

Inspection of a good school: High Halden Church of England Primary School

Church Hill, High Halden, Ashford, Kent TN26 3JB

Inspection date: 24 February 2022

Outcome

High Halden Church of England Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a harmonious community where pupils and adults work happily together. There is a strong sense of pride from everyone involved.

Everybody is welcome.

The school is ambitious about the rich range of learning it offers pupils, both academically and beyond. Pupils themselves have been involved in designing what this offer should look like.

As well as through close links with the local community, staff take opportunities to enrich pupils' experiences, for example, through city, beach and museum visits. A generous, diverse and ever-changing variety of clubs are on offer, considering the school's size.

Pupils are expected to conduct themselves well and they rise to this challenge. As they grow in this safe and nurturing environment, pupils develop confidence and self-esteem. Pupils can aspire to one of several leadership roles, including house captain or serving on the spiritual committee.

Parents and carers, and almost all pupils, have full confidence in the school's ability to deal with bullying. Many are not even aware it ever happens. Potential incidents are taken seriously, investigated and tackled robustly where bullying is occasionally found.

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

Everyone in this school is involved in its continual strive to improve. Leadership responsibility is very well shared and there are even pupil governors. High standards of behaviour allow pupils to concentrate and achieve well.

In recent years, the school has done much thoughtful work to develop a strong curriculum. Its creation is grounded firmly in the school's ethos of encouraging curiosity

and creativity, as well as developing character and a sense of community. Beneath these overarching aims sit careful decisions about what pupils should learn in each subject and when. This begins right from day one of early years.

The curriculum places greater emphasis on what the school calls 'sticky knowledge' than it did in the past. Staff have had training this year on how to make learning 'long lasting' and are following this up with various helpful strategies in the classroom. As a result, pupils know an increasing amount across subjects. There is a strong emphasis on expanding pupils' vocabulary across subjects. This follows leaders' concerns that some pupils will have had less exposure to a rich range of language and experiences during national lockdowns.

Partly as a result of the disruption since the first national lockdown, staff have not taught all the things in some subjects that they had hoped to by now. Leaders and staff have rightly prioritised assessing and tackling gaps in pupils' knowledge following the last two years of disrupted schooling. The approach to this important work has been systematic and well planned. Some pupils still miss too much school, which hinders their progress. However, in some cases, pupils are ready to move on and return to, or closer to, the school's originally intended curriculum more quickly.

There are clear and high expectations of how quickly pupils should learn to read. Staff are well trained. They tailor the support for pupils who do not keep pace with their peers. The daily teaching of phonics is rightly prioritised from the time children join the school. A recent focus on helping pupils to read more fluently is starting to pay off.

Developing younger children's sense and understanding of numbers and counting is similarly prioritised in early years. They are taught the right mathematical vocabulary from the start. Children benefit from plentiful opportunities to practise what they learn. As pupils move into key stage 1, teachers present new concepts clearly. They provide suitable apparatus to support pupils' developing understanding and calculations. Across the school, pupils are keen to share their knowledge of number facts.

Leaders are clear that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are entitled to the same curriculum as their peers. Leaders and staff plan the support and necessary adaptations for individual pupils accordingly. Teaching assistants are well trained, purposefully deployed and an important part of the school's success in this area.

Staff have been closely involved in developing the school's curriculum. However, within a positive overall picture, some variability remains in how well what the school is aiming for is actually brought about in the classroom.

Leaders have been highly effective in creating an overwhelmingly positive staff team who feel inspired, well supported and unanimously proud to work at the school. Teachers contribute ideas to policies and practices, and leaders and staff work closely together to manage workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The culture of safeguarding encourages adults to notice and act on concerns. Staff are alert to possible issues and follow the school's processes for recording and reporting these. Leaders respond promptly and make sound decisions about what to do next. However, where there are lower-level concerns, records do not always show clearly when these actions happened and what the outcome was. That said, leaders work regularly with other relevant professionals and agencies to seek extra help and share information. There are suitable procedures for checking that absent pupils are safe, although improvements in attendance stalled when the first lockdown happened.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The intended curriculum is not successfully enacted consistently and securely across all classes and subjects. This means that pupils' knowledge and understanding, while developing, are not as strong and/or deep as they could be. Leaders should ensure that everyone shares the same understanding of, and competence in, the school's curriculum and chosen approaches so that these are implemented to a consistently high standard.
- Following changes to the school's curriculum and disrupted education over the last two years, some pupils are not on course to be likely to reach the ambitious end-points of the curriculum that the school intends. Teachers do not consistently check as well as they could whether pupils are ready to move on, and/or act as ambitiously as they could on this information. As well as securing and building on the important foundations of what pupils already know and remember, leaders and staff should refocus their attention on where they want pupils to get to.
- The school's strategies for making sure pupils attend school regularly are not working well enough for a small minority of pupils who, even considering the pandemic, still miss too much school. Leaders should work more closely with families to understand more about any underlying factors that may contribute to periodic absences, to tailor the support and challenge the school offers.

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 second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in January 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	118666
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10211197
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	100
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Nik Le Marechal
Headteacher	Kelly Burlton
Website	www.high-halden.kent.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	17 January 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This school is a Church of England voluntary-controlled school. Its distinctive character was last inspected under section 48 of the Education Act in October 2015. The school has been earmarked to be reinspected shortly.
- The headteacher is also acting executive headteacher of another nearby primary school.
- This school does not use alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

- 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, other leaders, governors, staff and pupils. The lead inspector spoke on the telephone with a representative of the local authority.
- To understand the quality of education provided by the school, inspectors examined certain subjects in detail (deep dives). They did deep dives in early reading, mathematics 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. An inspector also heard a range of pupils reading to familiar adults.

- The team used inspection surveys to take account of the views expressed by 77 pupils, 13 parents and 17 staff.
- Inspectors investigated the culture of safeguarding in the school through: a range of discussions; scrutiny of policies, documents and records; and a review of certain processes.

Inspection team

Clive Dunn, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Alice Early

Ofsted Inspector

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