

Inspection of a good school: West Hill Primary Academy

Dartford Road, Dartford, Kent DA1 3DZ

Inspection dates: 30 September and 1 October 2021

Outcome

West Hill Primary Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at West Hill are passionate learners. Staff have high expectations of pupils and pupils also have high expectations of themselves. They try their best and take pride in their work. Pupils achieve well, especially in reading, writing and mathematics.

In lessons and around the school pupils behave well. They trust in adults to sort out any problems. Bullying is not an issue here. Pupils are clear about the behaviour system, which they say 'does its job' in helping them to manage their behaviour and know what is expected of them.

Relationships around the school are warm and good-humoured. Pupils are happy and feel safe. They have been taught how to keep themselves safe, including online. They know what to do if they have worries or concerns and are confident that any problems will be resolved.

Pupils are proud of their school. They feel valued partners in it. For example, a pupil explained how he had started up a comic club to run during playtimes. Older pupils run lunchtime activities such as tennis, where they support younger pupils, with good-natured maturity. There is no sense of hierarchy, just a clear focus on the shared business of learning.

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

The school ethos is described as: 'No limits, only possibilities'. The curriculum has been carefully constructed to reflect this ambition. Across the curriculum clear learning plans are in place. Leaders regularly check how well these are working in English and mathematics, providing useful feedback and support for staff. As a result, the curriculum is particularly effective in these subjects. Regular and wide-ranging assessment identifies any gaps in pupils' knowledge. Following the lockdowns, this helped ensure that pupils who had fallen behind could be identified and enabled to get swiftly back on track.

Leaders are not yet making similar checks in other subjects. Teaching plans sequence learning for pupils well. However, teachers do not benefit from regular feedback and support to check the effectiveness of their teaching in other subjects. Pupils enjoy learning across the wider curriculum, but they do not attain quite as highly as in English and mathematics.

Pupils quickly master basic skills in mathematics, such as times tables. In Reception Year, children develop secure foundations in mathematics. This is because teachers ensure that there are lots of opportunities to fully explore numbers. As they get older, pupils can confidently explain their mathematical thinking. For example, pupils in Year 6 were able to make leaflets detailing a range of division methods for younger pupils.

Pupils learn to read quickly and well. In Reception Year, they start by enthusiastically exploring word patterns and rhymes. This quickly leads on to a well-structured and effective phonics programme. Pupils who need a little extra help to learn to read are identified quickly and given the support they need to catch up.

Reading is important and has a high profile in the school. Pupils are proud of the regularity with which they read and meticulously fill in their reading record books. They are excited by initiatives such as the 'Galaxy 100', which staff have drawn together to recommend good reads or by the opportunity to be reading ambassadors. Pupils' extensive reading is helping them to develop a wide vocabulary. A pupil explained how: 'When I read, I take the vocabulary and use it when I talk.'

Pupils behave well and this helps them to learn. They concentrate on their learning and engage in discussions. Low-level disruption is rare and quickly dealt with. In Reception Year, children carefully follow instructions. As they move up through the school, pupils work well in reading pairs and by the time they get to key stage 2 most pupils can work effectively in groups, solving problems together.

Teachers enjoy teaching personal and social education because they say that pupils engage thoughtfully. Throughout the school pupils are respectful, independent and mature. The school is joyfully multicultural. Pupils feel included. They model respect for the beliefs and cultures of others.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are provided for well. Their needs are identified carefully. They are given the support they need to be successful. Additional work in the school garden or through regular farm trips helps pupils to develop positive learning behaviours, such as resilience and positive self-image.

Staff are positive about the training and support that they receive from leaders, governors and the wider trust. Staff workload has been considered when systems such as marking are reviewed.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Systems to support safeguarding are thorough, meticulous and well maintained. Staff benefit from regular and detailed training in how to keep pupils safe. Governors are well informed about their statutory duties in respect of safeguarding and have the necessary expertise to discharge those responsibilities.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, from crossing the road to online safety. They know who to tell if they have a problem and are confident in adults to resolve things. Staff build trusting relationships with pupils. This supports pupils in telling them if they have any worries.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Sometimes pupils do not retain what they have learned in subjects other than English and mathematics. Subject leaders should monitor the planning and teaching of the curriculum in other subjects in order to check that it helps pupils to know more and remember more over time.

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 predecessor school, West Hill Primary School, to be good in March 2013.

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	144668
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10203144
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	541
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Philip Vander Gucht
Headteacher	Katy Ward
Website	www.west-hill.kent.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The predecessor school, West Hill Primary School, became part of the Galaxy Trust as West Hill Primary Academy in 2017.
- The school has undergone leadership changes since the previous inspection. The headteacher was appointed in 2020.
- Classes have been restructured since the previous inspection. The school now operates with mixed-age classes after Reception Year.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

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.
- During the inspection, the inspector met regularly with the headteacher. Meetings were also held with the special educational needs coordinator, early years lead and the safeguarding team. The inspector met with a representative group from the trust and

the governing body, including the chair of governors. The inspector also met with the chief executive officer of the trust.

- The inspector did deep dives in reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector also scrutinised documentation around curriculum planning in other subjects.
- Records associated with safeguarding were reviewed, including the single central record and appointment procedures. The inspector spoke to staff about their safeguarding training and spoke to pupils about the support they have in understanding how to keep safe.
- The inspector spoke to a group of parents and reviewed responses to Ofsted Parent View and to the staff and pupil questionnaires.
- Groups of staff met with the inspector to share their views about the school, including around workload and well-being. The inspector completed a tour of the school with pupils and spoke to them on the playground and in the dining hall.

Inspection team

Deborah Gordon, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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