

# Inspection of High Ash Church of England Primary School

Pound Hill, Great Brickhill, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire MK17 9AS

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Inspection dates: 14 and 15 November 2023

## Overall effectiveness

## Requires improvement

The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Requires improvement**

Early years provision

**Good**

Previous inspection grade

Outstanding

This school was last inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 twelve 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 school. They are well cared for and build secure relationships with staff. Developing pupils' empathy and resilience is a focus of each day. Pupils value honing their teamworking skills within the school's 'character education' programme. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are fully included in school life. This extends to the comprehensive programme of exciting extra-curricular activities, in which pupils' varied interests are considered.

Pupils behave well at the school. Staff set high expectations. A relentless focus on routines helps pupils to know what is expected of them. Some pupils do report that bullying occasionally happens in school. However, they recognise that it is never tolerated by anyone. The school reinforces values of tolerance and respect. Diversity is celebrated through the curriculum, with pupils learning to appreciate the views of others.

Pupils learn from a broad curriculum. 'Hook days' ignite excitement at the start of new topics. On these special occasions, pupils enjoy visiting different places of worship, or learning from engaging visitors to the school. However, currently, teachers have not had enough training and support to ensure they can fully deliver the intended curriculum. This means that pupils do not learn as well as they should in some subjects.

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

As a result of unforeseen changes in leadership and staff, there have been delays in the school's required improvements. The school is not currently ensuring that all pupils learn well across the full curriculum. The newly formed leadership team is aware of some of the changes that are urgently needed. The team is currently focused on improving pupils' behaviour and the provision for teaching reading. In these areas, newly implemented policies and practices have had a positive impact, and it is evident that staff have benefited from focused training. However, more is required to ensure that teaching of other aspects of the school's curriculum is improved. This includes strengthening the school's oversight of how well pupils are learning.

The school does have a planned curriculum in place. In most subjects, planning reflects the school's high ambition for what pupils should understand. The knowledge and skills that pupils need to learn is sequenced in a logical order. In many subjects, this allows for pupils to recap important prior learning. However, while there is some clear planning in place, the way that the curriculum is taught varies across the different subjects. This means teachers do not always introduce new information clearly or routinely check what has been learned. Consequently, some pupils have gaps in their understanding and are not consistently achieving as well as they should.

The school has recently strengthened the teaching of reading. This is helping to develop a strong culture for reading. Pupils enjoy learning to read through the school's well-implemented phonics scheme. Children in Reception learn new sounds quickly. Those who need additional help with their reading have targeted interventions in place to help them catch up.

The school identifies the individual needs of pupils with SEND effectively. Support required is carefully identified in plans that are shared with all staff. Within lessons, adaptations to learning are made successfully. The school reviews individual plans regularly, ensuring that the support pupils receive is helping them to learn.

Children in early years get off to a strong start. The early years curriculum is highly ambitious for all children, with clear milestones set for their learning. Children participate well in a wide range of carefully planned and stimulating activities. There is a sharp focus on developing children's communication. Children benefit from the support of skilled staff, who carefully model the use of new vocabulary.

Pupils attend school regularly. They conduct themselves sensibly. The recently redeveloped behaviour policy has raised expectations. From Reception, children focus well on learning and follow instructions without hesitation. They are motivated to do the right thing by the well-used rewards system. A small number of pupils who require additional support get the help they need to manage their emotions independently.

The personal development programme is comprehensive. Pupils gain leadership skills when they become house captains, ambassadors or join the eco-committee. These pupils act as positive role models for their peers. Understanding of the importance of helping others is strengthened through charitable events and initiatives. Pupils have access to effective support for their mental health, including counselling. This is valued by pupils, who learn helpful coping strategies.

## **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 intended curriculum is not taught effectively. Some teachers have not had the required training and support needed to ensure they can deliver the curriculum effectively. This means that the way new learning is introduced, and activities provided, does not always build pupils' knowledge and understanding over time. The school needs to ensure that teachers have the expertise to maximise all pupils' learning across every subject.
- In some subjects, teachers do not check that pupils have learned the intended curriculum as well as they should. This means that misconceptions are not always

addressed, and pupils do not achieve as well as they could. Leaders need to ensure that teachers regularly check on pupils' learning and adapt planning accordingly.

- There has been high turnover of staff and instability in school leadership. This has meant that there has been reduced capacity to address all identified school improvement priorities. Governors need to ensure that leaders have the required resources to be able to implement their planned improvements effectively.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	110419
<b>Local authority</b>	Buckinghamshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10287846
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	272
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Kathryn Middleton
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ruth Lewin
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.highestschool.co.uk">www.highestschool.co.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	5 and 6 May 2011, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- At the time of this inspection, the deputy headteacher had been acting as headteacher, since the summer term, on an interim basis. The school is a Church of England school. It had its most recent section 48 inspection, undertaken by Oxford Diocese, in June 2016.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors 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 lead inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in his evaluation of the school.

- The inspectors met with senior leaders, subject leaders, the leader responsible for pupils with SEND, many teachers, and support staff.
- The lead inspector met with governors. He also had a conversation with a representative from the diocese and the local authority.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, science, history and computing. For each deep dive, inspectors 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 where appropriate.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils and staff to hear their views.
- The inspectors considered the responses to the confidential Ofsted surveys for staff and pupils, as well as the responses to Ofsted Parent View.

## Inspection team

Martin Smith, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Sarah Brinkley	Ofsted Inspector
Julie Hiddleston	Ofsted Inspector

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