

Inspection of a good school: Holmbush Primary Academy

Hawkins Crescent, Shoreham-by-Sea, West Sussex BN43 6TN

Inspection dates:

21 and 22 November 2023

Outcome

Holmbush Primary Academy continues to be a good school.

The principal of this school is Susan Stickley. This school is part of the University of Brighton Academies Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Dr John Smith, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Professor Christopher Pole.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are polite, respectful and kind in this highly aspirational and inclusive school. They are proud and happy to be part of their welcoming community. Behaviour is positive, supported by warm relationships. Staff's support for pupils' emotional well-being is a strength of the school. Many pupils have made impressive improvements in their behaviour. Everyone feels safe and highly included in school life.

From table tennis to netball, there are endless ways for pupils to stay active at playtime. Pupils are proud to represent the school in inclusive sports events and competitive matches. Local trips enrich pupils' learning. Residential activities, including a trip to France, build resilience and widen pupils' understanding of the world. The school supports pupils to develop into leaders. Roles including head boy and girl, play leader and anti-bullying ambassador give pupils opportunities to take on responsibility. Disadvantaged pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are particularly well represented in these roles.

While there are high expectations for all, these have not been fully realised in external test results. In the most recent results, writing remained a weakness by the end of Year 6, so this has been a focus for trustees and leaders. As a result of well-targeted support, pupils are now meeting expectations with greater success.

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

Reading is a top priority. Staff teach phonics using effective strategies and well-matched books to provide essential practice. Pupils who need extra help access one-to-one support to help them with the sounds they find tricky to master. Pupils enjoy books and become

fluent and confident readers. The school has placed significant focus on improving writing outcomes by the end of Year 6, which were below national expectations in 2023. Pupils now write with accuracy, creativity and flair. Standards of writing are strong and pupils with SEND are achieving well alongside their peers.

Support for pupils with SEND is a strength of the school. Leaders work closely with teachers to identify needs by analysing the challenges that pupils experience. Teaching is adapted to help everyone access the full curriculum. Nobody is left behind. The curriculum is ambitious, broad and planned with precise knowledge and skills. All subjects are mapped from Nursery to Year 6 with clear progression to help pupils build knowledge over time. The school recognises that pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, need some help with language development. Impressive support for speech and vocabulary begins in Nursery. Staff across the school teach and model the technical words needed for pupils to successfully access their learning.

There is consistency across the school in the way important learning is presented. For example, in mathematics lessons, staff use the same structure to ensure that pupils learn number skills, revise concepts and apply their knowledge to remember content. In physical education, children develop core strength and physical control in early years, building up to impressive work in key stage 2, including accomplished gymnastics. Assessment is effective across the curriculum. Teachers give pupils helpful feedback to help them improve their work. Every subject is well planned, but there is some inconsistency in the effectiveness of lesson activities. In most lessons, pupils understand tasks and learn the planned content. At times, the tasks that staff design lack precision, so pupils do not consistently learn and remember the key knowledge with complete success.

Attendance is a priority for trustees and leaders. Impressive efforts have ensured that attendance is higher than national averages. Disadvantaged pupils enjoy extra support, such as the popular breakfast club. Pupils behave well in the school. Some need additional guidance, and leaders and staff do all they can to help pupils' mental health and well-being. Everyone feels valued and cared for. Learning behaviour is positive. Staff manage minor distractions swiftly and calmly, so learning is not disrupted.

Pupils' wider development is promoted well. Pupils learn about equality, diversity and safety in well-planned lesson and assembly activities. The school's support for pupils' transition into different year groups is impressive. For example, extra lessons and nurture sessions help Year 6 pupils to feel well prepared for secondary school. Parents are rightly happy with the wonderful start their children make in early years. The Nursery environment is caring, engaging and effective. In Reception, children thrive as a result of the high ambition and rich opportunities.

Leaders are highly regarded and effective. Staff across the school feel brilliantly supported. Trustees and leaders provide strong leadership. Everyone works together with a shared vision to be inclusive for all. Statutory duties, such as safeguarding, are met with high diligence. The local governing body provides support and challenge to further enhance the work of trustees and leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Sometimes, lesson activities do not support pupils to understand and learn the essential knowledge identified in curriculum planning. This means that pupils might not learn and remember key content, which can stop them achieving highly. The school must ensure that activities are precisely designed to help pupils securely learn key content across the curriculum.

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 January 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' 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	141906
Local authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	10256522
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	206
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Professor Christopher Pole
CEO of the trust	Dr John Smith
Principal	Susan Stickleby
Website	www.holmbushprimaryacademy.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	16 and 17 January 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school offers a before- and after-school club, overseen by the trust.
- There is a nursery for two- and three-year-old children.
- The school currently uses two unregistered alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

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 inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the principal, the assistant principal, the inclusion lead, the English lead, teachers, support staff, the deputy chief executive officer, trustees and the chair of the local governing body.

- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and physical education. For each deep dive, the inspector held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector discussed writing with leaders and evaluated pupils' writing.
- The inspector listened to a range of pupils read. The inspector observed catch-up interventions to learn how staff provide extra support to pupils.
- The inspector gathered evidence to explore the impact of pupils' behaviour, the school's wider curriculum offer and how leaders support staff with their workload.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: 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 inspector considered the responses to the staff survey and spoke to a range of staff about their views of the school.
- The inspector took account of the responses to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire and the free-text responses.
- The inspector spoke with a range of pupils to learn their views about the school. The inspector also considered responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Scott Reece, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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