively to ensure that tasks and activities match pupils' differing abilities, including challenging the most able so they are working at a greater depth of understanding
 - provide greater opportunities for pupils to use the skills learned in literacy and numeracy to deepen their understanding in other subjects across the curriculum.
- Increase the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - developing middle leaders' skills and knowledge, so they can drive improvements in teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility
 - ensuring that trustees engage with parents so that parents know and understand the role of the trust and work in partnership with it to develop the whole-school community.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- After the previous inspection, there was a period of inconsistent leadership in the school resulting in considerable disruption to ongoing school improvement. The current headteacher and acting deputy headteacher were appointed in September 2017. Since their appointment, the school has moved forward rapidly and pupils are now making good progress.
- Leaders have received highly effective support from the trust's executive principal. Working together, they have focused on improving teaching as a priority, doing so with determination and vigour.
- Leaders have high expectations of what pupils can do and achieve. These expectations are now part of the culture of the school, shared by teaching and support staff. Leaders' drive and ambition to secure the very best outcomes for pupils have ensured that all at the school are working together to support pupils' learning. When asked what had changed in the school, one pupil replied, 'Everybody knows what they should be doing, what they should be learning and what they do on the playground.'
- Leaders have rightly focused on the continual improvement of teaching. Using a variety of personnel from within the school and across the trust, they have used coaching effectively to improve teachers' practice. Teachers appreciate the support they receive and have responded positively, reflected in the improved learning opportunities for pupils.
- Leaders monitor teaching effectively. They successfully reinforce the focus on high expectations, and provide consistent feedback on how teachers can help pupils learn most effectively.
- Middle leaders, most of whom are new to post, share leaders' passion for pupils to achieve their very best. They understand the necessity to develop their skills further, both to improve the outcomes for pupils and to develop capacity in leadership within the school. This work is in the early stages and leaders and trustees rightly identify that this is a priority to ensure that the school continues to improve.
- The curriculum is effective in meeting the needs of pupils. It focuses on providing pupils with a variety of opportunities that are outside their everyday experience. Topics are planned with a considerable amount of input from pupils. In so doing, they capture pupils' interest and extend their experiences in learning. Visits out, and visitors to the school, are cleverly integrated into the curriculum by teachers, so that pupils are exposed to a variety of new situations. For example, Year 4 pupils visited a deer sanctuary in the New Forest, providing a stimulus for a writing activity upon their return to class.
- Art, music and physical education are strengths of the curriculum, and are subjects that the pupils say they enjoy. The curriculum is currently under review, and leaders have identified that they need to provide more opportunities for pupils to use the skills they learn in literacy and numeracy in other subjects, such as science, history and geography.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities are taught well.

Support programmes enable pupils who find it hard to learn to catch up when they have fallen behind. As a result, disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities are making good progress in their learning. Funding provided by the pupil premium is used efficiently to ensure that disadvantaged pupils get the help they need. Parents appreciate the range of interventions and the information they receive from teachers. One commented, 'He has special lessons every day to help him; he is doing so well, the teachers tell me every day.'

- Leaders, with support of the attendance officer, have improved attendance by working closely with parents, empathising with individual circumstances but taking firm action when necessary.
- Government funding to develop sport is used effectively. Pupils have access to a wide variety of activities, and teaching staff improve their professional development by working with qualified coaches. Pupils enjoy different sporting opportunities, such as bench-ball and hockey. They are particularly excited about playing football at the Southampton Football Club ground, St Mary's, later this term.
- Opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are plentiful. Pupils have visited a Hindu temple in Year 2, learned about stereotypes in Year 5 and, during assemblies, all have thought about how they can help others. Pupils have a high moral code and a good understanding of what is right and acceptable and what is wrong and unacceptable. One Year 6 pupil commented, 'We have all different types of people in this school; it's how they act, not what they look like.'

Governance of the school

- The school has only very recently joined the Inspire Learning Partnership. However the trustees have been working alongside the school as part of a shadow trust, offering good-quality advice and support. This has been particularly effective in providing support for senior leaders, working with the executive principal.
- Some of the trustees have been associated with the school for a number of years. They know the school well. They have a good understanding of the strengths and areas that need further development. Trustees have worked closely with the school's challenge partner to ensure that performance management for the headteacher is effective.
- Procedures for managing the performance of teaching staff are clear and transparent. Teachers' targets focus on developing their practice and improving pupils' progress. As a result, trustees make informed decisions about teachers' pay progression.
- The trust is determined to work with the school and its parents to improve the life chances of the pupils in the school. Trustees realise that working with the school community is essential, and they are already making plans to do so, focusing on the trust's role and how the trust can support pupils' development.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a strong culture of safeguarding and care in the school. The family liaison officer takes a lead role in ensuring that staff have up-to-date knowledge about pupils

and families. She takes the lead in working with outside agencies to get families and pupils the help they need. Any incidents regarding child welfare are recorded and followed up to make sure pupils in the school are safe and secure.

