

Inspection of a good school: Hardingstone Academy

Martins Lane, Hardingstone, Northampton, Northamptonshire NN4 6DJ

Inspection dates: 29 and 30 March 2023

Outcome

Hardingstone Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and enjoy school. They say that everyone is welcome. New joiners quickly become part of this friendly, inclusive school. Pupils appreciate their caring teachers, who frequently go above and beyond to help them.

Pupils benefit from visits to interesting places to help them learn more. They appreciate opportunities to develop their interests in sport and music. They respect the world around them and fundraise for charities. Pupils in key stage 2 relish different responsibilities, such as being a school councillor.

Pupils behave well. They know their school values are important. They are proud to receive praise and awards for being courteous, kind, resilient and doing their best. They say that bullying is rare. Adults help them to resolve any fallouts fairly.

Leaders and staff want to give every pupil the best education they can. Leaders make sure every pupil becomes a reader. Pupils are keen to learn. They learn complex vocabulary and benefit from reading a variety of books. They practise their arithmetic, so they can solve problems accurately in mathematics. Pupils learn from their mistakes. Staff help pupils to learn interesting facts and remember more over time in many subjects.

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

Leaders have identified the most important knowledge and skills that pupils need to know in all subjects. Senior leaders work closely with East Midlands Academy Trust to refine subject guidance and staff training. This helps staff to ensure that pupils learn important knowledge and know and remember more in all subjects. Many curriculum leaders are new to their roles. They are enthusiastic about the subjects they lead. However, they do not consistently support their colleagues to improve further.

Leaders ensure that reading is at the heart of the curriculum. It is a strength of the school. In Nursery, teachers make sure children can listen carefully to rhymes, songs and stories.

Children learn phonics from the start of Reception. Pupils read books that match their ability. Leaders make sure that barriers to becoming a reader are quickly identified and addressed. The same approach in the Butterfly Meadow resourced provision helps pupils build their confidence to become readers.

Leaders make sure pupils in key stage 2 continue to read with confidence and understanding. Teachers read to pupils every day. They carefully explain the meaning of complex language and new vocabulary. Leaders ensure that the range of books pupils study is demanding and extends their knowledge. Pupils talk confidently about their favourite books and authors. Pupils develop a love of reading.

In mathematics, teachers follow an ambitious and well-sequenced curriculum. Teachers have good subject knowledge. This enables them to spot pupils' errors or misconceptions. Teachers use regular assessment checks. These quickly identify any mathematical knowledge that pupils need to revisit. Teachers use resources well to help pupils demonstrate their knowledge to solve problems. Most pupils progress well through the mathematics curriculum.

Leaders ensure that pupils learn increasingly sophisticated vocabulary across all subjects. This helps pupils who speak English as an additional language. As a result, pupils' confidence to explain their understanding increases as they move through school.

Staff identify the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and their gaps in knowledge accurately. Careful support helps pupils with SEND to learn alongside their peers. The expert support of pupils in the Butterfly Meadow resourced provision is ensuring these pupils are thriving. However, leaders do not yet check that extra help and adaptations in other classes consistently match the precise support that pupils need. As a result, some pupils with SEND do not make the progress that they should.

Children in the early years make a strong start to their schooling. Staff ensure that children are safe and happy. Children settle in well and learn appropriate routines. Staff help children to build on important learning through purposeful activities. Children are well prepared for Year 1.

Leaders set high expectations. Adults work as a team to provide a calm and purposeful environment. Pupils' learning is rarely disrupted. Leaders prioritise pupils' mental health and physical well-being. Pupils learn about different beliefs and family structures. Leaders have ensured that pupils have a clear understanding of right and wrong. Pupils have an age-appropriate understanding of relationships. They are being prepared well for life in modern Britain.

Most parents appreciate that their children are happy and safe at school. Staff say that leaders treat them fairly and with respect. All staff appreciate the range of training provided by East Midlands Academy Trust. They value working with colleagues from other schools and the opportunities to take on new roles and responsibilities. Staff say they feel valued as part of a strong and inclusive team.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff prioritise pupils' well-being. Leaders provide regular safeguarding training for staff. Staff pass on any concerns about pupils, no matter how small they may seem. Leaders ensure that safeguarding records are robust and subsequent actions are appropriate. They work effectively with external agencies. They are tenacious to secure help for pupils and families when required.

Recruitment and induction processes are thorough.

Pupils say they feel safe because adults listen and help. Pupils learn how to stay safe when they are online. Year 6 pupils feel prepared for changes they may face, including going to secondary school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- New subject leaders are still developing some aspects of their leadership skills, particularly checking how well the curriculum is being implemented. As a result, they are not yet providing clear guidance to other teachers on how to improve the teaching of the curriculum in some subjects. Leaders should ensure that all subject leaders have the skills and expertise they need, so that they can lead their subjects and support teachers effectively.
- Some pupils with SEND do not consistently receive the precise adaptations and support they need to access learning well in all subjects. This does not help them to make as much progress as they could. Leaders should ensure that pupils who need additional help receive precise support to enable them to optimise their academic achievement.

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 2016.

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	140370
Local authority	West Northamptonshire
Inspection number	10211513
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	225
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Kevin Crompton
Headteacher	Zoe McIntyre (Executive headteacher) Julie Stevens (Head of school)
Website	www.hardingstoneacademy.northants.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	13 and 14 September 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has been part of the East Midlands Academy Trust since 1 January 2014.
- The executive headteacher was previously the headteacher. Their role involves leadership of three schools. The head of school and assistant headteacher were appointed in September 2020. Many new staff have joined the school over the past 18 months.
- The school opened a nursery class in January 2022.
- The school has resourced provision for up to 10 pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder . This opened in January 2023.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school runs before- and after-school clubs.

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 their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the executive headteacher, the head of school, the assistant headteacher, and other leaders. A meeting was held with representatives of the trust, including the chief executive officer and vice chair of trustees.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documents, including school policies.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics and history. This included meeting with subject leaders, visiting lessons and speaking with teachers and pupils. The inspector listened to pupils reading to adults, considered leaders' curriculum plans and scrutinised samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector also met with other subject leaders and looked at curriculum documentation and samples of pupils' work for some other subjects.
- The inspector met with groups of pupils. Pupils' behaviour was considered at various times of day, including in lessons, around the school and at lunchtime.
- The single central record was scrutinised as part of the inspection of safeguarding. The inspector met with safeguarding leaders, spoke with a range of staff and pupils, and considered safeguarding records.
- The inspector spoke with parents at the end of the school day. The inspector reviewed the pupil, staff and parental responses to Ofsted's online questionnaires.

Inspection team

Mandy Wilding, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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