

Inspection of Horton Kirby Church of England Primary School

Horton Road, Horton Kirby, Dartford, Kent DA4 9BN

Inspection dates: 16 and 17 May 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Staff set ambitious aims for what pupils will achieve at Horton Kirby. These aims are fulfilled, particularly in early years, through a focused learning culture. This is underpinned by the school's values. Pupil leaders helped to draw up these values, which show what is expected of everyone in the school community

Pupils enjoy their learning and achieve well. This is built on a secure foundation of effective reading. Pupils enjoy making use of the indoor and outdoor libraries. Leaders support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) well. This enables all pupils to work towards those same ambitions.

Pupils behave well. They know what is expected of them thanks to clear routines in the classroom and beyond. These are embedded during Reception, so they become habitual. Pupils are praised and rewarded for making the right choices. They encourage one another in their work and in the playground. Individual successes are shared through inter-house competitions. If problems arise, pupils are confident to talk to staff. Bullying is not tolerated, and pupils feel safe in school as a result. This is because leaders make sure that they follow up and resolve any concerns.

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

Since the last inspection, leaders have improved the curriculum, particularly in the foundation subjects. Leaders have ordered learning well. This is designed to enable pupils to know and do more as they move through the school. For example, in computing, pupils progress from programming simple machines to controlling complex devices. In some subjects, leaders have not concentrated enough on addressing pupils' gaps in learning. As a result, some older pupils do not acquire the same depth of knowledge and skill as they could. In early years, leaders carefully craft learning, so that children gain a deep understanding of the language and skills that they need. This prepares them extremely well to enter key stage 1. Pupils with SEND have their needs identified at an early stage. Leaders ensure that staff are trained effectively.

Teachers set well thought through and challenging work for pupils, and their explanations are clear. They check pupils' understanding and make adjustments to support pupils' learning. Leaders use assessment to identify where pupils may need extra support or help. Pupils achieve well. Those with SEND learn alongside their peers and access the full curriculum.

The teaching of phonics is highly effective, especially in early years. This provides pupils with a secure grounding in how to read. Staff provide targeted support for weaker readers, so that they can keep up with their peers. Pupils develop a love of reading, which is emphasised and promoted throughout the school.

Pupils concentrate hard on their work. They show a determined attitude in their learning. If pupils lose focus, teachers deal with it swiftly. In early years, children learn to sustain their concentration. This helps them to make the most of the learning that teachers provide. Some pupils still miss substantial amounts of school time. Leaders are working with pupils and their families to support better attendance. As a result, persistent absence is declining.

Pupils benefit from a variety of visits supporting their wider development. In early years, children thrive on the exciting opportunities on offer. For example, children love the forest school, where they also learn about mathematics and personal safety through interesting games. Staff ensure that pupils learn about growing up and how to stay healthy. Support is available for pupils who need it, from 'calm corners' to more specialist counselling provision. Pupils explore different faiths and diverse backgrounds. They have the chance to debate issues such as the ethics of free speech. Cultural opportunities include workshops led by members of the local community. Most aspects of the personal development programme are well designed, such as personal, social and health education. This is not yet the case in all elements of the programme. In some areas, leaders have not considered fully the needs of all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils. As a result, some pupils do not benefit as well as they could from a range of experiences.

Leaders have fostered an inclusive and supportive culture within the school. Wherever possible they bring parents in, such as for early years reading sessions. This approach extends to staff as well. Leaders are mindful of the many pressures on staff, and actively promote their well-being. Professional development supports staff in developing and delivering the curriculum.

Governors, trustees and executive leaders have supported and challenged school leaders. This has assisted leaders with implementing their vision for the school. Those responsible for governance ensure that they meet their statutory obligations.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff know how to identify pupils who might be at risk. This is because leaders ensure that appropriate training is completed, including by governors. When pupils need help, leaders are committed to making sure this is in place. There are clear procedures for raising concerns about the conduct of staff. Safer recruitment is managed effectively and records are kept meticulously. This is reinforced by governor and Trust-level oversight of safeguarding practices.

Staff teach pupils about personal and online safety through the curriculum. As a result, pupils understand how to stay safe, and how to get help if they need.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, leaders have not concentrated enough on addressing pupils' gaps in learning. As a result, some older pupils do not acquire the same depth of knowledge and skill as they could. Leaders should ensure that as the new curriculum is implemented, sufficient adjustments are made to close any gaps in pupil understanding.
- In key stages 1 and 2, the design of some aspects of the personal development curriculum does not consider fully the needs of disadvantaged pupils. As a result, disadvantaged pupils do not consistently benefit from planned opportunities as well as they could. Leaders should ensure that all pupils benefit equally from the school's personal development provision.

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	144099
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10256293
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	237
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Mark Till
Headteacher	Glenn Pollard
Website	www.hortonkirby.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	3 and 4 March 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Horton Kirby is a Church of England converter academy. The most recent section 48 SIAMS inspection took place in March 2016. The next section 48 SIAMS inspection is due to take place before April 2024.

Information about this inspection

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

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy head and subject leaders. Inspectors spoke with executive leaders from the Aletheia Academies Trust, and a representative from the Diocese of Rochester.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, art and design and computing.
- For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects, and looked at records of pupils' learning.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors reviewed the school's single central record, files relating to safeguarding cases, and spoke with staff, pupils, trustees and governors.

Inspection team

Daniel Botting, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Catherine Cottingham

Ofsted Inspector

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