

Inspection of Highwood Primary School

Fairwater Drive, Woodley, Reading, Berkshire RG5 3JE

Inspection dates: 1 and 2 December 2021

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a school that staff and pupils are proud to belong to and a place 'where individuals matter'. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and like the challenge of learning new things. They work with highly positive attitudes and behave very well. Classrooms are happy, purposeful places of learning.

Pupils know that they can rely on staff to support and care for them. They feel safe in school. Although there are occasional friendship issues, pupils confirm that bullying is rare. Any issues are very quickly resolved and leaders do not tolerate any form of unkind behaviour. Pupils cooperate very well together. They say that there is always a friend to play with and that everyone receives a warm welcome at Highwood.

Pupils enjoy assemblies where they can reflect on and celebrate the school's values, such as trust, respect and celebrating diversity. Older pupils like the responsibility and privilege of holding their leadership roles and helping out in school. The vast majority of parents have nothing but praise for the school. One parent, typical of many, commented, 'The school is amazing and my children are thriving'.

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

The headteacher has led the school well through the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Leaders have been unswerving in their ambition and determination to improve the quality of education. They have done this very successfully. Staff are fully on board and feel very well supported by leaders. They share leaders' high aspirations and there is a real sense of 'team Highwood'.

Leaders have developed a curriculum that is meaningful and engaging for pupils. Most subjects are planned well and pupils are developing their knowledge securely. Curriculum plans provide clear guidance for staff. However, sometimes teachers do not use assessment information to plan activities that deepen pupils' learning. In addition, a few subjects, such as physical education and religious education, are not planned quite as well. This is because the curriculum has too much breadth and not enough depth. As a result, pupils do not develop their knowledge as securely in these subjects.

Staff place great emphasis on helping pupils to learn and understand new vocabulary. This is a strong feature of the school's work. Staff engage pupils well in discussions and take every opportunity to develop their speaking skills. In the nursery, daily songs and rhymes pave the way for learning phonics later.

Teachers waste no time in getting phonics teaching underway in Reception. Staff provide extra support for any pupils who are not on track with the school's programme. Staff foster a love of reading from children's very first days at Highwood. Pupils' reading journey continues through the school. They achieve well

and enjoy reading. Pupils also know that learning to read is important. As one older pupil commented, 'You use reading in life'.

The mathematics curriculum is carefully considered and coherently planned. Pupils are doing well in this subject. Leaders have given added weight to fundamental building blocks such as place value. Key content is repeated and built on regularly to ensure that pupils remember important knowledge.

Leaders have high ambition and a strong moral purpose to ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) achieve well. Leaders and staff identify, plan and adapt activities suitably to cater for pupils' needs. Staff and therapists in the specialist resource base provision provide highly effective support. They tailor the curriculum precisely around these pupils' complex needs.

Staff and pupils get on very well together and relationships across the school are very strong. Pupils are enthusiastic about learning and behave exceptionally well. They are kind and take good care of each other. The school's personal, social and health education programme helps pupils to learn about how to stay safe and keep healthy. Staff encourage pupils to pursue their interests and make the most of their time at school. Pupils are pleased that sports clubs have resumed and enjoy being active and playing competitive games.

Governors have worked in close partnership with leaders to steer the school through its journey of improvement. They keep the welfare of staff and pupils and safeguarding to the fore of their discussions. Staff feel that leaders consider their workload and well-being. They appreciate the time leaders have given them to develop the curriculum. However, some subject leaders are new and are still finding their feet. Therefore, they have not yet been able to evaluate the impact of the curriculum.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding at this school. Leaders' approach to all aspects of safeguarding is systematic and thorough. Staff know that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Regular training enables staff to be confident in identifying and reporting any concerns. Leaders have a strong understanding of any risks to pupils and potential vulnerabilities. They are swift to put in place support for families that need help and guidance. When needed, they contact external agencies and pursue and escalate any concerns.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers do not consistently check pupils' understanding and use this to inform teaching. As a result, they do not always take full account of what pupils know

and understand when planning learning activities. Leaders need to ensure that formative assessment processes in all subjects are fully developed and used consistently well.

- In a few subjects, such as religious education and physical education, leaders have not selected or refined sufficiently the most important content they want pupils to learn. Too much content is included and covered too thinly. As a result, pupils are not building their knowledge as securely or deeply as in other subjects. Leaders need to identify the most important content they wish pupils to learn and ensure that there is sufficient focus on this in the school's curriculum plans.
- Some subject leaders are new and have not yet got to grips with evaluating the curriculum in their areas of responsibility. They do not have a clear understanding of the impact of the curriculum on pupils' learning. Leaders need to ensure that subject leaders receive guidance and support to develop this aspect of their role. This will enable them to contribute fully to strengthening the curriculum further.

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	131689
Local authority	Wokingham
Inspection number	10203131
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	461
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Wendy Sabaroche
Headteacher	Matthew Hickey
Website	www.highwood.wokingham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	14 and 15 March 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has a specialist resource base provision for pupils with speech, language and communication needs. This is known as The Orchard. Currently, 12 pupils attend this provision. They spend time in mainstream classes as well as attending lessons and therapy sessions in the specialist provision.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.
- Since the previous inspection, the number of pupils on roll has increased significantly. There are now two classes in each year group from Reception through to Year 6. The increase in the school's capacity in order to accommodate local demand on school places means that, recently, many pupils have joined the school at different times of the school year. A high proportion of the pupils in the current Year 6 classes have joined the school since June 2021.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school had 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 carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics, history, physical education and design technology. They discussed the curriculum with leaders, staff and pupils, visited lessons, sampled pupils' work and listened to pupils read.
- Inspectors sampled curriculum plans and pupils' work in other subjects, including geography, religious education and science.
- Inspectors visited the specialist resource base provision and spoke with the leader responsible for this provision and the leader for SEND across the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders and staff, including those teachers who have recently joined the profession.
- The lead inspector met with six members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- The lead inspector met with a representative of the local authority.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors reviewed the school's record of recruitment checks. The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding leader, and inspectors spoke with pupils and staff. Inspectors also reviewed procedures, records, policies and other safeguarding information.
- Inspectors gathered parents' views through the 60 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and free-text comments. An inspector also spoke with some parents on the first day of the inspection.
- Inspectors took into account the views of staff during meetings with them and from the 48 responses to Ofsted's confidential staff survey.

Inspection team

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