

Inspection of Thomas Hickman School

Belgrave Road, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire HP19 9HP

Inspection dates: 11–12 September 2019

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Early years provision **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to school. One parent wrote, 'they come with a skip in their step'. The headteacher is inspirational. Parents, carers, pupils and staff agree. She has developed an effective leadership team. They are very ambitious for all pupils. The headteacher has made significant improvements to pupils' behaviour. Pupils work and play well together and know how to stay safe. If pupils have a worry, they know staff will help them. One girl said, 'the headteacher has brought joy to our school'.

Pupils and staff value and respect one another. The school's 'No Outsiders' statement does exactly what it says on the tin. Leaders have worked hard to engage more with the whole community and continue to do so. The school provides a very high standard of care for pupils and their families. If pupils need a listening ear, there is always someone to help. Staff always put children first and will go the extra mile to help them. Pupils love working with the school's therapist and her dog, for example. They are all agreed this helps them to become more confident learners.

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

The headteacher leads exceptionally well. She is ably supported by the senior leadership team. They share her love of the school and her ambition to make it the very best possible. Leaders understand what works well in school and what needs to be better.

Leaders have a good understanding of how pupils learn at different ages. They have planned the curriculum well and know how this needs to develop further. In reading, writing and mathematics, pupils learn things in the right order and remember new facts and skills well. Leaders check that teachers know what pupils should know and understand in other subjects. This is already secure for physical education, history and geography. Middle leaders, some being new to their jobs, are developing this aspect across the wider curriculum. Teaching challenges and excites pupils, they say they enjoy learning new things. Pupils also enjoy the very wide selection of clubs that are on offer before and after school.

Leaders make it a priority to ensure that children get off to a good start with their reading. The teaching of phonics is led well, so pupils' learning is mostly systematic and well planned. Younger pupils' reading books are well matched to their stages of phonics learning. Children in the early years get lots of reading practice, but this does not continue for some older pupils. Not all pupils are reading the challenging books that they could be by the time they reach Year 6. The library has been revamped to promote pupils' love of reading but the books available there are somewhat limited.

The school's new curriculum is helping all pupils to catch up. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Current pupils talked with confidence to an inspector about the mathematics they were doing. They understood their work with numbers, which was helping them to work with bigger numbers and solve tricky problems. Teachers check pupils' work as lessons take place. If a pupil does not understand, then the teacher or teaching assistant will intervene. As a result, pupils learn well.

Children in the early years enjoy school. Some of them have only been in school for one week. Learning is well planned by staff in the early years. They support children's learning well. There was a real buzz in both the outdoor and indoor classrooms during inspectors' visits. The children enjoyed investigating all the activities around them. Staff encouraged children to share and take turns. Staff took every opportunity to help children to learn new words and talk in sentences.

Leaders pay particular attention to keeping pupils fit and healthy. Lunchtime dance sessions are very popular as well as sporting opportunities. A debating club has been started. This helps pupils to be better at discussing things. Pupils behave well and show good attitudes to their work. They carefully consider others' opinions. Pupils know that people have different views and that they must be fair and listen to one another.

An experienced chair of governors has established a new governing body. Governors have a broad range of skills and carry out all the tasks that they should. They work with leaders to check that every pupil is included in what the school offers. However, many governors are new to the school and will benefit from more training to help them in their roles.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school has a strong safeguarding culture which places pupils at the heart of its work. All staff do everything to ensure that pupils are safe, both in and out of school.

Pupils learn to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet. Teachers help pupils to know how to keep safe beyond the school environment.

Staff are clear about the procedures to follow if they have a concern about a pupil's safety. They follow them to the letter.

Leaders and governors understand and fulfil their statutory duties relating to safeguarding and pupils' welfare well.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Continue to prioritise the development of pupils' reading, especially in key stage 2. Leaders must ensure that pupils read a wider range of high-quality texts. This will help pupils to broaden their vocabulary across all areas of the curriculum and deepen their fluency and comprehension skills. Consider how library provision can be further improved, to better support teachers and pupils.
- Continue the purposeful focus on developing the curriculum for the foundation subjects. Ensure that this wider curriculum is ambitious for pupils and fully meets the aims of the national curriculum. Support teachers to develop more coherent planning, and sequencing, of the knowledge and skills pupils need in order to learn well in all subjects.
- Ensure that the new governors get the training that they need to carry out their roles well and to hold school leaders to account effectively.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	110313
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10088191
Type of school	All-through Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	461
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Alan Sherwell
Headteacher	Pippa Brand-Benee
Website	www.thomashickman.bucks.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	7–8 October 2015

Information about this school

- Since the last inspection, the school has had a number of temporary headteachers. The current headteacher took up the substantive post in September 2018.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the four assistant headteachers, two governors and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors considered, early reading, English, mathematics, physical education, personal, social and health education, and science. This involved discussing curriculum planning with leaders and subject coordinators, carrying out lesson visits with leaders and teachers, looking at pupils' work with teachers, pupils and teaching assistants, talking to parents, meeting with pupils, observing pupils read to a teaching assistant, observing story time and meeting with the newly qualified teacher.
- An inspector reviewed the single central record and attendance information. An inspector met with the school's safeguarding team and discussed systems and

processes as well as considering case studies. Inspectors talked to parents, pupils, governors and staff about safeguarding and checked that practice was consistent across the school.

Inspection team

Sarah Varnom, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Graham Marshall	Ofsted Inspector
Catherine Old	Her Majesty's Inspector

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