

# Inspection of a good school: Hillhouse CofE Primary School

Ninefields Estate, Waltham Abbey, Essex EN9 3EL

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Inspection dates:

15 and 16 November 2022

## Outcome

Hillhouse CofE Primary School continues to be a good school.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Hillhouse CofE Primary School is a warm and welcoming place because of the respect and kindness pupils show to each other and adults. Their school is a place where they feel safe, supported and able to learn. Pupils say that bullying rarely happens. If they have a worry, they can tell an adult who will help.

Pupils are excited about their learning. They engage enthusiastically in lessons and respectfully follow routines. Pupils appreciate the links made with other subjects across the curriculum because it helps them to understand more, for example how their art and English link to their learning in history about Ancient Greeks. They also value their trips and visitors as they say this makes learning fun and helps them to remember more.

There are a range of clubs on offer for pupils during the year. For example, hip hop, singing, rugby, netball and Lego. These clubs contribute towards extending and enriching pupils' learning.

Pupils relish the opportunity to make a difference to their school and wider community, for example by singing to the elderly, and in their roles as 'wellness warriors' fundraising to develop a place on their field where pupils can relax at playtimes.

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

Leaders have designed a curriculum that carefully considers the knowledge and vocabulary that they want Hillhouse CofE Primary School pupils to learn. The curriculum is taught well. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and use this to plan and deliver curriculum content that ensures pupils learn well.

Teachers' checking of pupil's knowledge and understanding is variable. While teachers identify what pupils know, and in many cases use this to inform what they teach, there are occasions where mistakes are made and repeated. For examples, in writing, some pupils were muddled when trying to use capital letters accurately.

Leaders have made sure that learning to read has a high priority across the school. For example, leaders promote pupils' enjoyment of reading and strongly encourage them to read at home. All staff receive training so that reading is taught consistently across the school. This includes effective phonics teaching where pupils quickly learn the sounds that letters make. This progresses to pupils learning more complex reading skills as they become more confident readers. If a pupil is falling behind with their reading, support is quickly put in place to help them to catch up.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are accurately identified. Pupils, parents and staff work in partnership to make sure that pupils' individual plans provide effective support. The training staff receive enables them to be able to confidently adapt learning to meet pupils' needs. As a result, pupils with SEND can access the full curriculum alongside their peers and achieve well over time.

Leaders and teachers have high expectations for pupils' behaviour. Leaders train staff to manage behaviour consistently. This results in pupils being able to get on with their learning with little disruption.

As with the rest of the school, the curriculum in early years is well considered. Rhymes, songs and stories are used to develop children's vocabulary and build their knowledge of the sounds letters make. Children are enthusiastic learners because leaders provide them with absorbing activities to extend their knowledge, for example having a visitor in to retell a traditional African folk tale called 'The tortoise's dream' for children in Reception. This was followed by a real tortoise being brought into the classroom.

Leaders provide for pupils' wider development well. Through a well-designed personal, social and health education curriculum, pupils learn age-appropriate content about relationships. For example, younger pupils learn about what makes a good friend, while older pupils learn about consent and privacy. Pupils understand about difference and celebrate diversity. One pupil said, 'You should treat people equally, it doesn't matter how different they are'. Pupils have opportunities to vote, to build their understanding of democracy. For example, they vote for their sports captains or select which book is read at the end of the day. The curriculum, as well as these experiences, helps pupils to grow into respectful citizens.

Governors and trustees carry out their statutory duties appropriately. Governor checks ensures that there are secure systems in place to hold leaders to account. Governors, trustees and school leaders have a shared understanding of school improvement. This supports leaders to effectively identify the correct priorities for leaders to focus upon.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have created a positive culture for safeguarding. Checks carried out by leaders ensure that all staff are suitable to work with pupils.

Staff know that they all are responsible for safeguarding pupils. They are well trained in what signs to look out for if pupils are at risk, and know what systems to follow to seek help and support.

When concerns are raised, these are followed up promptly by leaders. Leaders work effectively with outside agencies to ensure that families can access the support they need.

Pupils know how to keep safe both in school and in the wider world, including online.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- While teachers address mistakes made by pupils in lessons, this is not always remembered and applied by pupils in their future work. Continual revisiting of new concepts and re-checking that pupils have understood previous learning will ensure that pupils do not repeat the same mistakes continually in their work.

## **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/outstanding. 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 Hillhouse CofE Primary School to be good in June 2015.

## **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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	145992
<b>Local authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	10240360
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	309
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Daniel Bruton
<b>Headteacher</b>	Joanne Willcox
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.hillhouse.essex.sch.uk/">www.hillhouse.essex.sch.uk/</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- Hillhouse CofE Primary School converted to an academy in July 2018 and became part of the Epping Forest Schools Partnership Trust.
- The school runs a breakfast and after-school club.
- The school does not make use of an alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school had 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.
- During the inspection, the inspector held meetings with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and the special educational needs coordinator.
- The inspector met with members of the governing body, including the chair and vice-chair of governors, and the chief executive officer of the trust. The inspector also looked at governing body minutes and governing body monitoring.

- Deep dives were carried out in the following subjects: reading, mathematics and art. The inspector met with subject leaders and visited lessons. They reviewed pupils' work in these subjects, as well as speaking with teachers and pupils.
- The inspector observed pupils reading to a familiar adult, visited the breakfast and after-school club and observed lunchtime routines and behaviour.
- The inspector spoke with groups of pupils to learn about pupils' behaviour and personal development.
- Safeguarding arrangements were scrutinised. This included meeting with the designated safeguarding lead and scrutinising the single central record and other safeguarding documentation.
- The 57 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and 57 free-text comments were considered by the inspector.
- The inspector also took into account 80 pupil survey responses and 35 responses to the staff survey.

### **Inspection team**

Sharon Waldron, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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