

# Inspection of a good school: Heronswood Primary School

Heronswood Road, Kidderminster, Worcestershire DY10 4EX

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Inspection dates:

13 and 14 December 2022

## **Outcome**

Heronswood Primary School continues to be a good school. There is enough evidence of improved performance to suggest that the school could be judged outstanding if we were to carry out a graded (section 5) inspection now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils learn much at Heronswood Primary School. This is because staff have high expectations. They have established an extremely well-organised curriculum. Across the school, staff give their best and expect pupils to do the same. They keep pupils very busy and encourage them to work hard. They also make sure that pupils enjoy their lessons. Indeed, pupils bubble with enthusiasm when they talk about their learning.

Pupils' behaviour in class is excellent. This allows lessons to run smoothly and any disruptions are rare. Bullying is uncommon. Even so, leaders make sure that everyone knows what to do if it does happen. Staff teach pupils about the importance of healthy relationships and how to keep themselves safe. Pupils also have a role in shaping school life. Pupil house captains, school councillors and well-being ambassadors all play their part in making the school a fair and happy place to be.

Parents are highly supportive and say many positive things about the school. Staff invite parents to workshops during the day, so they can find out about pupils' learning in school.

Strong leadership keeps everyone up to date and continues to drive improvements.

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

The headteacher has built a capable team. Leaders and staff put pupils first and have established highly effective systems for making sure the right things happen at the right time. From the Nursery onwards, their communication with parents and carers is exceptional. They are quick to follow up pupils' absences, send out frequent newsletters and use online links to maintain strong contact with parents.

Since the previous inspection, this strong leadership has continued to improve the school. Because of this, curriculum guidance has strengthened, and academic standards have risen. Pupils' excellent behaviour continues to shine out. This means that playtimes are safe, and everyone can get on with each other.

Reading is a key strength. In the Nursery, early years staff share lots of songs, rhymes and stories with children. They teach them to listen carefully to different sounds. This paves the way for formal phonics teaching, which starts straightaway in the Reception classes. Daily phonics lessons follow a consistent structure and children are expected to read regularly at home. To this end, staff provide parents with lots of helpful information. Phonics continues into key stage 2 for those who need it. Once pupils have learned to read, teachers recommend books and prompt pupils to read widely.

Leaders have set out informed guidance for other subjects too. During the COVID-19 lockdowns, they worked with staff to improve the curriculum. They have identified the important content to include in different subjects, and what to revisit and emphasise. This helps pupils to make links with previous learning and prepares them well for what comes next. For example, during this inspection, pupils could talk about the legacy of Ancient Greece and its influence on life today. They could explain how ideas about democracy and monarchy have endured, but also changed, over time. Furthermore, they know how the school's values of sharing, trust, achievement, respect and safety guide their actions and words.

Leaders' curriculum thinking is clearly on the right track. However, they continue to check and adjust guidance to strengthen it further. For instance, they recognise that aspects of handwriting need to improve. To achieve this, and tackle other minor development areas, they have set out informed plans to promote even greater consistency. Academy trust leaders support this work, and staff value this extra guidance.

Beyond the classroom, staff run clubs and after-school tutoring. They also put on special events and trips. During this inspection, early years children performed an uplifting and joyous Nativity play. All were involved, and the hall was full of applauding parents. Occasions like this help to build confidence, optimism and community spirit.

Almost a quarter of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Whatever their needs, they receive high-quality tailored support. Staff provide additional resources or do things differently, such as using sign language, so that no one is left out. Partnership working with home and other organisations are significant strengths.

Staff say that school leaders and parents support them in their work. They enjoy their jobs and say that workload is reasonable and purposeful. During the inspection, many parents sent in messages of support to staff and wrote lots of positive words in their responses to Ofsted's survey.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The culture of safeguarding is exceptionally strong. Leaders are very well informed and have established efficient systems for noticing and acting upon concerns. Adults are vigilant and take time to talk with and listen to pupils. If they spot anything wrong, they know the right things to do, including contact with external agencies where required.

If a pupil does not come to school, staff are quick to find out why. If a pupil is hurt or upset, then staff take good care of them. Staff also teach pupils how to look after themselves and the importance of safe, respectful behaviour.

All the correct checks on staff and visitors are carried out.

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

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

- Staff do not consistently guide children to develop correct pencil grip and to form their letters correctly. This limits the quality of some pupils' handwriting. In part, this is due to disruption caused by the pandemic, but staff could do more to teach effective handwriting habits. Leaders should ensure a consistent and effective approach to teaching handwriting.

## 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 September 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	141246
<b>Local authority</b>	Worcestershire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10240929
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	442
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Caroline Hoddinott
<b>Headteacher</b>	Rhoda Pierpoint
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.heronswoodprimaryschool.co.uk">www.heronswoodprimaryschool.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	19 and 20 September 2017

## Information about this school

- The school is part of The Rivers Church of England (CofE) multi academy trust (MAT).
- The school provides before- and after-school childcare on the school site.
- Leaders do 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 inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in the following subjects: reading, mathematics, and history. In these subjects, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at pupils' work.
- The inspector also looked at the curriculum in other subjects in less detail to check how they were organised and taught. He also observed some pupils reading.
- The inspector looked at published performance data about the school and a range of school documents. These included information about pupils' behaviour, attendance, the curriculum, extra-curricular activities and school improvement planning. He also checked the school's website.

- The inspector asked school leaders, staff, pupils and parents about safeguarding arrangements and safety routines. He examined the record of employment checks on school staff and looked at other school records.
- The inspector talked informally with pupils, parents and staff to gather general information about school life. He took account of the responses to Ofsted's surveys of staff, pupils' and parents' views. He spoke with some parents at the start of the school day and visited the before-school club and the nurture breakfast club.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in class, at lunchtime, on the playground and at other times during the day.
- During the inspection, the inspector had formal meetings with the headteacher, other leaders, school staff, pupils and the chief executive officer of The Rivers CofE MAT.

### **Inspection team**

Martin Pye, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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