

Inspection of Thistle Hill Academy

Aspen Drive, Minster-on-Sea, Sheerness, Kent ME12 3UD

Inspection dates: 26 and 27 April 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and proud members of the school. As one pupil said, 'You feel part of a massive family full of people you can trust and work with'. Throughout the school pupils engage positively with adults and their peers. In many classrooms pupils can be seen accessing a broad range of activities designed to support their learning. Many pupils benefit from classroom activities that provide them with different ways to record their learning. Breaktimes are fun filled with a range of equipment available to encourage pupils to be active. There are a range of clubs and trips for pupils to take part in that are carefully selected to meet the needs of the curriculum and develop a range of pupils' talents. However, not all pupils are yet being provided with a high-quality education that is ambitious and meets their needs.

Pupils show positive behaviour in and around school. They know their school values and demonstrate them with pride. There are clear classroom and breaktime routines in place that pupils are taught from Reception to minimise disruption to learning. Pupils are confident that if bullying did take place that adults would be quick to prevent it from reoccurring.

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

Leaders know their pupils well and the needs of the local community. They are committed to drive the improvements needed to ensure that all pupils receive a high-quality education. Curriculum documentation provides a clear outline of what pupils are to learn in both reading and mathematics. During teaching, pupils are provided with regular opportunities to revisit and build upon their prior learning. Pupils' knowledge is checked regularly within these subjects and is used to inform future lessons. Pupils struggling to read are identified early through these processes and provided with the support they need to catch up quickly. Many pupils demonstrate enthusiasm for reading with skilled adults and they speak positively about the books they are reading.

In other subjects, including computing and history, pupils can discuss with confidence what they are currently learning. In history, pupils spoken to were able to recall important themes from historical events they have learned about and link them to the present. This included discussing anti-discrimination and inclusion, themes that pupils were passionate about.

Children in Reception make a strong start to their school life. They develop positive relationships with adults and are encouraged to develop their language through discussion and questioning. Children enjoy a range of learning activities that are designed to teach them the important knowledge they need to flourish. This includes, for example, visits from the local dentist and visits to the local beach. The indoor and outdoor environment has been carefully matched to the knowledge

pupils are intended to learn. It provides a safe and purposeful setting to build a range of different skills.

Leaders are keen to ensure that all pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are taught an ambitious curriculum but for some this is not yet the case. Some pupils who require additional support from adults, including those pupils within the specialist resource provision, are not yet benefiting from clear and consistent routines to support their learning. Most pupils with SEND are accessing the curriculum and achieving well but not all are. During lessons, some pupils with SEND require higher quality support from appropriately trained adults. Leaders are working with external agencies and have requested the support of specialist services to develop consistently high-quality provision for all.

At the time of the inspection a small number of pupils were not receiving their entitlement to a full-time education. When not in school, these pupils are not all being provided with appropriate work to complete. The monitoring and review processes in place for these pupils are also not yet clearly identifying the steps leaders are taking to support pupils while not in school and their return to full-time education.

Leaders' oversight of high-quality education for all pupils requires further improvement. The trust has provided welcomed additional capacity to leadership and supported staff training. However, they are not checking carefully enough that leaders within the school with additional responsibilities are being supported and challenged to meet the needs of all pupils.

Pupils behave well. They know the rules that keep everyone safe in school and they know the importance of trying their best. Most pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning and are focused during lesson time. Leaders have successfully created a school environment where pupils appreciate British values. They seamlessly integrate these into their everyday values within school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils are protected from harm and feel safe. The planned curriculum for personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education provides all pupils with age-appropriate knowledge pertaining to keeping themselves safe. Pupils know what to do if they have any concerns and they trust that there are adults available to help them.

Those responsible for safeguarding have put effective policies in place to identify pupils that might be at risk. Staff receive regular training updates to ensure they are knowledgeable and alert to any concerns. Safeguarding concerns are shared in a timely manner. Leaders work effectively with external agencies to support families to access and receive the help that they need.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Not all pupils with SEND are provided with sufficient support to access the curriculum they are provided. This means that some pupils with SEND do not have opportunities to achieve the success that they are entitled to. Leaders must ensure that all staff are appropriately trained to support pupils with a range of special and additional needs.
- The small number of pupils who are on part-time timetables are not routinely provided with suitable work to complete while they are not in school. This means that their curriculum is not as broad and balanced, and they also miss important opportunities to receive the feedback they need to improve. Leaders must ensure that all pupils receive their entitlement to a full-time education.
- The oversight of provision for pupils with SEND is not yet robust and leaders at all levels are not providing suitable challenge for where provision is not good enough. This includes pupils who access the specialist resource provision and pupils who are not in school full time. This means that there are inconsistencies within practice that leaders are not aware of. Leaders must ensure that they have robust systems in place to improve all pupils' access and entitlement to the highest quality education for all.

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	140393
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10227333
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	340
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of board of directors	Fiona Trigwell
Executive Headteacher	Annette Bevan
Website	www.thistlehill.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	22 and 23 May 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has a specialist resource provision for pupils with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). This provision changed designation from social, emotional and mental health to ASD in September 2021. Currently nine pupils are supported within the provision as well as taking part in mainstream lessons within their year groups.
- The school currently uses one alternative provider.

Information about this inspection

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

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 reviewed a range of documentation including the school's self-evaluation form, board meeting minutes and relevant school policies.

- Inspectors met with senior leaders and a range of phase leaders and subject leaders. Inspectors also met with the chair of the board of directors and representatives from the multi-academy trust, including the chief executive officer.
- Inspectors conducted deep dives in early reading, mathematics, computing and history. This involved inspectors talking to subject leaders, class teachers and pupils, visiting lessons, looking at pupils' work and listening to pupils read. Inspectors also looked at curriculum documentation for the teaching of PSHE education.
- As part of inspecting early years, inspectors met with the early years leader and made visits to the Reception classes.
- Inspectors reviewed the arrangements for safeguarding by scrutinising relevant documentation, staff recruitment checks and training records. Case files were also sampled to explore how the school identifies and supports pupils at risk of harm. Inspectors also talked to a range of staff and pupils.
- The inspectors took account of the views expressed by 49 staff and 26 pupils through survey responses. They also took account of 71 parents including 53 free-text comments through Ofsted's online surveys.

Inspection team

Hanna Miller, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Andrea Carter	Ofsted Inspector
Kirstine Boon	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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