

Inspection of a good school: Herstmonceux Church of England Primary School

Hailsham Road, Herstmonceux, Hailsham, East Sussex BN27 4LG

Inspection dates:

28 and 29 September 2022

Outcome

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive in this school. They show a genuine care for one another and form strong friendships. Staff know them well. Warm relationships between staff and pupils create a calm and respectful culture. Pupils are happy, feel safe and enjoy their learning.

Pupils rise to the challenges set by their teachers so that they succeed in their academic and personal development. They show interest in what they learn and ask searching questions. Pupils take pride in roles they are given to make the school a great place to learn. They are well prepared for secondary school.

The school's values of wisdom, peace, community, dignity, hope and joy drive the school. For example, the religious education (RE) curriculum focuses on a different value each term. This gives purpose and relevance to what is learned. Pupils model these values well. This creates a school where pupils are reflective and behave well.

If bullying happens it is quickly resolved by adults. Pupils use the 'worry box' to share any concerns they have. They have every confidence that staff will help them if they have a problem or concern.

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

Leaders are ambitious for the school and its pupils. Leaders' review of subjects such as science and RE is helping to raise the quality of pupils' learning. Teachers mostly use the training and guidance that they receive to encourage pupils to think deeply about the concepts that they learn. Teachers' challenging questions help pupils to develop and articulate well-refined ideas. However, some strategies for teaching are less consistently applied across the school. This is because leaders have not carefully checked that teachers are clear about how to teach some lesson content.

Leaders provide teachers with helpful ways to assess what pupils learn. Teachers use assessments well to think about what pupils need to learn next. As a result, teachers make sure that lessons are matched well to pupils' needs and help pupils to remember what they have learned.

Leaders make sure that the workload for teachers is manageable. They provide helpful guidance to reduce the intensity of marking and assessment. This helps teachers to manage their time well.

Children in the early years settle well to life in school. Parents receive helpful introductions to life in school and teachers make sure that they know about what their child is learning. Children mix with older pupils in Year 1 at playtimes and form strong friendships with one another. This creates a culture of care in the school.

Pupils achieve well in reading. Leaders have carefully sequenced lessons in phonics and reading so that pupils learn to read with confidence. In the early years, children settle well to the routines of daily phonics lessons. As pupils move into Year 1, they learn how to decode unfamiliar words with increasing confidence. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) benefit from additional reading interventions that are carefully matched to their needs. Pupils select books that interest them from the school library and build a love of reading that continues through the school.

Pupils are keen and confident mathematicians. This is because teachers have thought carefully about how best to support pupils' mathematical thinking. For example, in Year 1 and Year 2, children use a range of well-chosen practical resources to help them to build confidence in understanding how numbers are formed. Pupils with SEND are particularly well supported to achieve in mathematics.

In subjects beyond English and mathematics, pupils produce work in books that shows clear steps in their learning. Teachers encourage pupils to refine their thinking. For example, work in personal, social, health and economic education 'reflection journals' ask pupils to think about their views on issues including equality and diversity.

Pupils behave well in lessons because of the high expectations and well-established routines. Teachers ensure that pupils are attentive and respond well to questions posed by the teacher. This means that pupils have a positive approach to learning.

Leaders provide a range of interesting and relevant activities beyond the curriculum. Pupils engage well in outdoor learning to develop their ability to work collaboratively and solve problems. They learn to play musical instruments and engage in a range of sporting and creative activities. Pupils relish these opportunities and describe their learning with enthusiasm.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders make sure that all staff receive regular safeguarding training. This helps them to keep children safe. Adults carefully identify when pupils are at risk of harm and act swiftly to help. They work closely with families and outside agencies to keep children safe.

Pupils know how to stay safe. As well as talking to staff, pupils use the 'worry box' to record their concerns and are confident that adults will respond to them quickly and helpfully. The curriculum helps pupils to learn about staying safe, including when online. As a result, there is a culture of safeguarding that permeates the school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not checked that teachers fully understand how to deliver the planned curriculum. Consequently, some pupils are not progressing through this curriculum as well as they could in some subjects. Leaders need to ensure that teachers fully understand how learning is designed to build over time and that they follow the agreed approach to lessons.

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 an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in March 2017.

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.

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	114506
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	10227790
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	208
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Duncan Irvine
Executive Headteacher	Catherine Cottingham
Website	www.herstmonceux.e-sussex.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	21 and 22 March 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is a Church of England controlled primary school under the Diocese of Chichester and was previously graded as good for its religious character under SIAMS on 18 November 2015.
- The school is federated with All Saints' and St Richard's Church of England Primary School.
- The headteacher was in post at the previous inspection, but the chair of the governing body has been appointed since the previous inspection.
- The school does not currently use any 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 his evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the executive headteacher, deputy head of school, SENCo, subject leaders, a representative of the diocese and a representative from the local

authority. The inspector also met with three members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.

- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, science and RE. 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 considered the curriculum in other subjects, including mathematics.
- The inspector reviewed a wide range of documents, including those related to the governance of the school.
- To inspect safeguarding, the inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead and considered safeguarding documents and records. This included the school's records and plans for supporting pupils who have been referred to outside agencies.
- The views of pupils were considered through formal and informal discussions with them in lessons and during playtime. The views of parents and staff were gathered through Ofsted's online questionnaires.

Inspection team

Graham Chisnell, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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