

Houghton Regis Primary School

St Michael's Avenue, Houghton Regis, Dunstable, Bedfordshire LU5 5DH

Inspection dates

8–9 May 2019

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 her deputy know their school well. They have introduced improvements in teaching, learning and assessment that have improved outcomes for pupils.
- A strong focus on key skills in English and mathematics has enabled pupils to make good progress in these subjects.
- Improved assessment and systems for tracking pupils' progress help teachers to identify and support pupils where necessary. This has enabled staff to ensure that disadvantaged pupils make good progress.
- Many teachers are new to the school, but the headteacher has managed recruitment well, and new staff are committed to the school's ethos of high expectations.
- Governors are well informed about standards of education and use this knowledge to support and challenge the headteacher effectively.
- The early years foundation stage is managed effectively, and staff support children to be well prepared for key stage 1.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make good progress because all staff take responsibility for meeting their needs.
- Pupils' good behaviour creates a friendly and calm atmosphere where they can learn well.
- Pupils feel safe and happy in school and have deep trust in school staff to help them when necessary.
- The proportion of pupils achieving the higher standard in English and mathematics is rising, but it is still not as high as it should be because teachers' questions are sometimes not challenging enough.
- Leaders give clear direction in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. The leadership of other subjects is not yet sufficiently well developed.
- Pupils enjoy a broad and balanced curriculum. Their progress is not as strong in subjects other than English and mathematics. This is because the curriculum in these subjects is not as well developed, and pupils sometimes do not have sufficiently regular opportunities to build their knowledge and skills.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teachers' questioning, so that a greater proportion of pupils achieve the higher level in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Build on the good work done in English, mathematics and science to develop the leadership of other subjects, so that pupils make better progress in these subjects.
- Further develop the broad curriculum beyond English and mathematics, so that pupils have better and more regular opportunities to extend their knowledge and skills by consolidating and building on what they have already learned.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher and her recently appointed deputy have worked diligently and effectively to bring about improvements in the quality of education since the last inspection. As a consequence, the standards achieved by pupils have improved.
- Leaders have managed the significant turnover of teaching staff over the last two years well. The headteacher has rapidly built a new teaching team that is unified in its commitment to high standards for pupils. Teachers have willingly embraced school improvement strategies that have created consistency in the quality of teaching that has, in turn, led to an improvement in outcomes for pupils.
- There has been a significant improvement in the quality of the curriculum, particularly in early years and key stage 2, where shortcomings were identified at the previous inspection. The school has prioritised the development of essential literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils have responded well to the stronger focus on these aspects of the curriculum, enabling more of them to reach the expected standards for their age group.
- The leadership of English and mathematics has had a positive impact on improving standards in these subjects. In English, pupils' ability to read text with understanding and retrieve relevant information has improved because they have been given more opportunities to read well-chosen books. In mathematics, a relentless drive to enable pupils to master key mathematical skills has led to improved arithmetical fluency. Even though standards have improved, both subject leaders concede that these secure foundations have not yet allowed a sufficient number of pupils to master higher level skills in these subjects.
- Leaders ensure that pupils benefit from a broad and balanced curriculum covering a wide range of subjects. However, pupils do not always have sufficient opportunity, in subjects other than English and mathematics, to develop a secure and systematic understanding of each separate subject area. This is because the leadership of some of these subjects is not well enough developed.
- The school has introduced a rigorous system of assessment that accurately keeps track of how well every pupil in the school is performing. This means that leaders have up-to-date information about different groups of pupils, and can hold relevant staff to account for pupils' educational progress.
- Because of effective leadership of early years, children in the Reception class build on the good quality of education they have received in Nursery to achieve well and be fully prepared to start key stage 1.
- Pupils with SEND are well supported by the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo). They are provided with personalised support, and the progress that they make is closely monitored. As a result, they make good progress.
- Ably supported by her deputy, the headteacher has created an ambitious ethos aimed at achieving high standards for pupils. Using information from the school's new assessment system, leaders meet regularly with teachers to review pupils' achievement and to agree how to provide support for pupils where necessary. Leaders ensure that

staff benefit from ongoing training, and make sure that staff share what they have learned with each other.