- Training for staff and trustees is effective. All adults in school know what to do should a child protection issue arise. Procedures for vetting staff are rigorous in ensuring that pupils are kept safe from harm.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching and learning has improved since the previous inspection and is now good. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve, and plan interesting lessons that capture pupils' imagination. Lessons are lively, with plenty of opportunities for pupils to discuss their learning. Good subject knowledge enables teachers to focus on developing pupils' vocabulary associated with subjects such as science.
- Teachers mostly use assessment information effectively, planning tasks and activities that build on what pupils already know and understand. As a result, pupils are making better progress in their learning. There are, however, some instances, evidenced by work seen in pupils' books, where work set is either too hard or too easy. When this happens, pupils' progress slows. This is particularly the case for the most able pupils, who sometimes are not sufficiently challenged, and do not therefore reach the standards of which they are capable.
- Teachers know the pupils well. They are able to change and reshape lessons so that if pupils do not understand a concept, they can present it in another way to help them to do so. For example, in a Year 3 writing lesson, some pupils were looking puzzled about their task. The teacher immediately used simpler vocabulary to describe what she wanted them to do. As a result, pupils were able to complete the task successfully.
- The teaching of reading is good. Pupils develop a good understanding of phonics in the lower years, and these skills are built on as they get older. Pupils learn how to sound out words initially, building up their vocabulary over time. The school promotes reading effectively and has significantly improved the opportunities for pupils to read each day. The higher profile of reading is supported by a new approach to teaching reading in class. Initial signs, confirmed by the work seen in pupils' books, are positively illustrated by pupils' improving comprehension skills.
- Writing and mathematics are taught effectively throughout the school, which is reflected in the improving progress seen in pupils' books. Pupils are encouraged to write at length, improve their vocabulary and develop more complex sentences. They use skills, such as data handling and graphs, well and can manipulate number effectively. These literacy and numeracy skills are not yet used sufficiently to support learning in other subjects to enable pupils to make links between subjects and develop deeper learning.
- Teaching assistants are used effectively to support and challenge pupils in their learning. They work closely with the class teachers and have clear impact during lessons. They use open-ended questions to get pupils to think, and offer timely interventions if pupils need extra help.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- From the time children join the school in Reception, the school has a nurturing approach which helps pupils build confidence and resilience. Consequently, most pupils develop a 'have a go' attitude that is helping break down barriers to learning.
- Pupils are proud to be part of Hightown Primary and want to contribute to the success of the school. One pupil commented, 'We can all help make things even better in school.' Pupils like taking responsibility as prefects or school councillors, and are keen to take on other roles in the future.
- There are good opportunities for pupils to learn and apply their knowledge of how to be a good citizen and develop their understanding of British values. For example, pupils learned about the development of our democracy by studying ancient Greece and applying those principles when they took responsibility for the school council elections.
- Pupils feel safe at school, and the vast majority of parents agree. One parent commented, 'They are always well looked after.' Pupils have a very good understanding of how to stay safe on the internet; they receive regular lessons on how to do so and are confident when using technology. They know that eating a balanced diet and taking regular exercise will help to keep them healthy.
- Some parents were concerned about bullying. Pupils say that occurrences of bullying are rare but that if they do occur, staff act swiftly and effectively to find a resolution. Pupils trust the adults in school and display high levels of care for one another.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils have good manners, are polite and are very welcoming.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the behaviour policy and know what is expected of them. They particularly like the fact that positive behaviour and learning is rewarded. Pupils can receive a 'band of trust' for praising others, showing respect or for trying their best over a period of time, reflecting their ongoing good behaviour.
- Attendance is improving, reflecting pupils' increased enjoyment in their learning. Some pupils with complex learning needs demonstrate very challenging behaviour. This is well managed by the school, so that it has a minimum impact on the learning of other pupils.
- The majority of parents and staff agree that behaviour is good. Pupils learn in an atmosphere that is free from discrimination of any kind. This reflects some of the school's core values, such as respect, justice and honesty.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- In 2017, the progress made by pupils in reading and mathematics was close to that achieved nationally, while writing was above. Current progress across the school in reading, writing and mathematics is improving, reflecting the stronger teaching that is now in place.
- The proportion of pupils gaining a good level of development in Reception, and those achieving the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check, has risen steadily over the past three years. Both groups are now in line with what pupils are achieving nationally, reflecting good progress from starting points that are typically low for their age.
- Pupils build successfully on their good start in the early years. Evidence in pupils' books shows that most groups of pupils are making accelerated progress, and that they are likely to meet at least national expectations in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress and achieve well. In 2017, these pupils made similar progress to other pupils nationally. There is extensive support in place to help these pupils develop the confidence they need to succeed. Leaders identify those disadvantaged pupils who could do even better in their learning. Teachers and support staff make sure that these pupils have opportunities to extend their learning, providing them with challenging activities that deepen their understanding.
- Outcomes for most-able pupils are improving. However, leaders correctly identify this as an area where further development should be made, so that more of these pupils can achieve higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics.

