

Inspection of a good school: Helmdon Primary School

21 Station Road, Helmdon, Brackley, Northamptonshire NN13 5QT

Inspection date:

3 November 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. The next inspection will therefore be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Helmdon Primary School are positive and kind. Older pupils look after the younger ones. They act as role models, demonstrating the core beliefs of 'happiness, perseverance and respect'. Pupils feel safe and know how to keep themselves safe. They work hard and get on well with one another.

Pupils enjoy school. They particularly value the opportunities for outdoor learning in the 'Wild Wood'. Staff provide a range of after-school clubs. Pupils represent their school in sporting competitions. They take part in leadership work and are proud of their various roles. These include reading ambassadors, house captains and school councillors.

Pupils behave very well in lessons and during social times. They strive to earn house points for their team. They told the inspectors that bullying is rare. Pupils say that adults are there for them and would deal with bullying well if it did occur.

Leaders want pupils to do well. However, some pupils do not achieve as well as they could. This is because some subjects are not yet sufficiently well planned to ensure pupils gain the knowledge they should across the curriculum. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

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

Children in the early years settle into school life quickly. From their very first days in the Reception class, they learn the importance of behaving well and working hard. The calm and purposeful atmosphere in the classroom reflects the positive attitudes that staff help children to develop. Children are happy, confident and curious learners.

Leaders have made sure that the curriculum matches the breadth of the national curriculum. They are in the process of refining the curriculum to ensure that it is suitably ambitious for all pupils, including pupils with SEND. In some subjects, such as mathematics, leaders are clear about the knowledge that pupils need to learn and the order in which they should learn it. Staff know what to teach and when to teach it. This helps teachers to design learning that builds on pupils' prior knowledge.

While some subjects are planned well, leaders' curriculum thinking in other subjects is not as far along. Teachers are less clear about the precise knowledge that they want pupils to learn. Not all teachers check pupils' work or correct pupils' mistakes in lessons. As a result, some pupils' misconceptions persist. Some pupils are not achieving as well as they could.

Leaders have prioritised reading. Staff receive effective training. Children in the Reception class learn to read as soon as they start school. They learn new sounds in a way that helps them to master the basics of reading quickly. They develop confidence by reading books that match the sounds they have learned. Staff make regular checks on the progress that all pupils make. They identify promptly those who are falling behind with their reading. Staff provide effective help to ensure these pupils catch up. Pupils have positive attitudes to reading. They love visiting the library. Pupils access a range of high-quality books. Leaders have ensured that the books represent difference and diversity.

Pupils have opportunities to attend a range of sporting and creative clubs. Teachers encourage pupils to nurture their sporting talents through participation in local competitions. Residential visits help to develop pupils' independence and resilience. Pupils speak with respect when discussing different faiths and families. One pupil, typical of many, told an inspector, 'We are all different. It would be really boring if we were all the same.' While pupils learn about different religions, they have gaps in their knowledge. Their knowledge of the British values is limited. This may hinder their readiness for life in today's world.

Pupils behave well in class and are keen to learn. Their conduct around the school is typically of a high standard. They play happily with their peers at breaktimes and lunchtimes. Pupils are considerate of others and polite. They know and value the school's rewards and routines. Disruption during lessons is rare.

Governors commit themselves fully to the school. They want the best for the pupils and staff. Governors have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They provide appropriate support and challenge for leaders. They are mindful of staff well-being and have taken positive steps to help manage staff workload. Staff recognise the support from leaders. They are proud to work at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders know their safeguarding responsibilities well. Staff undertake regular training. They know how to identify and report concerns about a pupils' safety or well-being.

Leaders act swiftly to help pupils who may be at risk. Governors regularly check the school's safeguarding procedures. Leaders make suitable checks to ensure that adults are safe to work with pupils.

Pupils are well looked after in school and know there is always an adult they can speak to if they have any concerns. They learn how to keep themselves safe, including when they are working or playing online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have adopted and developed schemes of learning across the curriculum. In some subjects, the building blocks of learning have not been identified clearly and this means that, at times, work is not focused well on what pupils need to know. This prevents pupils from building on their prior learning. Leaders should make sure that the important knowledge is identified clearly in all subjects and is sequenced well so that pupils can deepen their learning over time.
- The curriculum in some subjects is not sufficiently designed and adapted to meet the needs of all pupils, including some pupils with SEND. This results in some pupils not learning as well as they could. Leaders should ensure that all pupils are receiving a suitably ambitious curriculum.
- Some pupils do not have a developed understanding of the British values and of different faiths. This hinders their understanding of life in modern Britain. Leaders should ensure that pupils develop a deeper understanding of these aspects of the curriculum.

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 January 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	121827
Local authority	West Northamptonshire
Inspection number	10212522
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	109
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Emma Gray
Headteacher	Amanda Zdyrko
Website	http://www.helmdonprimaryschool.com
Date of previous inspection	24 January 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- 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 inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- During the inspection, the inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders and a range of staff.
- Inspectors met with members of the governing body. The lead inspector spoke to a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders to discuss the curriculum, spoke with teachers and spoke with pupils about their learning. They visited lessons and looked at samples of pupils' work. An inspector observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of the school's arrangements for safeguarding,

inspectors reviewed school policies, procedures and records. The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead. Inspectors also spoke with staff, governors and pupils about the school's approach to keeping pupils safe.

- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school.
- Inspectors gathered staff members' views by speaking with them. They considered parents' views submitted to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and free-text comments.

Inspection team

Kirsty Norbury, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Luella Manssen

Ofsted Inspector

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