

Inspection of Howe Park School

Bowland Drive, Emerson Valley, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire MK4 2SH

Inspection dates: 17 and 18 October 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

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

This school was last inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 12 years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between graded inspections under section 5 of the Act. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy attending this welcoming and nurturing school. They know the school's five core values well. Pupils exemplify these through highly respectful interactions with staff and each other. They treat each other kindly and play together happily during social times. Pupils who are playground 'buddies' help make sure everyone is included in activities and games at break and lunch times.

The school wants the best for all pupils. Pupils are encouraged to aim high. They know that perseverance in the face of challenges helps them to achieve well. They appreciate 'star of the week' awards that recognise effort in lessons and where pupils have demonstrated the school's values consistently well.

Pupils are rightly proud of their school and enjoy taking on roles of responsibility. They particularly love being 'library keepers' where they make sure books are categorised and sorted correctly. Pupils are enthusiastic about weekly clubs, such as magical maths, Spanish, art and violin, where they get to learn new skills with their friends. They also benefit from trips such as those to Whipsnade Zoo, Warwick Castle, nature reserves and farms that help bring learning to life.

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

The school's curriculum is designed carefully, from Reception to Year 2. The aims of each subject are ambitious and prepare pupils well for their next stage. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are accurately and swiftly identified. The school ensures that the curriculum is equally ambitious for pupils with SEND and enables them to learn the same content as their peers through effective adaptations. In each subject, the school has specified the knowledge and vocabulary that pupils learn, making thoughtful connections between subjects where appropriate.

Staff have secure subject knowledge and know what to teach and when. Where the exact knowledge that pupils need to know is set out precisely, staff have a better understanding of how to build on pupils' prior learning effectively. In some subjects, this knowledge is not identified as clearly as in others. This means the work pupils complete does not always connect new knowledge to what pupils already know as securely. Therefore, pupils do not understand and remember as much as they could.

This is a 'reading school' where staff ensure pupils learn to read very well. From the early years, children enjoy a wide range of high-quality texts. The phonics scheme that the school uses is taught well. Teachers introduce the sounds and words that children should learn in a logical order and adapt quickly to correct any errors pupils make. In other subjects, however, staff do not consistently check pupils' understanding or act effectively to correct misconceptions. This means some pupils continue to make mistakes.

Pupils enjoy learning. They are keen to share their views and ideas during classroom discussions. Pupils respect each other's right to learn. Where some pupils have high levels of need and their behaviour is particularly challenging, this is dealt with swiftly and sensitively to ensure all pupils and staff are safe. Learning is not disrupted. While most pupils focus well on lessons, a few pupils sometimes become distracted and do not give full attention to their learning. Staff do not consistently identify this and then act to re-engage pupils. This means these pupils sometimes miss important instructions or opportunities to practise what they have learned.

Pupils have a strong moral compass. They know right from wrong and respect the school's values. Elections to the school council and creating class rules builds an early understanding of democracy. Pupils are taught to respect people from different backgrounds and with different beliefs. They learn to think for themselves and consider different perspectives through educational programmes. There is an emphasis on physical and mental health that shines through in how well pupils understand self-care. They know how to stay safe online and how to protect their own information on devices.

The school carefully considers staff's workload and well-being. Leaders are rightly intending to develop further how the views of staff are gathered so everyone can be best supported in their roles. Staff benefit from training opportunities and are motivated to teach and support the pupils in their care. Governors provide valuable support to the school. They ensure that the systems and processes for safeguarding children are prioritised and working well.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, the precise knowledge that pupils need to learn is not yet identified clearly. This means that pupils' knowledge is not always built as fully as it could be. The school should ensure that the curriculum in all subjects sets out the precise knowledge pupils need to know and remember.
- Staff sometimes do not check and consolidate pupils' learning, addressing any misconceptions, before moving on to new learning. This means any gaps in pupils' understanding are not addressed as quickly as they could be. The school should ensure that assessment helps teachers to build on pupils' prior learning effectively in all areas of the curriculum.
- A few pupils do not engage as fully with their learning as the school would expect. When this happens, pupils do not benefit as much as they could from

lessons. The school should ensure that all staff use agreed strategies to refocus pupils and maintain high engagement.

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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	132786
Local authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	10287987
Type of school	Infant
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	171
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Peter Cannon
Headteacher	Alison Bladon
Website	www.howeparkschool.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	14 and 15 February 2011

Information about this school

- The school runs an on-site before- and after-school club.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspector(s) carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders. They also met with members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.

- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, physical education and geography.
- For each deep dive, the inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- During the inspection, the inspectors met with a range of pupils to discuss their views about the school and talked to them informally during social times.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector/inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspectors reviewed the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View. The inspector also took account of staff's responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire.

Inspection team

Ally Aldridge-Gibbons, lead inspector His Majesty's Inspector

Paul Shaughnessy Ofsted Inspector

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