Early years provision

Good

- Provision in the early years has significantly improved since the previous inspection, and is now good. The setting has been supported effectively by other schools in the trust. The learning environment has been transformed to reflect the different areas of learning, cleverly enhanced by displaying the progress children are making throughout the year.
- The planning system focuses well on what children want to learn. Teachers plan with support staff to ensure continuity in learning. Planning is dynamic, changing daily to meet the developing needs and interests of the children. As a result, children enjoy learning and make good progress.
- Leadership has benefited from some high-quality training and development. As a result, leaders have made great progress in ensuring that the early years is effectively led by a leader who knows what needs to be done to improve further.
- In line with the rest of the school, Reception is a very nurturing environment. Most children come to school with skills and knowledge well below that which is typically expected. Teachers and support staff constantly reinforce language and take every opportunity to develop children's vocabulary. There is a good balance between teacher-led activities, and those where children have the opportunity to choose independently.

In one teacher-led activity, children were seen sharing beans in mathematics as part of their 'Jack and the Bean Stalk' topic, saying why it was fair. In some instances, where children are working more independently, adults miss opportunities to help reinforce children's learning. Leaders have rightly identified this as an area for improvement.

- Children are well behaved, have good attitudes to their learning, and are tolerant of one another. They play together nicely and do so with increasing levels of concentration and enjoyment.
- The setting is safe and secure. Adults are well trained in all aspects of child protection, and all welfare requirements are fully met. There is a good level of engagement with parents, which starts with home visits, leading to opportunities for parents to work with their children in class. Each morning, parents are invited to come in and read with their children; this reinforces the importance of learning from an early age and builds trust and empathy.

School details

Unique reference number	139947
Local authority	Southampton
Inspection number	10046576

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	183
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Tim Sunderland
Headteacher	Sian Cook
Telephone number	02380 403 536
Website	www.hightownsch.net/
Email address	info@hightownsch.net
Date of previous inspection	26–27 April 2016

Information about this school

- There has been a significant change in leadership since the previous inspection. The school joined the Inspire Learning Partnership on 1 May 2018, having previously been part of the Hinkler Academies Trust.
- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The vast majority of pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged is over twice the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above average. There is a small number of pupils with education, health and care plans.
- An executive principal from the Inspire Learning Partnership has been working with the school since September 2017.
- Three trustees from the Hinkler Academy Trust joined as trustees of the Inspire Learning Partnership when the school transferred.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors visited lessons in all year groups, accompanied by senior leaders, to observe pupils' learning.
- Discussions were held with senior leaders, members of staff, pupils, and a group of parents. Telephone conversations were undertaken with the chair of the Inspire Learning Partnership and the school's challenge partner.
- Inspectors examined a wide range of documentation, including that relating to attendance and behaviour, school improvement planning, assessment information, monitoring of teaching, minutes of governing body meetings, challenge partner reports, and school policies relating to safeguarding.
- The inspectors listened to pupils read from Years 2 and 6, and met formally with a group of pupils to discuss their learning, behaviour and safety. Inspectors evaluated pupils' books, displays of pupils' work and the school's assessments of the progress made by pupils.
- The inspectors took account of 22 responses to the pupil questionnaire and 36 responses from the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Bill James, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Kevin Burrell

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