

Inspection of a good school: Handcross Primary School

London Road, Handcross, Haywards Heath, West Sussex RH17 6HB

Inspection dates: 23 and 24 May 2023

Outcome

Handcross Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), work incredibly hard and achieve well. Leaders ensure that there are strong relationships at all levels. Bullying is rare, and this helps pupils to feel happy and safe. This embodies the school's strongly shared vision of 'Happy, Safe and Aiming High'.

Excellent routines and caring staff enable the youngest children to settle and quickly develop confidence. Parents appreciate this and recognise the high levels of care their children receive. 'It's a very good school and the staff are brilliant, very understanding and supportive,' was one parent's comment, reflecting the feelings of many.

Pupils try their best to meet the high expectations of behaviour and learning set by leaders. They have good attitudes to learning and concentrate in lessons. Pupils love the opportunity to discuss their work. They behave well in lessons because they want to learn. Teachers ensure that lessons are stimulating and capture pupils' imaginations. Consequently, there is virtually no low-level disruption.

Pupils accept one another. They learn to respect and look out for each other. 'We can all be different, but we must treat each other the same,' was an insightful comment from an older pupil.

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

Leaders have developed an ambitious curriculum that they are continually trying to improve to make sure pupils get the best learning opportunities. Subject leaders identify the essential knowledge that pupils need to know precisely. They have sequenced this content so that pupils learn the correct concepts in the right order. In a few subjects, this is not as accurate as leaders would like, and this hampers some pupils' ability to build upon their prior learning to understand more complex ideas.

Leaders have rightly made reading a priority in the school. Nursery and Reception staff

introduce reading from day one. Children are surrounded by books and start to learn the initial sounds of letters quickly. Phonics is delivered consistently well by early years practitioners and teachers who are well trained and highly skilled. Books are closely matched to the sounds that pupils learn. This enables pupils to practise and learn sounds to help them build words. Pupils' progress is closely monitored by staff, and teachers support those who find reading difficult, taking swift action if anyone falls behind. Pupils have a very positive experience of reading. As a result, older pupils love reading and do so with fluency and expression.

Mathematics is well taught throughout the school. Number is well covered in early years. Children are exposed to numbers at every opportunity, both in structured lessons and while learning outdoors. As a result, they are confident, learning how to count forwards and backwards from zero to 10. Teachers successfully build on these basic skills. By Year 6, most pupils are proficient in the manipulation of number and can successfully apply this knowledge when reasoning and problem-solving.

Learning is well organised across the curriculum, including in the early years where staff have created a vibrant environment where children's learning can flourish. All resources that children need to learn are accessible. As a result, children are resilient and independent. Teachers have good subject knowledge. They check pupils' understanding carefully and use this information to adapt their teaching skilfully. Pupils with SEND are identified swiftly and very well supported which helps them learn well.

Teachers are skilled and well trained to deliver the intent leaders have for the curriculum. Specialist teaching in modern languages, music and physical education further reflects leaders' ambition to 'aim high' across the curriculum. Subject leaders have ensured progression within subject curriculums so pupils' knowledge grows as they get older. For example, in history, pupils develop knowledge about burial rituals during their time at school, firstly through learning about early humans, then exploring Egyptian culture and subsequently, finding out about burial in Victorian Britain. Art supports learning across the curriculum, for example the way that pupils learn why certain insects are suited to the rainforest through detailed sketching activities.

Leaders consider staff well-being when making decisions. Staff trust leaders and feel appreciated which is reflected in the school's well-being charter. Leaders consult staff regularly and have made a number of changes to reduce workload.

Leaders make sure they effectively promote pupils' personal development within the curriculum and beyond. The school's 'Learning for Life' programme covers fundamental issues such as 'dislike or discrimination'. This challenges pupils to think for themselves. As a result, pupils question things and debate. They take roles with additional responsibility, such as school councillors, seriously. Pupils are proud to use their talents to help their friends. They feel a deep responsibility to act as good examples for younger pupils 'To show them our way,' as one pupil put it.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding. It is everybody's responsibility. Staff receive excellent ongoing training, including additional 'Prevent' duty training to reflect the local context. Consequently, adults act swiftly if they have any concerns about pupils. All incidents are meticulously documented and actioned immediately. The school works with a variety of outside agencies. The headteacher is tenacious in pursuing actions to make sure pupils and their families get the help they deserve.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe. They have regular training on e-safety. They understand both the opportunities and dangers of using the internet and social media platforms.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few foundation subjects, leaders have not identified the key knowledge they want pupils to know and remember precisely. As a result, some pupils cannot build upon their knowledge over time. Leaders need to continue to develop the curriculum so that it clearly sets out the order in which pupils should learn the essential knowledge across all subjects.

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 February 2018.

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	125932
Local authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	10269071
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	240
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Robert White
Headteacher	Sharon Bondonno
Website	www.hancrossprimary.uk
Date of previous inspection	20 and 21 February 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This an average-size school.
- The governing body manages its own before- and after-school provision.
- The school has a Nursery for two- and three-year-old children.
- The school does 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 met with the headteacher and other school staff.
- The inspector met with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors, and the inspector spoke on the telephone with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and art and design. For each deep dive, the inspector met with the subject leaders, looked

at curriculum planning, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector spoke with staff, pupils and governors. He met with the school's designated safeguard lead to review the provision for safeguarding and review records and actions. He also looked at safeguarding records and reviewed information about the safer recruitment of staff.
- The inspector spoke to staff and groups of pupils from different year groups. He observed behaviour in classrooms and at breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- The view of staff and pupils, including responses to Ofsted's online staff and pupil surveys, were taken into account.
- The responses to Ofsted Parent View, including written responses, were also taken into account.

Inspection team

Bill James, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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