

Inspection of Highwood Primary School

Loves Green, Highwood, Chelmsford, Essex CM1 3QH

Inspection dates: 22 and 23 November 2022

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| Overall effectiveness | Good |
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| The quality of education | Good |
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| Behaviour and attitudes | Good |
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| Personal development | Good |
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| Leadership and management | Good |
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| Early years provision | Good |
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| Previous inspection grade | Good |
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What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy attending Highwood Primary School. They thrive in this small school where pupils and adults all know one another well. The playground is full of smiles and laughter as pupils of all ages play together. Pupils treat each other with care and kindness.

Pupils behave well. They know adults expect them to be 'Always Aiming Higher'. These high expectations from adults mean that pupils enact the school's values, such as showing respect and developing independence. The school is a harmonious place.

Bullying rarely happens. If it were to happen, pupils know that adults are there to help them. Pupils feel safe in school. The 'worry boxes' in each class mean that pupils have a safe way to ask for help if they need it.

Pupils enjoy weekly visits to the school's forest area. The youngest children are encouraged to build their resilience and to take carefully considered risks. Older pupils develop their ability to work in teams, for example working with friends to build dens. Pupils can be elected as 'house captains' and take on extra responsibility. These opportunities help pupils to develop into healthy, active and responsible members of the community.

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

Leaders' ambitious curriculum meets the needs of pupils in their small, mixed-age classes. Pupils remember much of the curriculum because leaders have skilfully identified what pupils need to know, remember and be able to do and by when. Pupils are taught important knowledge, in a sensible order, which helps them learn well.

Adults know the individual needs of pupils. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) learn well. Activities these pupils carry out are carefully adapted to their individual needs. When making decisions about the provision for pupils with SEND, especially those pupils with an education, health and care plan, leaders act with great integrity.

Reading sits at the heart of the curriculum. Adults are effective in ensuring that the youngest pupils learn to read. They are skilled at delivering the well-designed phonics programme. Most pupils now learn to read confidently, although a small number of pupils who need additional support with reading do not yet read fluently. Pupils hear a wide range of stories read by adults. This inspires them to read a wide range of different books.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge. This helps them present information clearly, and spot quickly if a pupil makes a mistake. For example, pupils learning to play the ukulele were quickly helped if they were unsure where to place their

fingers. Teachers use assessment effectively in order to help them adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of pupils. Assessment practices in some subjects are being adapted. Currently, in these few subjects, leaders do not have the information they need to help them to determine how much pupils remember in the longer term.

Children in Reception listen to a range of stories, poems and rhymes. These, along with adults' skilful interactions with children, help them learn and use a growing range of vocabulary. Children are supported to learn how to share, take turns and play together from an early age. They develop strong relationships with their peers and are well prepared for Year 1.

Pupils enjoy learning and behave well in lessons. This means lessons are not disturbed. Pupils who need additional support to help them behave well receive this promptly.

Pupils learn about the differences between people, including their cultures, religions and beliefs. The well-designed 'core learning skills' programme provides many opportunities to support pupils' personal development. Opportunities such as regular fundraising events, singing in the local church and taking part in the Remembrance Day parade allow pupils to become active citizens in the local community.

Governors now have a greater understanding and oversight of how well pupils achieve. They have closely monitored how effectively the new phonics programme is working and make regular visits to see this for themselves.

Senior leaders provide useful training for staff. They appreciate this and know that it helps them to continue to improve their practice. All staff are proud to work at Highwood Primary School. Leaders pay close attention to teachers' workload and take this into account when they make any changes to the way they work.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have established a culture of vigilance. Adults are well trained to help them spot if a pupil may be at risk. If pupils need extra help, leaders make sure they receive this. All required checks are carried out on staff, along with all volunteers, and recorded thoroughly. Governors make appropriate checks to ensure that leaders are doing all they should to keep pupils safe.

Pupils are taught well how to protect themselves. They know the steps they should take to stay safe online. Older pupils know the signs to look out for to avoid online risks.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- A small number of weaker readers have not received the precise support they need to help them catch up quickly. They do not read fluently. Leaders should ensure that teachers fully implement the new phonics programme to provide effective support for these pupils who need extra help in learning to read.
- Assessment practices in some subjects are newly developed. Leaders do not yet have a clear oversight of how well pupils learn in these subjects. They do not always have the information they need to identify further refinement they may need to make to the curriculum. Leaders should ensure they complete the work they have started to improve the assessment processes in order to help them have a clear view of how well pupils in school are learning.

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

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| Unique reference number | 114869 |
| Local authority | Essex |
| Inspection number | 10226856 |
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 5 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 57 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing body | Alan Oddy |
| Headteacher | Aedin Lipski |
| Website | www.highwood.essex.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 10 June 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- The school is part of a federation with another local school, Writtle Junior School.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the second routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, science and music. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector listened to pupils from Years 1, 2 and 3 read to an adult.

- Inspectors evaluated the curriculum plans and spoke to leaders and pupils about several other subjects.
- Inspectors held meetings with the head of school, executive headteacher, special educational needs coordinator and the early years leader. The lead inspector held a meeting with members of the governing body and held telephone conversations with two separate representatives of the local authority.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors scrutinised the single central record, reviewed safeguarding paperwork and systems. Inspectors spoke with leaders, teachers, support staff, governors and pupils to evaluate the culture of safeguarding in school.
- Inspectors considered the responses and free-text comments to Ofsted’s questionnaire for parents, Ofsted Parent View, along with the responses to Ofsted’s questionnaire for staff. The lead inspector also held a telephone conversation with one parent.

Inspection team

Nathan Lowe, lead inspector

His Majesty’s Inspector

Nicola Shadbolt

Ofsted Inspector

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