

Inspection of Highfield Church of England Primary School

Hawthorn Road, Highfield, Southampton, Hampshire SO17 1PX

Inspection dates: 26 and 27 January 2022

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

This school was last inspected 14 years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to this school. They are enthusiastic learners. From the minute they enter Reception, pupils benefit from an ambitious curriculum. They learn to read very quickly and receive extra support if they find reading challenging. Pupils have a strong sense of equality and fairness. One parent, typical of many, said, 'Our child loves this school and is very happy here.'

Pupils behave very well. The school values of 'love, serve and trust' are evident in the way pupils work together. In lessons, pupils listen attentively and join in enthusiastically. They play and cooperate very well together. Pupils say that bullying is very rare, and if it does happen, they know that the staff will deal with it promptly.

Helping pupils to think about how they learn is central to the curriculum, from the beginning of Reception through the whole school. Pupils learn how to be 'reciprocal, resilient, reflective and resourceful'.

Staff have high expectations for the pupils at Highfield Church of England School. Pupils feel safe and trust adults to help them with their problems. However, leaders in the school do not handle safeguarding concerns in the correct way. This potentially puts children at risk of harm.

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

Leaders and governors have not fulfilled their statutory duties with regards to safeguarding. Safeguarding records have not been stored securely or confidentially. Leaders have not maintained a detailed account of how concerns are followed up or resolved. Records lack detail of the actions taken, the decisions leaders have made, and the outcomes of concerns shared with them.

Children get an amazing start to their education in this school because teaching in Reception is exceptional. Leaders have designed a curriculum that is broad and inspiring. Thoughtfully planned lessons cater for children of all abilities. Children thrive in stimulating classrooms and specially designed outdoor play areas. There is a focus on nature and the development of curiosity in the early years. Staff actively encourage children to take responsibility for their learning, supporting them in making choices that stretch and challenge them. Children crave success because of the value they place on discovering and learning. Behaviour in the Reception classes is exemplary. Children are kind to each other and flourish here. Staff foster a love of reading from the moment pupils arrive. This continues as pupils move up through the school.

Pupils are taught in single-age classes in Reception and move to mixed-age classes from Year 1 onwards. In the infant school, the work of teachers and teaching assistants is highly effective. Staff plan together and share a common approach. As a result, pupils gain the knowledge and skills they need for the next stage of school.

In some subjects, such as mathematics, geography and art, the curriculum is particularly ambitious. In these subjects, leaders have focused on providing a carefully sequenced curriculum for pupils, from Reception through to Year 6. Where it is most effective, teaching enables pupils to develop knowledge and skills, building on prior learning. In other subjects, the curriculum thinking is not as well developed yet, so pupils have not learned and remembered vital parts of the curriculum before they have moved on.

Relationships in the school are strong. Staff and pupils work well together, and the school values are evident in the way pupils treat each other. Pupils have a positive attitude to their learning. Disruptive behaviour is very rare. The caring nature of the school came into its own during the pandemic. Parents valued the support they received and told inspectors, 'The school had an exemplary approach to remote lessons.'

Opportunities to extend learning beyond the curriculum are highly valued, such as the enterprise project which pupils run at the summer fair. Activities are carefully designed to develop 'well-rounded' individuals. The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme provides a wealth of opportunities to develop financial management skills. Pupils enjoy taking part in stimulating spiritual, moral, social and cultural activities as part of the fabric of the school. They make valuable contributions to the local food bank and the many charity events that the pupils support. Equalities and fairness are actively promoted here.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is strong. Parents are actively involved in co-producing plans to support the learning of pupils with SEND. Leaders are swift in identifying needs. Teachers are well trained and supported to adapt their teaching plans to accommodate pupils' needs. Staff know and understand pupils' needs well. Pupils with SEND are included fully in school life.

