

Inspection of a good school: St Catherine's Hoddesdon CofE Primary School

Haslewood Avenue, Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire EN11 8HT

Inspection dates:

12 and 13 October 2021

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this initial (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a full inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a full (section 5) inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

At St Catherine's, pupils are polite and sociable young people. They say they feel safe in school. They say that bullying is rare and that they can talk to teachers if they are unhappy or worried. Pupils enjoy extensive grounds to play in. They say that they particularly enjoy the wide range of resources now available at breaktimes.

Pupils say they enjoy school and talk enthusiastically about what they have learned in subjects such as mathematics and history. They say they enjoy their class book and enjoy reading at school and at home. However, some pupils do not have the necessary phonics skills to read fluently. Some pupils are not helped well enough to catch up quickly.

Children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are very well supported when they start Reception. Staff know pupils well and provide strong nurture and support for the most vulnerable children so that they are ready to learn.

Some pupils, particularly the most disadvantaged, are not attending school as well as they should. This is hindering their progress in subjects across the curriculum.

Most parents are positive about what the school offers. Parents comment that they 'find the staff approachable, friendly and caring'. This view is echoed by many.

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

Leaders have reviewed curriculum plans for all subjects. Teachers are delivering some of this curriculum with confidence, owing to the planning and training that they have received. For example, in mathematics, teachers plan time for pupils to practise

fundamental concepts to help them understand, practise and develop their ability to problem-solve by the time they reach Year 6. In history, the organisation of the curriculum means that pupils connect learning and gain a greater understanding of key vocabulary and concepts, such as invasion, monarchy and power.

However, some curriculum planning and teaching are less well developed. Current plans to teach reading do not specify how reading will be taught or help pupils to become fluent from early years and beyond. Pupils do not learn to read quickly enough or catch up when they fall behind. Teachers do not always insist on high expectations for pupils' writing. As a result, some pupils repeat grammatical mistakes, and the quality of pupils' handwriting is too variable.

Children in the early years have their social and emotional needs met as soon as they start. They settle quickly, ready for learning. Although leaders have identified what they want children to learn, this has not been planned into the curriculum so that all staff know what to do. Therefore, some children do not make the strong progress they should.

Since the previous inspection, there have been significant changes in school leadership. The headteacher is well supported by her leadership team. Leaders, including governors, share a vision to help pupils become resilient and independent learners. This is helping to bring about improvements in the quality of education. Leaders know what they need to do to improve further. However, some aspects of leaders' plans are not as precise as they need to be.

The school's local area plays an important part in pupils' personal development. Pupils take part in a range of local community events and school trips that connect to their studies. Through the curriculum teachers address political issues that affect the local area, such as local protests. Pupils learn from different views and perspectives.

A significant minority of parents commented on pupils' poor behaviour at lunchtime. Leaders have recently introduced a wide range of activities to help develop teamwork, independence and resilience during breaktimes. This is in its early stages. Pupils were observed playing well together and can explain the consequences for poor behaviour.

In discussion with the headteacher, the inspector agreed that curriculum plans for the teaching of reading from early years to Year 6 may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured there is a strong safeguarding culture in the school. All safeguarding checks on staff and visitors to the school have been completed. The headteacher categorised safeguarding concerns about pupils appropriately and reports them to governors routinely. Leaders analyse concerns and adapt the curriculum where necessary. Leaders are vigilant and meticulously follow up concerns swiftly. Staff know how to identify peer-on-peer abuse and are clear on the systems of reporting. Leaders'

precise actions to ensure the most vulnerable families attend school have had some success. This remains a priority for leaders.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders, including governors, have identified where provision needs to improve. They have set out priorities in the school's improvement plans. Aspects of these plans need to be even more precise to help governors hold leaders to account for the progress made against each priority.
- The early years curriculum does not identify in detail how language will be reinforced through child-initiated play and child-adult interactions. Weaknesses that leaders have identified, such as weak gross motor skills, are not precisely addressed in the early years curriculum plans. Leaders are unable to accurately check whether the quality of education in the early years is as good as it could be.
- In Years 1 and 2, some pupils do not learn to read fluently quickly enough. This is because leaders' plans do not specify exactly what pupils need to learn from the start. In addition, some pupils who fall behind in reading do not catch up quickly enough. This is because they are not given the precise support they need to catch up in reading. Leaders need to make sure their revised plans for the teaching of reading set out exactly how the school intends to teach pupils to read fluently quickly from the time they start school and beyond. Pupils who have fallen behind need precise support to catch up as a matter of urgency.
- Leaders have curriculum plans in place for developing pupils' writing. Some teachers do not always enforce leaders' high expectations of how pupils present their work. This is leading to poor-quality handwriting in some year groups. In addition, some pupils continue to make the same grammatical errors over time. Leaders need to ensure that pupils build on and secure fundamental writing skills from the beginning.

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, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, 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 deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in September 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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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	133773
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10199984
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	333
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Peter Falconbridge
Headteacher	Angela Wallis
Website	www.stcaths.herts.sch.uk/
Dates of previous inspection	13 and 14 September 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Three years ago, and since the previous inspection, the leadership changed from two co-headteachers to sole headship.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and assistant headteachers. The inspector held a meeting with five members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. The inspector also held a remote video conversation with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector took account of a wide range of information, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, records of pupils' behaviours and curriculum plans. School policies, documents and records relating to safeguarding, including the single central record, were reviewed.

- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site. The inspector also reviewed records of behaviour and attendance and other information provided by school leaders.
- The inspector took account of 47 responses to Ofsted's staff survey, 38 free-text responses to Ofsted Parent View and 91 responses to the pupil survey. The inspector also spoke with several parents on day 2 of the inspection.
- The subjects covered in depth as part of this inspection were reading, mathematics and history. In each subject, the inspector spoke with subject leaders, teachers and pupils. The inspector visited lessons and looked at pupils' work.

Inspection team

Cindy Impey, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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