

Inspection of a good school: Highcliffe School

Parkside, Highcliffe, Christchurch, Dorset BH23 4QD

Inspection dates:

27 and 28 June 2023

Outcome

Highcliffe School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Highcliffe School is a welcoming school. Pupils are keen to share their experiences of school life with visitors. Pupils behave well in lessons and at social times. They feel safe in school and have an adult who they can speak to if they have a concern. Pupils particularly value the use of their 'My Highcliffe' account messaging service to ask for help.

Pupils say there are some incidents of bullying. They understand that this behaviour is unacceptable and they report concerns to staff. The school does act, but pupils and parents are not always confident that bullying will not reoccur.

The 'Highcliffe Challenge' encourages pupils to develop and showcase their skills and talents. Pupils take part in a wide range of personal challenges, for example physical activity, leadership or creative skills. Pupils are proud to see their record of success grow and be celebrated.

Pupils and students in the sixth form value their extra-curricular opportunities. For example, they take part in music, debating, outdoor education and sporting clubs. Pupils enjoy having leadership responsibilities, such as being representatives on the school council and peer mentoring.

Students in the sixth form enjoy their courses. They feel supported by teachers who know them well. Students value the advice and guidance they receive about careers and further education. They feel well prepared for the future.

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

Leaders have created a broad and ambitious curriculum. Teachers are knowledgeable and passionate about their subjects and share this with pupils. For example, in geography, the curriculum prepares pupils as global citizens. In art, pupils develop a bank of techniques to express their individual creativity. The curriculum promotes diversity and equality. For example, in English, pupils study works by authors from many backgrounds.

What pupils will learn at each key stage is set out in subject 'learning journeys'. Leaders sequence the curriculum so pupils know more, remember more and can do more over time. For example, in English, pupils' study of Shakespeare and poetry builds from Year 7 through to the sixth form. Where the curriculum was not sequenced as well, leaders have made changes. This means a firm foundation of knowledge in key stage 3 now prepares pupils well for key stage 4.

Teachers have high expectations for pupils, and pupils learn the curriculum well. Pupils are proud of their work and achievements, and these are celebrated. For example, in art, pupils' work is displayed for all to enjoy. Expectations for sixth-form students are high. Teachers know their students well. As a result, students feel well supported and challenged.

Teachers know the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Teachers meet these pupils' needs and help them successfully learn the curriculum. Teachers are aware that some pupils find reading challenging. However, they do not identify the individual reasons for this precisely enough.

Pupils in Years 7 and 8 read beyond the books they discover in the English curriculum. Even so, this does not continue for pupils in Year 9 and above. Some older pupils do not develop a love of reading and miss the opportunity to develop their language and cultural experience by reading texts.

A highly structured careers programme supports pupils to prepare for adult life. Pupils receive the information they need to make pathway choices. Sixth-form students receive impartial information about higher education, apprenticeships and employment.

Pupils are taught about tolerance, respect, equality and diversity. This happens through lessons, the tutor programme, assemblies and whole-school events. Pupils recognise when the behaviour of others is not acceptable, and they tell adults when it happens. Leaders know there is more to do to change the attitudes of some pupils. They are working with other organisations to do this.

The Jubilee Centre supports pupils with lower attendance to engage with school life. Pupils value this bespoke individual support, and attendance for these pupils is improving.

Staff are proud to work at this school. Leaders consider staff well-being and workload when planning changes to the curriculum. The school and multi-academy trust prioritise staff development. This means that staff feel valued.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff have been well trained to identify concerns. They notice changes in pupils and report these if necessary. Leaders identify patterns over time. They act at both an individual and school level to address need. For example, they review the school support provided for

mental health concerns.

Leaders show determination to secure support for pupils. They work with other organisations to support pupils who have a range of personal challenges. When concerns remain, leaders continue to raise concerns with external agencies.

Governors understand their responsibility for monitoring the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements. This includes ensuring that the school has all statutory policies in place.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders do not identify the precise needs of the weakest readers. As a result, the pupils without secure phonic knowledge do not receive the support needed to learn to decode and read fluently. Therefore, these pupils do not learn the wider curriculum as well as they might. Leaders need to ensure that all pupils can read well enough to understand age-appropriate texts in all the subjects they study.
- The reading curriculum does not support pupils of all ages to develop their enjoyment of reading. As a result, some pupils do not have opportunities to improve their reading confidence and breadth. Leaders should consider how to further develop a culture of reading across the school.

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 November 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	136763
Local authority	Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole
Inspection number	10267018
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,492
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	280
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Richard Boden
Headteacher	Patrick Earnshaw
Website	www.highcliffe.school
Dates of previous inspection	31 October and 1 November 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Highcliffe School is part of the HISP Academy Trust. The school joined this trust in November 2022.
- The school uses three registered alternative providers and four unregistered alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- 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 held discussions with school leaders at all levels. Inspectors also met staff, governors, the school improvement partner and the chief and deputy executive officers of the trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, modern foreign languages, geography, and art and design. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, looked at curriculum planning, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at a sample of work.
- Inspectors viewed a range of school documents, including reports, reviews, minutes of the local governing body and trustee meetings and the school's improvement and self-evaluation plans.
- Inspectors met with the special educational needs coordinator and reviewed plans that support pupils with SEND.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the lead inspector scrutinised the single central record of adults working in the school. The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead, examined school records, and discussed safeguarding cases. Inspectors also spoke with a range of pupils and staff about safeguarding.
- Inspectors considered responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and considered the views of staff and pupils in Ofsted's online surveys.

Inspection team

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