

Inspection of an outstanding school: High Beeches Primary School

Aldwickbury Crescent, Harpenden, Hertfordshire AL5 5SD

Inspection dates:

7 and 8 June 2023

Outcome

High Beeches Primary School continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at High Beeches Primary School focus on a different value each half term. Their current focus is on happiness. Pupils display this value from the moment they arrive to the end of the school day. They are, and feel, very safe here. They love to learn and play together. There is a strong family atmosphere at the school.

Pupils learn and behave extremely well. They are friendly and polite. They understand that staff have high expectations of them, and they rise to meet these. In lessons, pupils diligently concentrate on their work, as they want to do their best. This includes the youngest children in early years, who get off to an exceptionally good start.

Pupils embrace opportunities to take part in the school community. Various leadership roles allow them to develop their character. Pupil librarians learn resilience from the routine task of tidying the library. Digital leaders relish the responsibility of looking after the school's various devices. A well-established buddying system pairs younger pupils with older role models.

There is a wide range of trips and workshops for pupils to enjoy. These are carefully planned to enhance pupils' classroom learning. Support for pupils' social and emotional skills is well developed. They love to attend the 'comfort club' at lunchtimes, or to spend time with Bess, the school dog.

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

Leaders have carried out a thorough review of the curriculum over the last three years. Curriculum leaders have set out the essential knowledge and skills they want pupils to learn in each subject. They have organised the curriculum sequence precisely. This means that pupils build up their learning gradually and sustainably. The resulting curriculum is highly ambitious.

Teachers' subject knowledge is excellent. They explain things clearly. The activities they design make learning fun and memorable. In a Year 3 history lesson, for example, a practical activity helped pupils understand what it was like for child plaiters in the hatting industry. This inspired them to produce high-quality pieces of writing. Pupils are highly engaged in lessons. They make the most of their learning time.

As a result of high-quality planning and expert teaching, pupils learn exceptionally well, including children in Reception. In mathematics, for example, children in Reception use practical resources to secure their understanding of numbers to 10, symmetry and doubling. They embrace the activities adults set up for them enthusiastically. Practical resources and games support pupils' mathematical understanding in other year groups. A dice game in Year 4, for example, enlivened a session on revisiting written methods of multiplication. Pupils are confident in their learning and can articulate this with a high level of accuracy. They learn and achieve very well, across the curriculum.

Leaders are ambitious for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils' needs are quickly and accurately identified. Their provision is planned carefully. When needed, leaders work closely with external professionals such as speech therapists or autism specialists. Pupils with SEND are provided with adapted teaching, practical resources, or additional adult support to ensure that they can access the curriculum effectively. They learn and achieve very well.

Ensuring that pupils can read fluently is a priority for leaders and staff. Phonics lessons begin as soon as children join the Reception class. Lessons are delivered with consistency, by skilful teachers and teaching assistants. They enable pupils to learn new sounds quickly. When they need it, pupils get extra help straight away. Pupils quickly become fluent readers.

Reading lessons for older pupils teach higher level reading skills. Pupils learn to interrogate texts, hypothesise and think analytically. They have mature conversations about books. Teachers share their own love of reading with pupils. They choose high-quality texts to read to pupils every day. This motivates pupils to become avid readers.

There is an exceptionally rich range of opportunities for pupils' wider development. Themed weeks, such as 'arts week', strengthen pupils' understanding of other cultures, lifestyles and faiths. Well-chosen visiting speakers inspire pupils. A school orchestra and choir develop pupils' musical talents. The annual 'speaker's cup' competition enables pupils to experience public speaking. Extra-curricular clubs cover a variety of interests from gardening to chess. These are extremely popular with all pupils.

Leaders have ensured that staff are highly motivated and skilled. Staff value the many professional development opportunities they are offered. Leaders, including governors, consider staff well-being. They always bear this in mind when making decisions about the running of the school. Staff are proud to work at High Beeches Primary School.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have established a strong culture of vigilance. Leaders, staff and governors are well trained to recognise the signs that a pupil may be at risk. They report any concerns, no matter how small. These concerns are followed up swiftly by safeguarding leaders. When needed, they liaise with external agencies to ensure the right support is put in place for vulnerable pupils or families.

Leaders carry out appropriate checks on adults who come to work or volunteer at the school.

Pupils know what to do if they have any worries about safety. They are very well informed about online safety.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. 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 outstanding in February/March 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

Unique reference number	117342
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10242497
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	419
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Anita White
Headteacher	Jonathan Walker
Website	www.highbeeches.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	28 February to 1 March 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The number of pupils on roll has grown significantly since the previous inspection.
- The leadership team has changed since the last inspection. The headteacher took up his post in January 2019.
- At the time of the inspection, the school was not using any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The lead inspector carried out this ungraded inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The lead inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the school.
- The lead inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the lead inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of their work. The lead inspector

listened to a sample of pupils read to a familiar adult. She also looked at books and curriculum planning from other subjects across different year groups.

- The lead inspector met with a range of leaders, including senior leaders, the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo), governors including the chair of the governing body, and held a telephone meeting with a representative from HfL Education.
- To inspect safeguarding, the lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding leader and reviewed safeguarding records. The inspector scrutinised the single central record of recruitment and vetting checks. She also spoke with staff, pupils and the link governor for safeguarding.
- The lead inspector reviewed a range of school documentation and policies, including the school development plan and minutes of governing body meetings.
- The lead inspector reviewed 69 responses to Ofsted’s pupil questionnaire and spoke with pupils during lessons and at lunchtime.
- The lead inspector reviewed 218 responses to Ofsted’s online questionnaire for parents and carers, Parent View, including 135 free-text responses. The inspector also gathered parental views at the end of the school day.
- The lead inspector reviewed 33 responses to Ofsted’s online questionnaire for staff and gathered the views of staff during the inspection.

Inspection team

Caroline Crozier, lead inspector

His Majesty’s Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates:
<http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2023