

Inspection of a good school: Highwood Primary School

Loves Green, Highwood, Chelmsford, Essex, CM1 3QH

Inspection date: 10 June 2021

Outcome

Highwood Primary School continues to be a good school.

However, inspectors have some concerns that one or more areas may be declining, as set out below.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Highwood are happy and enjoy coming to school. Adults know the pupils well. This makes pupils feel safe and well looked after. They like being part of a small school and have positive relationships with each other. There is a calm, friendly atmosphere in the school.

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school. They say that the school is like a 'family'. Parents appreciate the support they received with remote education.

Pupils say that behaviour in school is good. At times there may be isolated incidents of inappropriate behaviour, but adults deal with this quickly. Pupils are aware of what bullying is and know it would be dealt with by staff should it occur.

Pupils say that they like work when it is challenging. When discussing mathematics, a group of pupils said, 'We find it hard, but we like that!'. Pupils show respect for each other and can learn without being disrupted by their peers. In classes, pupils get along well together and can work independently when required.

Pupils are not learning to read as well as they could do. Some younger pupils do not sound out words with enough accuracy and this hinders their fluency in reading. Older pupils do not have a 'love of reading'.

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

Leaders have created a school culture of kindness and cooperation. Adults work well together and support each other. This partnership work also benefits from working alongside a local partner school.

Leaders have developed a curriculum that meets the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders think carefully about how to manage mixed-age classes.

Teachers carefully plan what they teach. Year 2 pupils receive targeted activities for their needs, different to those, for example, in Year 4 in the same class.

The school curriculum includes all the required subjects and is organised into topics. Leaders are keen to develop the personal development of pupils through planned activities such as fire building in the outdoor environment.

Teachers check work regularly. This helps pupils understand what they need to do next to get better. In science and mathematics, learning is carefully planned. Teachers and support staff use accurate, subject-specific vocabulary well. Pupils enjoy learning new words and are proud to show off their knowledge.

Leaders have developed strong relationships with parents and carers. Pupils' learning is frequently shared via an online tool so teachers can share what pupils are learning. One hundred per cent of results on Ofsted's parent survey show that the school lets parents and carers know what their children will be learning and how they are doing.

Leaders have high expectations for pupils' behaviour. Systems are in place to encourage pupils to behave well, and staff consistently use positive language to praise and support pupils. If pupils are upset or worried about something, staff know exactly how to support them and help them to feel better.

Governors talk positively about the school and have a general overview of educational and financial performance. They have been supportive and appreciative of the joint working with a local partner school and can see the benefits it has brought. However, when talking about the fine detail of the curriculum, learning and progress, governors do not have enough knowledge to hold leaders to account.

Reading is not prioritised well enough across the school. Pupils do not get off to a good enough start when learning to read. Leaders have planning in place that sets out what pupils should know at set times during the year. However, pupils do not demonstrate this and are not progressing with reading as quickly as they should be.

As pupils move through the school, they are not developing a 'love of reading'. The school has purchased new books but more needs to be done to really engage and ignite pupils' desire to read. Where pupils are reading books that are too difficult for them, they quickly become disengaged and disinterested.

To make sure pupils read books that are matched to their ability, more accurate checking of what pupils know and do not know needs to be in place.

In discussion with the Executive Headteacher, we agreed that reading may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured that all staff have received appropriate training and know what to do if they are concerned about a child or adult. Leaders have reviewed safeguarding procedures and introduced a new system of recording concerns that is accessible to all staff.

The Executive Headteacher and the Head of School meet weekly to discuss any ongoing or new concerns. Leaders have created a culture where staff know they can raise any concerns and they will be taken seriously.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Reading needs to be more highly prioritised. Too many pupils do not keep up with the pace of the phonics programme. Leaders are insufficiently focused on those pupils who find reading difficult.
- Leaders need to make sure that all staff are appropriately trained to deliver a high-quality reading curriculum. Staff are unclear about the progress that children should make in learning to read letters, words and texts.
- Governors need to have a greater knowledge of what pupils are learning. They need to understand how and why the curriculum works.

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 outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that a good school could now 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 first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good on 11 and 12 July 2016.

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 [here](#).

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	114869
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10193978
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	58
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Alan Oddy
Headteacher	Aedin Lipski
Website	www.highwood.essex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	11 – 12 July 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils with an education health and care plan is above the national average. The proportion of pupils who receive SEND support is above the national average.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school, and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- The inspectors did deep dives in the following subjects: mathematics, science and early reading. They spoke to leaders about the curriculum. The inspectors looked at pupils' work and spoke to pupils. They met with teachers from lessons they visited.
- The inspectors met with members of the local governing body and spoke to a representative from Essex local authority.

- The inspectors considered the views of parents through discussions and through the 31 responses to Ofsted's parent survey.
- The inspectors looked at the single central register. They spoke to leaders, teachers, governors and pupils about safeguarding.

Inspection team

David Milligan, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Damian Loneragan

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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