

Inspection of a good school: Highgate Primary Academy

Nicholas Lane, Goldthorpe, Rotherham, South Yorkshire S63 9AS

Inspection dates:

6 and 7 October 2022

Outcome

Highgate Primary Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Highgate understand what the school value to 'be respectful' means. Pupils listen to their teachers when they are explaining what to do or reading a story. Pupils are polite to staff throughout school and hold doors open for visitors. The school building is a calm and orderly place nearly all the time. If pupils have a concern about someone being unkind to them they know that they can tell someone. These issues rarely develop into bullying concerns.

Leaders have analysed behaviour trends and spoken to pupils about their thoughts. This has helped leaders to respond to what is happening and make improvements to the daily experience of pupils. For example, there is much more to do at lunchtimes now with a range of activities, and staff there to run them. Older pupils help younger pupils join in with parachute games or running races.

Pupils are taught important knowledge about how to keep themselves safe. Pupils know about what to look out for when online and how to resist peer pressure. By the time they get to Year 6, pupils understand how to form and maintain healthy relationships.

Pupils enjoy all the reading that they get the opportunity to do. Teachers read to them daily and teach them new words and about characters in the stories. Pupils borrow books from the library that they can continue to enjoy at home.

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

Leaders at all levels, including trustees and local governors, have a strong understanding of what is working well in the school and what needs to improve. Trustees have focused on ensuring school leaders improve the curriculum and the content of what is taught. They have also checked that more is done by leaders to improve the attendance of pupils and their attitudes to learning when they are in school.

Leaders have brought in a curriculum that clearly sets out what pupils need to know. Leaders have made sure that the early years provides the important first steps to understand important concepts like the past. Children in early years are taught the vocabulary they need to talk about what they know. Teachers are clear on the milestones that pupils need to achieve as they move through school. Leaders have done some important work to establish gaps that pupils will have in their knowledge due to the COVID-19 pandemic and what teachers should do because of this.

Leaders have ensured that teachers understand the importance of revisiting knowledge that has been taught in the past. Teachers carry out recaps or quick quizzes to do this. However, sometimes these recaps are not focused on the core knowledge that pupils need to be able to build on to acquire new information. For example, pupils learning about place value recall where to place numbers in a place value grid but cannot say the numbers that they make as this has not been revisited.

Children in the Nursery are taught how to listen to sounds around them and the sounds that make up words. This prepares them well for Reception, where they are taught about the letters that make these sounds through their phonics teaching. Staff are well trained to teach pupils how to read words. Pupils practise how to read and spell words daily and they enjoy reading books that contain the sounds that they have been taught.

Reading and mathematics are assessed very well by teachers. Teachers use helpful assessment systems to identify when pupils have gaps in their knowledge and quickly address them, sometimes on the same day. Teachers are bringing some of these effective techniques into assessing pupils in other subjects. Leaders make sure that these processes do not cause teachers too much work, and teachers appreciate this. Teachers are only asked to carry out assessments that will help them.

Teachers help pupils learn new knowledge by explaining what to do and demonstrating how to do it. Teachers show pupils how to make tints of blue paint or describe the differences in life from the Stone Age to the Iron Age. Sometimes, however, teachers do not choose an effective method to help pupils remember their learning. For example, teachers ask pupils to research topics for themselves or to copy information from texts that they hope pupils will remember. Pupils do not gain the important knowledge that they need when this happens. Pupils have misconceptions or simply do not remember what they have worked on.

Leaders have improved their processes for identifying pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders are ambitious for these pupils. Pupils with SEND are mostly taught the same knowledge as their peers. Leaders have trained staff on different ways to support pupils with SEND, such as using extra resources in mathematics or giving pupils sentence starters in science. Leaders recognise that parents and carers are not as meaningfully and helpfully involved in the planning and review process for pupils with SEND as they could be.

Leaders want all pupils to be able to access clubs and activities that develop their interests. As leaders increase the number of these opportunities, they make sure that they are accessible. They check what pupils with SEND and other groups of pupils want to do, so that more and more pupils are attending clubs that nurture their talents.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Trustees keep safeguarding at the forefront of school leaders' minds. They regularly check what leaders are doing to keep staff up to date. Leaders, in turn, train and update staff regularly. Staff have a wide and detailed knowledge about key safeguarding risks such as criminal exploitation or child-on-child abuse. They know what to look out for in the community and for the age of child that they teach. Staff record any concerns they have. Leaders act on these concerns quickly and pass them on to external agencies if needed. A weekly meeting between safeguarding leaders reflects on these actions and helps to build a wider picture around any pupils who may need help.

Leaders take a zero-tolerance approach to inappropriate touch or behaviour that makes others feel uncomfortable. They record any incidents like this and pass them on to local governors who ask questions about the actions leaders have taken. There is no complacency from leaders about keeping pupils safe. They look to improve in this area constantly.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers can miss opportunities to revisit important knowledge that they need to build on to support pupils to acquire new knowledge. Pupils do not grasp the new concepts taught to them when this happens. Leaders need to ensure that they train teachers to use the key concepts that thread through the curriculum to revisit past learning to ensure that pupils have the prior understanding that they need to be successful.
- Sometimes, in foundation subjects, teachers use pedagogical approaches that do not help pupils to retain knowledge and skills in the long term. Pupils do not use lesson time well in these cases and they are focusing on work that does not help them acquire new knowledge. Leaders need to train staff in pedagogy that supports acquisition of the knowledge that pupils need in a way that focuses on what pupils need to know and remember.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in February 2013.

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	138701
Local authority	Barnsley
Inspection number	10240454
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	351
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Benjamin Brown
Principal	Devinder Riat
Website	www.astreahighgate.org
Date of previous inspection	27 June 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The principal took up the substantive role in May 2022.
- Many leaders in school are new to their role, including the vice principal, special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) and the early years leader. Most of these leaders have been internally promoted from within the school.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- There is a local school governing body. This body is called the trust management board (TMB). This replaces a joint governance arrangement with another school and has been in place since September 2022.

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 their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the principal and vice principal throughout the inspection. The inspector met with trustees, members of the TMB, executive trust leaders from Astrea Academy Trust and other senior leaders.

- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, inspectors 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 looked at samples of pupils' work in science and music.
- The inspector checked the school's single central record and sampled some records that leaders keep about contact with external safeguarding agencies.
- The inspector met with the SENCo and checked the plans for some pupils with SEND and how teachers were using these plans in lessons.
- The inspector observed behaviour at lunchtimes and spoke to a range of staff and pupils about behaviour.
- The inspector spoke to parents outside the school and evaluated the responses to the online parent survey, Ofsted Parent View.
- The inspector evaluated the responses to the pupil and staff surveys.

Inspection team

Matthew Knox, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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