- The school appointed five newly qualified teachers at the beginning of the academic year. Leaders have provided these new staff members with effective support and mentoring in order to ensure that the quality of education continues to improve for all pupils. These teachers spoke highly of the support they receive, and the way that leaders encourage them to contribute to the quality of the curriculum across the whole school. Examples include leading the upcoming 'culture week', introducing cooking across the curriculum, and establishing a school choir.
- The school uses pupil premium funding effectively to ensure that disadvantaged pupils make good progress. As well as implementing whole-school strategies that disproportionately benefit disadvantaged pupils, such as accurate assessment and consistent behaviour management, the school has also introduced specific opportunities for them, such as a maths puzzle day and an outdoor education day. As a consequence, there is no significant difference between the attainment of these pupils and that of their non-disadvantaged peers.
- Leaders use the primary physical education (PE) and sport premium well. The school has developed and improved its PE curriculum, supporting teachers to improve the effectiveness of their PE teaching. Staff provide extra-curricular sports clubs, and pupils have a range of one-off sporting opportunities. As part of the school's ongoing improvement programme, leaders intend to develop regular sporting fixtures with other schools, such as the inter-school netball tournament that has been organised at the school's forthcoming summer fair.
- Parents and carers are very supportive of the school, and particularly appreciate the changes introduced by the headteacher since the last inspection. Responding to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, one parent commented on the staff's 'tireless dedication to teaching and commitment to the children'. This was typical of other comments. The school provides workshops where parents learn how to support their children's learning. These are well supported, with one parent commenting that they 'found it very helpful and feel more confident to help with homework'.
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of the curriculum are well developed by leaders. Pupils know the school's values, and also commented on their understanding of British values. The school's curriculum embraces a range of global cultures, and the introduction of cooking to the curriculum has enabled pupils to deepen their understanding of different cultures through the food that they eat.

Governance of the school

- Governors are clear about their ambitious vision for the school, which has high outcomes for pupils at its heart. Working closely with the headteacher, they evaluate the school accurately, and develop improvement strategies that address the school's needs.
- The governing body is well informed about pupils' progress because the headteacher provides them with timely and accurate information. Governors hold the headteacher to account for the school's performance, but are keen to express their support and

admiration for what she has achieved.

- Some individual governors have specific responsibilities, and they take these seriously. For example, the governor responsible for safeguarding makes regular checks of the school's safeguarding systems, while other governors ensure that leaders spend the pupil premium and the PE and sport premium effectively.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- In her role as designated safeguarding lead, the headteacher ensures that all staff receive safeguarding training. As a consequence, staff are able to describe what they would do if they were worried about a child.
- The school keeps accurate and up-to-date records of any safeguarding concerns. These records are held securely, but can be readily accessed by the designated safeguarding lead when necessary.
- The school works closely with the local authority and is familiar with how to access its support when necessary. The school's parent support worker offers a wide range of early help to a number of families and helps them to access support from outside agencies where necessary.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The headteacher and her deputy have worked hard to eliminate significant variations in the quality of teaching identified at the last inspection. Following the appointment of a number of new teachers, leaders have prioritised consistency of approach to ensure that the quality of pupils' education does not fluctuate widely between year groups.
- The best curriculum planning is found in English and mathematics. Here, a well-structured curriculum enables pupils to build on what they have already learned to continue to develop their understanding. Expectations of what leaders want pupils to know are explicit. Consequently, teachers confidently support pupils to make good progress across and within year groups to acquire and retain key core knowledge and skills.
- Science is also taught well across the school. The curriculum provides pupils with opportunities to expand their scientific knowledge, as well as conducting experiments that enable them to make scientific predictions, and to attempt to explain their results in scientific terms. Pupils' ability to retain and build on their scientific understanding is, however, sometimes hampered by the infrequency of their science lessons.
- The curriculum for other subject areas is not sufficiently well developed to enable pupils to make the same progress that they make in English and mathematics. Work in pupils' books shows that, in some subjects, pupils cannot always easily build on what they have already learned because the curriculum is not sufficiently well planned, or the time between lessons is too great.
- Teachers and teaching assistants share a strong sense of corporate responsibility for the progress that pupils make. Where necessary, they seek support from leaders if

