

Inspection of a good school: Houghton CofE School

Jackson Road, Houghton, Carlisle, Cumbria CA3 0PA

Inspection dates:

15 and 16 March 2022

Outcome

Houghton CofE School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy to attend school. They appreciate that their teachers are friendly and welcoming. Pupils know that staff are there to help and take good care of them. This helps pupils to feel safe in school. Pupils have every confidence that adults will deal with any incidents of bullying swiftly and effectively.

Leaders and teachers are determined that all pupils, including those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), will learn and remember the curriculum. Pupils respond to these high expectations and achieve well across a range of subjects.

Pupils behave well and look after one another. Older pupils enjoy taking responsibility for looking after younger ones. For example, they organise fun games with parachutes for their 'little buddies' in the Reception Year. Pupils are courteous, polite and sensible as they move in and around school.

Pupils take part in many activities after school, including choir, judo and a range of other sports. Pupils also participate in interesting trips and visits. Recently all pupils visited a local farm as part of an art project. They also enjoyed a visit from a scientist who demonstrated some exciting experiments.

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

Leaders have designed ambitious curriculums for all subjects which support pupils in their learning. Teachers know precisely what pupils need to learn to achieve well. For example, in the early years, teachers structure activities with care to help children learn basic skills in reading, writing and number.

Teachers have secure subject knowledge. They use skilful questioning to check pupils' understanding and help pupils think more deeply about their learning. Pupils respond well. They are interested in finding out more. For example, they want to learn about events that have happened in the past because they know that these often influence how

we live today. That said, in a few subjects, some teachers' expectations of how well pupils can achieve are not high enough. For example, pupils' work in some subjects is not completed to the same high standard as it is in other areas of the curriculum. Work in other subjects, such as English, shows that pupils are capable of doing better.

Leaders make learning to read a top priority for the school. Children begin learning phonics soon after they enter the Reception class. Teachers deliver the phonics programme skilfully. This means that most pupils read well and can use their knowledge of phonics to tackle new words. Any pupils struggling with reading receive effective support from staff to help them catch up. Teachers read to pupils often and encourage pupils to read at home.

Pupils behave very well. This begins in the early years. Teachers make sure that children become confident and independent as they learn and play together. Across the school, pupils have respect for one another and adults in the school. Pupils rarely disturb each other's learning.

Pupils with SEND are very much part of the school family. Leaders identify pupils' needs accurately and at the earliest possible stage. They make effective use of links with outside agencies offering professional help and advice. This means that pupils with SEND have the right support to learn the same curriculum as their classmates.

Leaders and teachers broaden pupils' experiences through opportunities to take part in a range of trips and to meet interesting visitors to the school. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, pupils joined in with activities remotely to learn about significant historical characters such as Mary Seacole and Rosa Parks. Once restrictions eased, older pupils experienced a residential visit to an outdoor education centre. This supported their personal well-being, as well as helped them to settle back into school.

The school curriculum supports pupils' wider development. Visits to places of worship, such as a mosque and a Sikh temple, help pupils learn about different faiths and cultural traditions. Weekly assemblies focusing on current affairs give pupils the chance to learn about the wider world and prepare for their future in modern British society.

Governors are active in the school and the local community. Governors and leaders consider staff's workload, well-being and work-life balance when making decisions about the school. Staff feel valued. They speak highly of the personal and professional support that they receive from leaders. Staff participate in opportunities for professional development on a regular basis, for example in building their leadership skills.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and governors ensure that there is a school-wide culture of safeguarding. All staff understand that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Staff know precisely what to do and whom to contact if they suspect that a pupil may be at risk of harm. Staff have

regular and up-to-date training, including in child protection and first aid. They know that it is vital to recognise from the earliest possible moment that a pupil may be at risk.

Pupils learn how to be safe, including when online. They are aware of the potential dangers of using social media.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, some teachers' expectations of what pupils should achieve are not high enough. As a result, some pupils do not learn as well as they should in these curriculum areas. Leaders should ensure that teachers expect the same high standards from pupils across all subjects to ensure that pupils progress well through the whole curriculum.

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 November 2012.

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	112250
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10226207
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	193
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Paul Turney
Headteacher	Stephen Johnston
Website	www.houghtonschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	28 March 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This is a Church of England primary school. The school's previous section 48 inspection took place in June 2018.
- School leaders do not currently make any use of alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in the evaluation of the school.
- During this inspection, the inspector met with the headteacher and seven members of the governing body.
- The inspector held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector reviewed a range of safeguarding documentation, including the single central record of checks on staff's suitability to work with pupils. The inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead and checked how leaders record and respond to safeguarding concerns.

- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector 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. The inspector also looked at pupils' work in some other subjects and spoke to leaders about it.
- The inspector observed pupils reading to a familiar adult and spoke to pupils during breaktimes.
- The inspector spoke with staff about their workload and well-being.
- The inspector considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments. The inspector also considered responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Jan Corlett, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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