

Inspection of a good school: Heronsgate School

Lichfield Down, Walnut Tree, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire MK7 7BW

Inspection dates:

4 and 5 October 2022

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. Inspectors are recommending the next inspection to be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils and staff are proud of their happy and welcoming school. Leaders are never too busy to celebrate pupils' achievements and there is a strong focus on promoting pupils' well-being.

Leaders and staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Pupils understand the school's values and, usually, demonstrate them through how they behave. Pupils who need help to manage their behaviour are expertly supported by adults. Sanctions and rewards are applied fairly. This means that the atmosphere in classrooms is typically calm and purposeful. If bullying happens, leaders deal with it rigorously. This makes pupils feel safe and supported in school.

Pupils are encouraged to develop their talents and interests. These include sporting, creative and musical activities. Pupils enjoy the challenge of the leadership roles they undertake. These include serving on the school council, becoming mental health champions and caring for the school's chickens.

All staff are ambitious for pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). In a few curriculum subjects, such as mathematics, their expectations are broadly met. However, weaknesses in the school's reading and wider curriculums mean that pupils are not achieving well enough.

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

Some pupils do not learn to read as well as they should. Leaders are in the process of re-designing their reading curriculum. They have adopted a new approach to teaching phonics to pupils who join the school at the early stages of reading. However, staff are

not yet trained to teach the programme effectively. Although teachers are quick to identify which pupils need support, the help that pupils receive is not always beneficial.

Leaders are committed to promoting pupils' love of reading. They have not, however, clearly set out exactly how this will be achieved. Staff share their enthusiasm for books and most read to pupils daily. Despite this, pupils do not experience a wide enough range of books, authors and genres.

Since the last inspection, leaders have successfully improved the curriculum offer in mathematics. They have ensured that the curriculum defines the small and precise steps of learning. Teachers present information clearly and they carefully check pupils' understanding. Staff are quick to identify the learning needs of all pupils, including those with SEND, and they provide effective support.

Leaders make sure that pupils receive a broad and engaging curriculum. Pupils enjoy learning new information in a range of subjects. However, they do not know and remember as much information as leaders intend. This is because staff do not have the level of subject knowledge needed to present information clearly enough. They do not always spot pupils' mistakes or check effectively how much pupils have remembered. Most staff are quick to identify the needs of pupils with SEND. Teachers provide support, but the work they give to pupils is not always precisely matched to their individual needs. Consequently, these pupils do not learn as well as they could.

Subject leaders are keen to bring about improvement. Many, though, are new to their roles. They do not yet have the subject expertise and skills to provide clear guidance to teachers or check how well the curriculum is implemented.

Leaders have thought carefully about what pupils will be taught in personal, social and health education. Pupils know about ways to keep safe. This includes learning about healthy eating, road safety and emergency first-aid skills. Pupils have a good understanding of individual differences. They show respectful and tolerant attitudes.

Governors and trustees understand the school's strengths and what needs to improve. Staff are proud to work at Heronsgate. Leaders are considerate of their workload. All the work staff are asked to do is directly linked to pupils' safety, well-being and achievement.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that all staff receive regular safeguarding training. Consequently, adults in the school know how to spot the signs that might indicate potential harm to a pupil. If they are worried about a pupil, they report it immediately. Leaders follow up on concerns promptly to ensure that pupils get the help that they need. However, they do not always rigorously record and communicate their actions. Pupils feel safe in school and know that adults will listen to them if they have a problem. They also learn about how to keep themselves safe outside of school, for example when online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Early reading is not taught well enough. As a result, some pupils do not quickly become fluent readers. Leaders must ensure that all staff have the subject knowledge and expertise to teach the early reading programme accurately and consistently.
- Subject leadership is not strong enough. The improvements needed to ensure pupils build and retain knowledge in all subjects are not happening quickly enough. Senior leaders should ensure that subject leaders have the necessary support and development to develop their subject knowledge and expertise.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is variable across subjects. This means that pupils do not achieve as well as they should across the curriculum. Leaders need to prioritise staff's professional development in these subjects.

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 April 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	139449
Local authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	10227889
Type of school	Junior
School category	Academy
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	382
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of trust and Chair of governing body	Penny Dent
Headteacher	Jane Edwards
Website	www.heronsgate.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	25 and 26 April 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not currently use 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.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, subject leaders and other staff. The inspector met with two governors and two members of the board of trustees.
- The inspector spoke to parents at the school gate and groups of pupils in school, and took account of the responses to Ofsted's parent survey, staff survey and pupil survey.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, looked at

curriculum information, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- The inspector listened to pupils read and spoke to groups of pupils about the books they like to read.
- To inspect safeguarding, the inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead and reviewed records. The inspector met with the school's business manager to scrutinise the single central record of recruitment and vetting checks. The inspector also spoke with staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Clare Morgan, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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