

Inspection of a good school: Hythe Bay CofE Primary School

Cinque Ports Avenue, Hythe, Kent CT21 6HS

Inspection dates:

24 and 25 January 2023

Outcome

Hythe Bay CofE Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Hythe Bay is a happy, caring school. The school's distinctly Christian character underpins daily life and attitudes to learning. Pupils are kind, welcoming and respectful of others. This is a school where everyone is valued. As one parent commented, it is 'a school where every child has a chance to shine'.

Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent. Pupils know that they can rely on any member of staff to help them with a worry or a concern. For example, pupils told the inspector that bullying is not common, but should such behaviour occur, staff will address it immediately. Staff and leaders know the pupils very well indeed. The care provided for pupils is a strength of this school.

Pupils can talk equally confidently about their learning, future ambitions, and forgiveness. Pupils across the school, including in the specially resourced provision, know just what is expected of them in terms of behaviour and learning. Most pupils behave very well and work enthusiastically with others. As one pupil remarked, 'Teamwork is important'.

Daily routines for learning are established, including in Reception. Classrooms are busy and purposeful. The curriculum is complemented well by trips, visits and 'beach school'.

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

The school has recently reorganised, with pupils in key stages 1 and 2 now grouped in mixed-age classes. Consequently, leaders have reviewed the school's curriculum. The curriculum now established runs over two years. Plans confirm that pupils are offered a full range of subjects linked by topics and themes, such as 'curiosity and exploration', 'dragons' and 'technology'.

Subjects are planned, setting out the skills, knowledge and vocabulary that pupils should learn. 'Golden threads' such as experiencing the wider world and learning cooperatively are woven throughout. Intentions for learning match the ambitions of the national curriculum, with new learning building on what has gone before. However, leaders know that curriculum planning varies in detail. Certain plans, including mathematics, are therefore under review. Assessments of learning take place at the end of each topic, as well as informally day by day. As a result, teachers make helpful adjustments to plans and use 'Friday fives' to revise and recap on learning.

Teachers work in teams to translate the overarching plans into sequences of lessons that meet the needs of their individual classes. Although most lessons proceed successfully, many staff are new to mixed-age teaching. The mathematics coordinator and the key stage 2 leader have been providing helpful support and coaching for teachers, outside of lessons. Collectively, they are establishing which teaching and organisational strategies work best for different age groups and subjects. However, subject and key stage leaders do not have a clear view of how successfully the curriculum is being implemented or learned.

Reading has been prioritised well. Leaders responsible for phonics and early reading are expert enthusiasts. Staff are trained appropriately and agreed strategies are used precisely. Lessons are timetabled to make maximum use of support staff. Pupils welcome the routine of phonics and reading lessons, and most learn to read successfully. Those who need extra help in learning to read receive timely, targeted support. Typically, older pupils are enthusiastic book lovers, and are able to talk about the texts they have read and heard.

Pupils enjoy learning, and lessons are rarely disrupted. Visits to science, mathematics and computing lessons showed pupils working with a range of equipment to engage and support them well. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), could explain what they were learning, using appropriate vocabulary. For example, children in Reception class were able to explain how they were finding one more than a given number, using words such as, 'plus', 'add' and 'makes'. Across the school, work to identify, include and support pupils with SEND is strong.

The school's wider curriculum ensures that pupils have opportunities to broaden their horizons and raise aspirations. Pupils learn much about Christian values, as well as other faiths. Pupils' learning includes the importance of community and communication, as well as about relationships, health and staying safe. Through an extensive transition project, the oldest pupils are being prepared thoughtfully for their start at secondary school.

Staff feel valued and respected. They say that leaders and governors always consider their workload, well-being, and opportunities for professional development. Governors' support for school leaders is highly effective.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school has a strong, embedded culture for safeguarding. As the headteacher commented, 'Any incident we hear about, we deal with.'

Staff and governors are trained well and know how and when to raise concerns. Leaders are deeply knowledgeable about the individual circumstances of pupils. Systems for recording and responding to concerns, and for securing support for pupils and families, are thorough.

Pupils have a good understanding of keeping safe, including online. They learn a mantra of 'stop it, I don't like it', and know that the next step is to seek help.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Not all staff are as confident or skilled as they need to be in teaching mixed-age classes across the range of subjects. Consequently, there are inconsistencies in the quality of curriculum implementation, and pupils do not learn equally well across different year groups or subjects. Leaders should ensure that teachers access sufficient training and support, and acquire the necessary pedagogical skills to enable pupils of all ages to learn and progress well.
- Curriculum subjects are not consistently planned. Some subjects have been planned in such detail that staff are reluctant to deviate from the plan, even when pupils are able to move on more quickly or need further reinforcement. Occasionally, plans lack detail and this is reflected in pupils' slower learning. Leaders should ensure that all subjects are planned in appropriate detail, so that the intended curriculum is clear, implemented and learned.
- Subject leaders do not have detailed oversight of the effectiveness of curriculum implementation or of the quality of pupils' learning. Consequently, support for pedagogy, and/or adjustments to subject planning are not necessarily targeted where most needed. Senior leaders should ensure that they, and subject leaders, have a precise understanding of each subject area, in order to bring about further improvement.

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.

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	131020
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10256504
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	315
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Mary Tyler
Headteacher	Carolyn Chivers
Website	www.hythebay.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	5 December 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the last inspection, a reduction in planned admission numbers has been agreed with the local authority. The school now admits a maximum of 45 pupils in each year group. Pupils are taught in mixed-age classes throughout key stages 1 and 2. Reception class is solely for children in their first year at school.
- A new chair of the governing body has been appointed since the school's last inspection.
- The school has a specially resourced provision for 12 pupils with speech, language and communication needs. All pupils who attend the specially resourced provision have an education, health and care plan. The provision caters for pupils aged four to 11.

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 school leaders and has taken that into account in her evaluation.

- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, science and computing. She discussed the curriculum with leaders, staff and pupils, visited lessons and looked at pupils' work.
- The inspector met with senior leaders, staff, pupils and those with responsibility for governance, including the chair of the governing body. The inspector held a telephone conversation with the school's local authority improvement adviser.
- The inspector scrutinised records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- The inspector met with the special educational needs coordinator to discuss the provision for pupils across the school with SEND. With the headteacher, the inspector visited the specially resourced provision and the school's nurture provision. They made brief visits to lessons and considered the provision for these pupils.
- The inspector considered the response to the confidential staff survey. She took account of the responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire and comments made by those who responded.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector viewed the school's website and policies. She scrutinised child protection records as well as records of safeguarding checks carried out on adults working at the school. The inspector met with the designated safeguarding leader (DSL) and the deputy DSL, and spoke widely to staff, governors and pupils.

Inspection team

Hilary Macdonald, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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