

Inspection of a good school: Dickens Heath Community Primary School

Three Acres Lane, Dickens Heath, Solihull, West Midlands B90 1NA

Inspection dates:

5 and 6 April 2022

Outcome

Dickens Heath Community Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Dickens Heath is a welcoming, busy and joyous place to be. It is a community school in name and nature. Pupils have many opportunities to develop personally and academically. They take part in a range of activities, from cookery, choir and musical shows to gardening, sport and chess. Everyone is valued and no one is left out.

At breaktimes, older pupils carry out special jobs and help younger ones outside. In class and outside, most pupils behave well and get on with one another. Regular routines help everyone to know what to expect. However, if anyone needs something doing differently, then staff do all they can to make this happen. Bullying can happen from time to time, but staff deal with it properly. Pupils have positive relationships with adults. If pupils are worried about anything, they know that they can tell an adult, who will listen and help them. Pupils feel safe at school.

Leaders have created a well-designed and engaging curriculum. Lessons are well organised and purposeful. Staff have high aspirations for all pupils and expect them to work hard. Pupils build on their learning over time. They know and remember much of what they have learned in lessons.

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

Leaders, including governors, have a clear ambition for every child to be the best version of themselves. They are well on the way to realising this through a well-developed curriculum and the wider opportunities on offer to all pupils.

Reading is a high priority in the school. The curriculum helps pupils to learn to read and love to read. This starts in early years with the teaching of phonics and the extensive reading of stories to develop vocabulary. Pupils have daily lessons in small groups, so that staff can identify what they can and cannot do. Pupils are developing the fluency and confidence they need to read age-appropriate books because of the consistent approach

to the teaching of reading. Where children are behind, they get extra support to help them catch up. This is having a positive impact for many of the pupils.

The mathematics curriculum sets out what children and pupils need to know and remember from early years to Year 6. Children make a solid start in their understanding of number in early years. Staff use stories and rhymes with the youngest children to develop their mathematical understanding. They build on this with precise language and practical resources in Reception. This means that children have a good understanding of basic number. The quality of what happens across the other classes varies. There are many lessons that work well, but in some instances, staff try to cover too much or jump ahead too quickly. In part, this is because staff are still getting to grips with the school's new resources. Another reason is because some staff do not deliver aspects of the mathematics curriculum consistently well.

Staff teach most other subjects, including art, religious education (RE), geography and music, very well. Leaders have strong subject knowledge and have produced clear and detailed guidance for staff to follow. This helps to ensure that they teach the right things at the right time, and revisit important learning so that it sticks in pupils' minds. In RE, for example, pupils' knowledge of the nativity develops each year. It starts with a simple understanding of the story in early years. This grows to a more complex knowledge of aspects such as prophecy, divinity and incarnation in Year 6.

This is a fully inclusive school. Pupils in the specialist unit get expert input and, in most cases, receive support to take part in lessons in the main school. In all aspects of school life, staff listen to pupils' views. They will do things differently if it helps pupils to improve their behaviour or learning. While there are many activities going on throughout the day, there are many calm spaces around the school. This provides pupils with a safe place to reflect and take time out.

Pupils have a range of opportunities to develop beyond the academic. This includes trips to enhance the curriculum, such as visits to Stratford and Harry Potter World. The farm on site provides many pupils with the opportunity to look after animals such as goats and hens. In forest school, pupils have the chance to work as a team and learn outdoor survival skills. The whole community strives to develop the talents and interests of all children. Pupils appreciate opportunities to develop their artistic, musical, theatrical and sporting skills.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders make appropriate checks on all the adults who work in the school. They ensure that staff receive training so that they can recognise risk. There are systems in place that staff use to record their concerns. Leaders follow up any concerns immediately. They contact other agencies when they should. Leaders share the right information with the right people at the right time.

Pupils learn about safe behaviours. Pupils receive guidance and support to identify trusted adults in school and at home. They learn about risks online and out in the community.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The implementation of the curriculum in mathematics is inconsistent. As a result, not all pupils understand their learning as well as they should. Leaders should ensure that all staff have the expertise they need to deliver the curriculum effectively, so that all pupils know and understand what they have been taught.

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 a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in July 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	133720
Local authority	Solihull
Inspection number	10211262
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	447
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Richard Eadie
Headteacher	Jacqueline Nicholls
Website	www.dickens-heath.solihull.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	24 January 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

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.

- The lead inspector reviewed documents on the school's website, as well as published information about the school's performance.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator, subject leaders, governors (including the chair of the governing body), and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, spoke to teachers, visited lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- Inspectors spoke to leaders about the curriculum in other subjects, including in music, RE and art.
- The lead inspector met with the headteacher and the designated safeguarding lead. Pupils' case files were reviewed. The single central record of the checks on staff's suitability to work with children was scrutinised.
- Inspectors met with staff to discuss their workload and the support they receive to carry out their roles.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils about how safe they feel in school and how they learn to keep themselves safe.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, the pupil survey and the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Helen Forrest, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Martin Pye

Her Majesty's Inspector

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