

Inspection of a good school: Topcliffe C of E Academy

School Lane, Topcliffe, Thirsk, North Yorkshire YO7 3RG

Inspection dates:

4 March 2020

Outcome

Topcliffe C of E Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a school where pupils are happy, confident learners. Teachers promote a strong Christian ethos and British values are endorsed through this ethos. Pupils say that behaviour is good, and this is what we saw when we were in school. Everybody has high expectations of how they should behave. All the pupils we spoke to said that they feel safe. Some pupils told us there is some bullying in the school, but teachers deal with it well.

Pupils enjoy learning. They are proud to show their books and tell visitors about what they are doing in class. Even the youngest children in the early years want to share their learning and play with visitors.

Adults act as good role models. They demonstrate kindness and respect to others, which pupils copy. Adults know the pupils well. They work hard to make sure that pupils' emotional and academic needs are met.

Virtually all the parents who responded to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire, would recommend this school to other parents. Parents commented that their child 'had flourished' at Topcliffe and others stated, 'a fantastic school with wonderful staff'.

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

The headteacher leads her team well. This is a small school where staff work collaboratively. All staff who we spoke to and who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire said that they feel valued. They said that their work-life balance and mental well-being are considered by senior leaders. Members of the trust and the local governing body support this school extremely well. They ensure that teachers and leaders at Topcliffe share and develop expertise with others in the trust. The chief executive officer (CEO) of the Elevate Trust knows the school and offers challenge and support to maintain school improvement.

Most pupils read well. Younger pupils quickly learn phonics as a result of teachers' effective phonics teaching. A love of reading is promoted across the school. Children in Nursery visit the local library and older pupils are encouraged to read at every opportunity. Teachers use space to provide comfortable reading corners. Teachers make sure that pupils know the phonic sounds in the books they read. Some pupils need more practice of familiar texts to become more fluent readers. Teachers know pupils need lots of opportunity to read and more time is now devoted to reading in school. The trust has developed a strategy to improve the quality of reading. It is investing time and resources to make sure that teachers have the right resources and knowledge to implement this strategy.

Pupils enjoy mathematics. The mathematics leader is extremely knowledgeable and passionate about the subject. She does everything in her power to help other teachers teach mathematics well and to try to get pupils to love mathematics as much as she does. She ensures that learning is sequential. She carefully adapts a commercial scheme to ensure that the needs of a mixed-year group class and those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are considered.

All teaching staff follow a strategy known as Keep Up Not Catch Up. Teachers use this strategy skilfully to make sure that all pupils, including those with SEND, get immediate support if there is any indication that they have not understood what they are being taught. Assessment systems are used well in some subjects and in others are being developed further.

The headteacher makes sure that pupils have experiences beyond the academic curriculum. Pupils take part in activities that develop knowledge and understanding about the world around them to help them become valuable members of British society. During the inspection, older pupils helped with lunches in the local community to celebrate Lent. At other times, pupils take part in activities at off-site residential locations. Links with a commercial enterprise help pupils learn how to protect themselves in different scenarios, as well as learning about others with different circumstances and beliefs in the world today.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All the pupils we spoke to during the inspection said that they felt safe. School leaders are thorough and plan for all eventualities. Procedures are practised, such as the lockdown procedure, and adults quickly identify and reassure pupils who are concerned following these procedures. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) works well with other agencies and makes sure that all staff have up-to-date knowledge of safeguarding. Detailed records are kept by the DSL. The office manager ensures that recruitment checks are thorough and recorded appropriately.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils, in the past, have not had enough time to practise their reading skills. Some still do not. This means that although some younger pupils know the sounds letters make well, they cannot blend these sounds with ease, making their reading disjointed. For some older pupils, this lack of fluency means that they do not use punctuation well to make sense of the text. School leaders are currently investing in staff training and further resources to help improve reading. Teachers are now prioritising reading more to give pupils more time to become proficient readers. Leaders must ensure that these improvements in reading are continued so that recent improvements seen in school continue.
- Teachers' use of assessment in core subjects is thorough and used well to influence learning. In some of the foundation subjects, a new assessment strategy is being implemented to check what pupils are remembering. Leaders should embed this strategy further across all curriculum areas, so that teachers have an accurate picture of learning across the whole curriculum.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school may be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Topcliffe C of E Voluntary Controlled Primary School, to be good on 4–5 October 2011.

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 are the school and you are 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	144840
Local authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	10134937
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	131
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Richard Tindall
Headteacher	Abigail Clay
Website	www.topcliffeacademy.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Topcliffe C of E Academy is part of the Elevate Multi Academy Trust, which is made up of nine other primary schools. All schools in the academy are currently judged to be good or outstanding.
- Topcliffe C of E Academy joined the trust in 2017.
- The school's predecessor school was judged to be good at its previous inspection in 2011. The predecessor school's short inspection in January 2017 judged that the school remained a good school.
- The school is a Church of England school which is supported by the Diocese of York. The school was last inspected in 2016 by the Church of England Education Office when it was judged to be outstanding.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out over one day by two inspectors.
- The lead inspector met with members of the local governing board, the diocese of York, the board of trustees and with the chief executive officer of Elevate Multi Academy Trust.

- Both inspectors spoke to pupils throughout the day, informally and formally, sometimes with their work.
- The lead inspector listened to pupils read in early years, reception, key stage 1 and key stage 2.
- We conducted deep dives in reading, mathematics and personal, social and health education. This involved looking at these subjects in detail. We held meetings with the curriculum leaders. With curriculum leaders, we visited lessons, talked to teachers and pupils about the lessons we saw and looked at work in pupils' books.
- We considered safeguarding in detail. To do this, we spoke to the designated safeguarding lead, studied the recruitment checks made on staff and considered how well the school works with other agencies. We also spoke to staff, pupils, trustees and governors.
- Ofsted is aware of the challenges that Covid-19 is currently posing to those we inspect. During this visit, the inspectors took into consideration the impact of any measures being taken to slow the spread of Coronavirus by the school. This has included the effect these measures have had on the current attendance of the pupils and staffing arrangements.

Inspection team

Jo Sharpe, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Pritiben Patel

Ofsted Inspector

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