

Inspection of Highwoods Academy

Highwoods Road, Mexborough, South Yorkshire, S64 9ES

Inspection dates: 23 and 24 November 2021

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Early years provision **Good**

Previous inspection grade Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders at Highwoods Academy have built an ambitious curriculum that focuses on improving pupils' vocabulary. Leaders' high expectations of what pupils can achieve start as soon as children join the school in the nursery.

Classrooms are an oasis of calm. Pupils' learning can take place without interruption. There are strong, respectful relationships between teachers and pupils. Teachers encourage pupils to work hard. Pupils say that bullying hardly ever happens in school. When rare incidents of online bullying have been reported to leaders, they have worked with parents to sort it out quickly. As a result, pupils feel safe and cared for.

The school values, such as kindness and respect, are promoted well by all staff. Pupils are tolerant and respectful of difference. Pupils told inspectors 'It's good to be different. People aren't different just because they have a different colour skin. Everyone is equal.'

Pupils enjoy the positions of responsibility they are given. Pupils say that leaders listen to their views. The Junior Leadership Team are proud of the changes that they made to the school dinner menu. Some pupil roles, such as 'playground buddies', have been stopped due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The range of after-school clubs has also reduced. Pupils are keen to see these restart.

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

The reading curriculum is carefully sequenced. Daily story times promote pupils' love of reading. High-quality texts are used across the curriculum. When pupils are in school, they read widely and often. Leaders have prioritised reading and phonics. Staff in the early years and key stage 1 have received the training they need to deliver leaders' chosen phonics programme with consistency. Assessments are used to match books to the sounds that pupils already know. This helps pupils to become confident, fluent readers. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) get the help they need to catch up.

Children in the early years benefit from a carefully structured curriculum and engaging learning environment. Children are taught phonics as soon as they start school. Stories and rhymes are shared regularly. Early years classrooms are awash with books. Adults model the language and vocabulary they want children to learn.

In mathematics, the curriculum is well sequenced from the early years to Year 6. In the early years, adults use every opportunity to teach children all about shape and number. Inspectors saw adults counting with pupils as they made play dough cupcakes. Adults also helped children to compare the volume of measuring cylinders in the water area. Across the school, all teachers are well trained. Teachers' mathematical subject knowledge is strong. Teachers provide clear definitions of

mathematical words. This helps pupils to use vocabulary with precision. Leaders provide pupils with SEND with the extra help they need to access the same ambitious curriculum as their peers. 'Maths meets' revisits pupils' previous learning. This helps pupils to remember what they have been taught before.

In subjects such as history, the curriculum is less well organised. Leaders have not carefully sequenced what they want pupils to know. The curriculum does not build pupils' knowledge and skills each year. While pupils' knowledge of recently studied historical events, such as World War II or The Great Fire of London is accurate, pupils' sense of chronology is underdeveloped.

In subjects other than English and mathematics, the assessments of pupils' knowledge and skills are not accurate enough. In history, for example, assessments focus too much on checking pupils' recall of historical facts. In other subjects, such as art, assessments do not check the full breadth of what pupils have been taught. Leaders do not have a complete picture of pupils' abilities in all areas of the curriculum.

Leaders check on pupils' attendance regularly. They take early action to inform parents when pupils' attendance is low. However, levels of persistent absenteeism remain too high. Despite small improvements in attendance, too many pupils are missing too much of their education.

Across all subjects, pupils have opportunities to discuss and debate their ideas. Leaders have skilfully included units of work linked to the heritage of the local area. This helps pupils to appreciate the cultural background of where they live. In geography, pupils have raised money to save a section of rainforest. This helps pupils to develop a clear understanding of wider world issues, such as climate change.

Leaders have high aspirations for the pupils at Highwoods Academy. The trust provides high-quality support to the school. This has included temporary leadership support. Leaders benefit from the network meetings where best practice and knowledge are shared. Staff morale is high. Leaders listen to the views of staff and help them to manage their workloads.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding have a clear understanding of the safeguarding issues that affect their community. They work with other agencies, such as the police, to promote pupil's awareness of child criminal exploitation.

Leaders ensure that all staff receive the training they need to keep pupils safe. Processes for reporting and recording concerns are clear and all staff know these well. No concerns go unreported.

Leaders have identified opportunities to teach safeguarding across the curriculum. This ensures that topics such as e-safety are prioritised. Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe online and when to report worries to a trusted adult.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, such as history and geography, curriculum plans do not accurately identify the knowledge and skills that leaders want pupils to know and do. As a result, pupils' understanding of chronology is weaker. Leaders need to ensure that curriculum plans, in the wider curriculum, are well sequenced and progressive.
- The assessment of pupils' learning in the wider curriculum does not identify what pupils can do with enough accuracy. Assessments focus too much on pupils' recall of facts. In subjects such as art, assessments do not reflect the curriculum content that pupils have been taught. This means that gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills are not consistently identified. Leaders should develop assessment systems in the wider curriculum, so that assessments capture pupils' skills and knowledge.
- Despite a slight reduction, rates of persistent absenteeism are too high. Too many pupils are missing too much of the curriculum. Leaders should identify pupils who are at risk of being persistently absent at an earlier stage and work more closely with parents to overcome barriers to pupils' attendance.

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	144539
Local authority	Doncaster
Inspection number	10200636
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	201
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Kim Kellett
Headteacher	Graham Rhodes
Website	www.highwoods.doncaster.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Highwoods Academy converted to become an academy school in June 2017. When its predecessor school, Mexborough Highwoods Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to require improvement overall.
- Highwoods Academy is a smaller than average primary school.
- The proportion of pupils in receipt of additional support through the pupil premium funding is almost double the national average.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.
- The proportion of parents, who responded to Ofsted's survey, was very low.

Information about this inspection

The inspector(s) carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, and wider leadership team. Inspectors also met with the interim special educational needs coordinator and carried out joint lesson visits.
- Inspectors conducted deep dives in reading, mathematics, history, and science. Inspectors met with curriculum leaders, visited lessons, looked at pupils' work and talked to pupils and teachers. Leaders were involved throughout the deep dive activities.
- Inspectors also reviewed wider curriculum plans in art, geography, computing, and modern foreign languages.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read to a familiar adult and visited reading and phonics lessons in Reception, Year 1, and Year 2.
- Inspectors spoke with a selection of parents at the start and end of the school day.
- Inspectors spoke with a representative from the board of trustees, including the chair of trustees and chief executive officer.
- Inspectors met with the chair of the academy committee.
- Inspectors reviewed the five responses that were received through the Ofsted online questionnaire Parent View, which included two free-text responses. Inspectors considered the 20 responses that were received through Ofsted's staff questionnaire. Inspectors also considered the six responses received through the pupil survey.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour throughout the school day, including during lesson visits, at breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors scrutinised the schools safeguarding documentation and behaviour and attendance information.

Inspection team

Chris Pearce, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Alex Reed

Ofsted Inspector

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