

Inspection of Hilltop Junior School

Hill Avenue, Wickford, Essex SS11 8LT

Inspection dates: 11 and 12 January 2022

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5
of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Hilltop know and live up to the school's values: happiness, esteem, achievement, responsibility, trust and spirituality. Staff model the values and, as a result, relationships are warm and supportive across the school. Pupils are encouraged to do their best and are rewarded readily. Pupils talk excitedly about rewards for a variety of achievements, including reading, presentation and behaviour.

Pupils know that they can talk to any member of staff about a problem. Pupils told inspectors that staff help them when needed. Whole-school approaches to emotional well-being help pupils to learn how to be independent and resilient. Staff know the pupils well. Bullying is rare and pupils behave well at their school.

Pupils enjoy their lessons. They like the quizzes that teachers make for them. Their lessons have familiar routines and teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. This helps to develop pupils' concentration. Pupils have opportunities to take on responsibilities, such as becoming an eco-warrior or a school librarian. Playtimes are harmonious and pupils talk about how the school is 'kind and caring'.

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

Leaders have created a curriculum that helps pupils to learn well. Leaders' curriculum planning provides teachers with a clear sequence of learning. Words and ideas are introduced in a way that helps pupils apply them in the work they do. Pupils understand the vocabulary needed to make sense of, and discuss, what they are learning. Teachers incorporate techniques that maximise pupils' understanding of what is being taught. Teachers also endeavour to give pupils a lot of opportunities to rehearse and revisit content. Pupils enjoy their lessons, and they are proud of their work. These strengths are common across the different subjects in the school. Pupils learn well.

Pupils achieve most well in subjects where assessment gives teachers and leaders precise information. This helps them to decide whether pupils need extra help, or whether a different approach to teaching the topic might be more effective. In some subjects, assessment is not this strong. While pupils generally progress well in these subjects, they do not develop a long-term memory of some of leaders' intended curriculum.

In teaching reading, staff emphasise the acquisition of knowledge and the development of fluency and expression. Staff choose books that help pupils learn the subjects in the curriculum. Staff also ensure that pupils read about cultures and lifestyles from around the world. Leaders work with local infant schools so that they know which pupils will need help to catch up with reading.

An emphasis on routines and positivity helps pupils to concentrate and behave well in their lessons. Teachers help pupils who find controlling their emotions difficult. As a result, behaviour is calm and appropriate for learning.

Leaders support pupils' personal development well. They ensure that pupils develop their knowledge of the school's values through, for example, the school council or by taking part in termly 'HEARTS promise days'. Staff recognise and celebrate when pupils demonstrate the school's values, such as in presenting their work neatly or demonstrating good manners, by rewarding pupils in assemblies.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have access to the full curriculum. The needs of pupils with SEND are well known. Staff create targets that are well matched to pupils' needs. Leaders have high expectations of staff and pupils. They have provided training that has given staff confidence to support pupils with additional needs. Pupils respond positively to this support.

Trustees and governors work together with school leaders to ensure that pupils' education, personal development and behaviour continuously improve. Experts in the trust help leaders to quality assure curriculum plans and resources, for instance. Trustees and governors are open to external challenge. They are mindful of teacher workload and well-being. Communication with parents and carers is a strength. Leaders are sensitive to the needs of the community.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that the school's single central record of recruitment checks is well maintained. They have put in place a comprehensive system to track, monitor and discuss pupils who are vulnerable. Leaders work well with outside agencies and with parents to secure help for those who need it. Support for vulnerable pupils is carefully thought out.

Regular training, updates and checking of staff knowledge help to ensure that safeguarding has a high profile. Pupils know the term 'trusted adult'. They can speak confidently about how to share their concerns and how to stay safe online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, leaders do not have enough information about what pupils do and do not know. This prevents leaders from ascertaining which aspects of curriculum plans, teaching or pupil tasks need strengthening or changing. Leaders should improve the way in which they check what pupils remember.

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	145421
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10212048
Type of school	Junior
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	339
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Vaughan Collier
Principal	Don Wry
Website	www.hearts-hilltopjun.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school has a breakfast and an after-school club.
- The school is larger than the average-sized junior school.
- Hilltop Junior School converted to become an academy school in September 2017. When its predecessor school, Hilltop Junior School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged as requires improvement.

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 leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, art, science and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors 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 lead inspector met with the chief executive officer of the trust, trustees and members of the local advisory body. The lead inspector also spoke to the local authority education partner.
- Inspectors spoke with the special educational needs coordinators and different groups of pupils to discuss personal development.
- Inspectors looked at the school's safer recruitment practices and the single central record of recruitment checks. Inspectors discussed the school's approaches to safeguarding monitoring and support with the designated safeguarding lead, with staff and with pupils.

Inspection team

Hannah Stoten, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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