individual pupils, or groups of pupils, fall behind. The SENCo supports teachers to make sure that pupils with SEND make the best possible progress, while the deputy headteacher offers teachers support to ensure that their disadvantaged pupils make good progress.

- Pupils make the best progress where the quality of teachers' questioning is strongest. This is most evident in early years and key stage 1. In key stage 2, leaders have ensured that teachers use questioning well to make sure that pupils acquire key skills in English and mathematics. For example, in Year 5 and Year 6 English lessons, teachers used questioning skilfully to help pupils to draw key information from written text. The quality of teachers' questions is, however, not always sufficiently strong to support higher attaining pupils to make the best possible progress. The work in some pupils' mathematics books showed that these pupils are not given enough opportunities to apply their arithmetical skills to reasoning and problem-solving challenges. Similarly, in their English books, there were too few examples of pupils being challenged to develop higher order skills.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher monitor the quality of teaching closely. They challenge and support teachers, and act on what they learn. For example, they have introduced a consistent, school-wide method of classroom organisation to ensure that all pupils contribute to whole-class discussion. They also monitor the contribution that teaching assistants make to pupils' learning. Leaders offer training and support where necessary in order to continue to develop teaching assistants' subject knowledge and teaching skills.
- The behaviour of pupils in lessons is orderly and calm. Pupils apply themselves to their learning with quiet enthusiasm. Because teaching is well planned, pupils are able to explain clearly what they are learning, and will apply themselves to tasks even if not directly supervised by an adult.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are happy at school. They play well together, treating each other with kindness and consideration.
- Relationships between adults and pupils are mutually respectful. The school has a friendly atmosphere, with older children showing consideration to younger children.
- Pupils are proud of their school. They relish taking on roles of responsibility, such as members of the school parliament or eco-warriors. They enjoy choosing charities to support, and devising ways of raising money for them. School prefects provide strong role models for younger pupils, for example by helping to look after them during break- and lunchtime.
- Pupils enjoy opportunities to take part in extra-curricular clubs and activities. The school choir recently took part in the Voice in a Million event at Wembley Arena.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, and were able to explain what they had

learned at school about keeping themselves safe online.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Records show that incidents of poor behaviour are rare, and are dealt with effectively when they occur.
- Pupils have a high level of trust in the adults in school to deal with infrequent incidents of bad behaviour and bullying. They found it difficult to recall any such incidents, and were very happy with the way staff dealt with the few that they could recall.
- Children develop their kind and friendly behaviour in early years, and this continues throughout the school. Children in early years are relaxed and excited about being in school because they know that they can trust the adults and other children to treat them kindly.
- Pupils are attentive and hardworking in lessons. The quiet and calm environment helps pupils to concentrate, although sometimes a lack of incisive and probing questioning inhibits the enthusiasm of some higher attaining pupils.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school. Overall levels of absence have stabilised, and the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent has fallen over the last three years and is now below the national average.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- As a consequence of improvements in the quality and consistency of teaching, pupils are making good progress across the school. Evidence in pupils' books, and the school's own assessment data, show that the progress that pupils are making from their different starting points in early years, key stage 1 and key stage 2 has improved and is strong.
- Because of the school's strong emphasis on teaching key literacy and numeracy skills in key stage 2, there has been an improving trend in published progress data for this key stage. The gap between the progress made by the school's pupils compared with pupils nationally has narrowed. As a consequence, progress in reading and writing for the school's Year 6 pupils was in line with the national average in 2018.
- Pupils with SEND make good progress because the SENCo works closely with class teachers to ensure that these pupils benefit from the best curriculum and learning activities to meet their needs. Leaders also ensure that staff monitor their progress closely, and take remedial measures where necessary to support their learning.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils has improved since the last inspection because leaders track their progress closely and hold teachers to account for what they achieve. As a consequence, teachers take the necessary remedial action to ensure that disadvantaged pupils make similar progress to other pupils in the school with the same starting points.
- Improvements in the teaching of phonics, and changes to the curriculum, mean that pupils make good progress in reading. The proportion of pupils achieving the expected

