

# Inspection of an outstanding school: Hillcrest Academy

Cowper Street, Leeds, West Yorkshire LS7 4DR

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Inspection dates:

4 and 5 May 2022

## Outcome

Hillcrest Academy continues to be an outstanding school.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Hillcrest Academy is an inspirational, inclusive primary school. Everyone is made to feel welcome. Staff, pupils and their families are proud to be part of the diverse school community. Leaders have high aspirations for all pupils academically, socially and for their futures. Pupils make excellent progress as a result of the well-planned curriculum and high-quality teaching.

Pupils feel happy and safe at school. At all times, in lessons and throughout the school day, pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Pupils are polite, courteous and friendly. They treat one another with respect. Pupils know that adults listen to their concerns and help them. Pupils value the support from the in-school counselling service. Leaders carefully monitor and address any incidents. There is no bullying at the school.

External partners provide a wide range of educational experiences for the pupils. Examples include dancing with the Northern School of Contemporary Dance, joining the cub scouts and acting with a youth theatre company. A resident actor works with pupils once a week.

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

Leaders have developed a well-planned, exciting curriculum. They have clearly defined the knowledge they expect pupils to learn from the early years through to Year 6. Highly detailed and sequential planning is in place, which class teachers then adapt to meet the needs of their pupils. Subject leaders are knowledgeable. They ensure that teachers are well trained. Teachers access a wide range of high-quality materials produced by staff in school and across the trust, for example reading anthologies. In addition to subject-specific planning, leaders have identified 'golden threads' which they feel are essential for pupils to learn about across the whole curriculum, for example 'invasion'.

Teachers regularly check pupils' understanding during lessons, using questioning and marking. Pupils value the feedback they receive. As one pupil said, 'We learn from our

mistakes.' Teachers start each lesson with a repetition of prior learning and address any misconceptions from the previous lesson. Teachers also use end-of-unit assessments to check the knowledge pupils have learned over time and to address any gaps.

Leaders have high expectations for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils with SEND are fully included in all aspects of school life. Leaders ensure that, when required, pupils have additional adult help. Staff are well trained and support pupils effectively. Leaders have been proactive in seeking assistance for pupils from external agencies. For example, leaders have commissioned an external partner to provide speech and language support for pupils.

Leaders recognise the importance of regular attendance. Pupils are strongly encouraged to come to school. For example, regular attendees enter a raffle to win a mountain bike. Pupils' attitudes to learning are superb. They respond well to working in the 'Purple Zone', which is when they work in silence on a focused task. For example, pupils in Year 6 worked in the 'Purple Zone' to write about what historians think was the main reason for the start of World War II. Meanwhile, pupils in Reception worked in the 'Purple Zone' to paint and label a beanstalk. Children in early years access a wide range of purposeful activities both indoors and outdoors. Highly trained school staff extend the children's learning through skilful questioning.

Leaders place a great emphasis on reading. All staff are trained to teach pupils early reading skills. Reading books are closely matched to the pupils' reading ability. As a result, pupils read confidently and accurately. Pupils are regularly assessed. Those who do need additional support are quickly identified and helped to catch up. Leaders promote a love of reading, for example through daily story time. Pupils enjoy using the welcoming class reading areas and school library.

The school's provision and curriculum to support pupils' personal development are exceptional. Planning covers keeping safe and healthy and also finance and careers education. Leaders encourage pupils to have high aspirations for their future. For example, pupils have chosen inspirational role models for their class names, such as Tim Peak and Raheem Sterling. Pupils were introduced to a range of job options at the recent careers week. Pupils have an excellent understanding of equality and bullying. They talk sensitively about the protected characteristics, such as race. They also talk knowledgeably about the fundamental British values, such as democracy and the rule of law.

Leaders, governors and trustees lead and manage the school well. They know the school's strengths and strive to be a beacon of great practice. Staff and governors benefit from the high-quality training and support from the trust. Staff feel well supported by leaders. They say leaders are mindful of their workload. Staff value the extra time they receive for additional work, for example when leading a subject. Pupils, parents, staff, governors and trustees speak highly of their superb school. Leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness is accurate.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that a strong safeguarding culture is in place. They are diligent in fulfilling their safeguarding duties. Leaders make the necessary checks about the suitability of adults who work at the school. They maintain highly detailed records of these checks.

Leaders ensure staff have regular and relevant safeguarding training. Staff are aware of local issues and know how to report concerns. Staff, including the family liaison officer, know the families well and ensure pupils receive the support that they need.

Leaders ensure that pupils are taught to keep themselves safe both on and offline. Leaders also keep parents well informed about online safety. For example, at a recent coffee morning at the school, parents were shown how to block inappropriate content on their children's phones.

## Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. 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 first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in September 2016.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	140413
<b>Local authority</b>	Leeds
<b>Inspection number</b>	10227116
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	464
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Anne McAvan
<b>Principal</b>	Sam Done
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.hillcrest.leeds.sch.uk">www.hillcrest.leeds.sch.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	28 and 29 September 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The principal took up post in January 2017.
- This school is a member of the GORSE Academies Trust.
- Leaders run a breakfast club.
- The school uses one registered alternative provider.

## 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 have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The lead inspector held several meetings with the principal during the inspection.
- The inspector met with the early years leader and the leader responsible for pupils' personal development.

- The inspector met with four governors and four trustees, including the chief executive officer.
- 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 observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- The inspector spoke to pupils formally and informally about their learning and experiences at school.
- Safeguarding documentation and records of behaviour and attendance were checked.
- The inspector spoke with some parents at the end of the school day.
- The inspector reviewed the 40 responses received through the Ofsted online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, which included 22 free-text responses. The inspector considered the 27 responses received through Ofsted's questionnaire for staff. The inspector also considered nine responses received through Ofsted's pupils' survey.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour throughout the school day, including during lesson visits and at breaktimes and lunchtimes. The inspector spoke to groups of pupils about their views on behaviour and the wider experiences they receive at school.

## **Inspection team**

Kate Williamson, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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