Leaders do not prioritise the well-being of all staff sufficiently well. A significant proportion of the staff at this school feel that the school is not well led. A quarter of staff shared concerns regarding their well-being with inspectors. They feel that their workload is not taken into account when new policies and procedures are designed and implemented.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

There are opportunities in the curriculum for pupils to learn how to stay safe. For example, in the PSHE curriculum, pupils are taught about safe relationships and online safety.

The school has completed all the necessary pre-employment checks for staff.

Regular training ensures that staff are aware of how to spot and identify signs of abuse. If staff have concerns, they know whom to report these concerns to. However, leaders do not possess an accurate enough understanding of how to deal with this information.

Safeguarding concerns are not always followed up properly by leaders. In many cases seen by inspectors, leaders had not taken timely or effective actions to ensure the safety of the child concerned. In one serious case seen, leaders had not persistently pursued effective support for a child who was at risk of harm.

Record-keeping is not effective. Records lack precision, omit detail about leaders' actions and are incomplete or inaccessible. Safeguarding records were accessible to staff who should not have had access. Governors have not fulfilled their statutory duty to ensure these processes are in line with their policy and are sufficiently robust to keep children safe. When the issue of staff access to safeguarding records was identified during the inspection, leaders took prompt action to ensure the confidentiality of safeguarding records.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not followed their own policy or statutory guidance when they receive safeguarding concerns. Record-keeping is inaccurate and insecure. This means pupils may be at risk of harm. Leaders must take urgent action to ensure that:
 - a secure system for recording and reporting safeguarding concerns is implemented
 - all designated safeguarding leaders follow the school policy, local authority arrangements and statutory guidance for assessing and reporting safeguarding actions
 - governors develop effective systems to check the appropriateness and urgency of leaders' actions to safeguard pupils.
- Leaders have begun to improve many areas of the wider curriculum. However, teachers are not always equipped with the required subject knowledge to plan lessons to effectively build pupils' knowledge over time. Leaders should ensure that subject leaders receive the appropriate support to further aid curriculum development and implementation.
- Leaders do not carefully take into account the extra workload that new policies and procedures place on staff well-being when they are launched. This leads to staff being placed under unnecessary pressure due to ineffective strategic leadership. Leaders and governors must ensure that the well-being of staff is prioritised when launching new initiatives.

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	116395
Local authority	Southampton
Inspection number	10211798
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	314
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Helen Thompson
Headteacher	Lisa Warren
Website	www.highfieldceprimaryschool.co.uk/
Date of previous inspection	13 July 2007

Information about this school

- The school is a voluntary-aided Church of England school. The most recent section 48 inspection took place in July 2018.
- The school has two separate sites, one each for infants and juniors.
- The number of pupils on roll is higher than when the school was last inspected.
- Pupils are taught in single-age classes in Reception and mixed-age classes in Years 1 and 2 and the junior school.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.
- The school is an associate member of the Aspire Community Trust.

Information about this inspection

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

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

This was the first routine inspection the school 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 met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and the leader with responsibility for SEND. Inspectors also met with governors, the local authority school improvement officers (in person and online), the diocesan representative (by telephone) and the Aspire Trust school improvement officer.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics, art and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors discussed curriculum thinking and looked at pupils' work in science and French.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors reviewed a wide range of safeguarding documents and records, including the school's record of recruitment checks. The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead and the deputy designated safeguarding lead. An inspector met with the team of designated safeguarding leaders on the second day of the inspection. Inspectors also spoke with pupils and staff.
- Inspectors gathered parents' responses to Ofsted's survey, Ofsted Parent View, including parents' written comments. Inspectors also spoke with parents on the morning of the first day of inspection and by telephone.
- Inspectors took account of pupils' views through meetings with them. Conversations were held with pupils during lesson visits and at lunchtime. Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.
- Inspectors met with staff to gather their views about the school and took account of their responses to Ofsted's confidential staff survey.

Inspection team

Linda Culling, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Matthew Newberry	Her Majesty's Inspector
Maxine McDonald-Taylor	Her Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

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