standard in the national phonics check in Year 1 has risen in recent years, and last year was in line with the national average.

- While progress is good, the proportion of pupils achieving the higher level in English and mathematics is not yet high enough, although this proportion is rising. Analysis of the school's improvement plan shows that leaders are aware of this, and are striving to build on the consolidation of key literacy and numeracy skills to enable more pupils to achieve these higher levels.

Early years provision

Good

- Standards have improved rapidly in the early years foundation stage. Last year, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development exceeded the national average. As a consequence, children are well prepared to enter key stage 1.
- Staff in Nursery and Reception use the school's new tracking system to good effect to plan lessons and activities that meet each child's particular needs.
- Children make good progress in Nursery and Reception because the curriculum is well managed. Children typically choose from a range of activities that develop their learning in the context of their curriculum theme. Adults lead activities well, questioning and challenging children to practise and extend important skills. For example, when learning about space, some children measured the distance travelled by their spaceships, while others searched for hidden planets, taking pleasure in reading their names when they found them.
- Staff use the new outdoor area to good effect by providing challenging and engaging activities that inspire children to improve their skills and knowledge. Children interact and learn happily in this safe and stimulating environment.
- Children also learn well without direct adult supervision. There is a culture of encouraging children to write independently, and some children take pride in choosing to write about what they are learning. Examples of children's writing are praised and celebrated.
- Children behave well towards each other and adults. They enjoy the activities that have been provided for them and speak eloquently and enthusiastically about their learning.
- The systematic teaching of phonics is well embedded into the routine of the Nursery and Reception class. Children are well supported to learn new sounds and have regular opportunities to consolidate their existing skills.

School details

Unique reference number	109459
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	10088647

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	306
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jackie Mew
Headteacher	Bernice Waite
Telephone number	01582 867487
Website	www.houghtonregisprimary.co.uk
Email address	Office@houghtonregisprimary.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	25–26 January 2017

Information about this school

- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who receive SEND support, or who have an education, health and care plan, is above the national average.
- There has been a significant change in staffing since the last inspection. A new deputy headteacher and a number of new class teachers have been appointed, including five newly qualified teachers who took up their posts in September 2018.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classes. For most of these observations, inspectors were accompanied by the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors met with senior and middle leaders, including the headteacher, deputy headteacher, SENCo, early years foundation stage leader, subject leaders, phase leaders and the parent support worker.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of governors as well as other members of the governing body.
- The lead inspector met with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors met with pupils from the school parliament. They also spoke with pupils in their lessons and around the school at breaks and lunchtime.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read.
- The lead inspector met with the school's newly qualified teachers.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work in their exercise books.
- Inspectors examined a range of documents, including self-evaluation and improvement plans, records of the monitoring of teaching and learning, the school's assessment tracking records, records of staff training, safeguarding records (including the single central record), behaviour records, attendance records, and minutes of meetings of the governing body.
- Inspectors considered 56 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 26 free-text responses. They also considered 37 responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Richard Hopkins, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
James Dyke	Ofsted Inspector
Lesley Stevens	Ofsted Inspector

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