

# Inspection of a good school: Hilltop Primary School

Ditchling Hill, Southgate West, Crawley, West Sussex RH11 8QL

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Inspection dates:

5 and 6 March 2024

## Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might be outstanding if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

The co-headteachers of this school are Abby McNiven and Ross Farndon. The school is part of The Kemnal Academies Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by chief executive officer, Dr. Karen Roberts, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Gaenor Bagley. There is a director of education, James Munt who is responsible for this school and seven others.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are very proud to attend this vibrant and welcoming school. They love the attractive learning environments, particularly the well-resourced reading areas and the impressive art installations. Pupils play an integral part in the life of the school. From preparing information and music to broadcast on the school radio station, to acting as mentors and reading leaders to younger children, pupils support each other very well. When pupils arrive from other countries, their peers help them to settle in quickly. There is a very strong sense of community here.

Staff have very high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Pupils achieve exceptionally well because the school provides an interesting and well-considered curriculum. In national examinations, pupils, and particularly disadvantaged pupils, excel in writing and mathematics. Pupils behave well, enjoy their learning and appreciate their talented teachers. They rightly credit the school with helping them to develop their incredibly positive attitudes. Pupils behave impeccably, with maturity, politeness and respect.

Pupils benefit extensively from the rich and varied experiences that the school carefully plans. 'Opportunity passports' set out a range of skills and opportunities that pupils should try, including sporting, artistic and cultural experiences. The school ensures that pupils also have meaningful opportunities to learn life skills such as travelling by train and learning to mend bicycles.

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

The school has designed an ambitious and very well-considered curriculum. The knowledge that pupils will learn in each subject is clearly mapped out and builds well over time. Enrichment activities such as trips to historical sites and author visits serve to further strengthen the curriculum. Thanks to the school's focus on pupils speaking confidently and clearly, pupils have regular opportunities to widen their vocabulary and verbally explore their ideas.

Staff are skilled and enthusiastic in delivering the curriculum. The activities they choose help pupils to learn consistently well. For example, in early years, children practise counting toy insects. They quickly gain confidence in simple addition and subtraction. The school carefully identifies the needs of pupils with special education needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and puts in place the support that they need. Staff check regularly how well pupils are learning and use these checks to adapt their teaching. All pupils, including those with SEND, develop increasing independence and confidence. Pupils with SEND achieve extremely well as a consequence of staff's expert approach to meeting their needs.

Reading is a very high priority. Children get off to a flying start in learning phonics in Reception. This ensures that almost all pupils reach the expected standard in phonics by the end of Year 1. Pupils are inspired by the varied and plentiful books in the school. They read widely and regularly, right from the start of early years. As one pupil said, 'If you're not a bookworm, you just haven't found the right book yet!' The school ensures that staff are well-trained to be experts in teaching reading and phonics. They quickly spot any pupils who struggle and give them extra help. By the time pupils reach the end of key stage 2, they read very well. Last year's external examinations results showed that more pupils than the national averages met and exceeded the expected standards in reading. Pupils who speak English as an additional language are well supported, gaining confidence rapidly.

Pupils conduct themselves exceptionally well. The school's very well understood routines and clear expectations result in a calm, happy and friendly environment. The foundations of pupils' highly positive behaviour are set in the early years. Here, warm and caring staff use a well-considered, structured approach to get children into great habits. More broadly in the school, when pupils with SEND struggle to behave as the school expects, staff manage their behaviour consistently well. Pupils are inclusive and very respectful of difference. They feel strongly that everyone is equal and deserving of respect.

The personal development curriculum is meticulously planned. School leaders are determined that all pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged, experience a set of rich and relevant wider opportunities. Projects, led by mentors from the business sector, help pupils to develop their leadership qualities and social responsibility. Pupils involved describe how they have grown in confidence and resilience. The school's curriculum teaches pupils about staying safe and healthy, and how to build and maintain successful relationships. Pupils are extremely well prepared for the next stage in their lives.

The trust and school leaders share a passion for an exceptional educational experience for all pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged. The school makes sure that its staff are well-trained and benefit from links with other schools in the trust. Staff are proud to work here and appreciate leaders' consideration of their well-being. While governors are committed to the school, some lack depth of knowledge. This prevents them from supporting leaders as well as they could. Parents unanimously endorse the work of the school. One parent, summing up the view of many, commented, 'My children are thriving'.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## What does the school need to do to improve?

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Local governance is not as effective as it could be. Governors do not have enough knowledge to allow them to support leaders sufficiently well in achieving the school's strategic priorities. The trust should ensure that governors access training to enable them to support school leaders as effectively as possible.

## 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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in June 2014

## 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>	138648
<b>Local authority</b>	West Sussex
<b>Inspection number</b>	10296378
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	594
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Gaenor Bagley
<b>CEO of the trust</b>	Dr. Karen Roberts
<b>Co-headteachers</b>	Abby McNiven and Ross Farndon
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.hilltop-tkat.org">www.hilltop-tkat.org</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	26 <sup>th</sup> June 2018 under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school is part of The Kemnal Academies Trust. The trust oversees 45 primary, secondary and special schools in the south-east of England.
- The co-headteachers have been in post since 2021.
- The school is in consultation to run the pre-school which shares its site.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.
- The school runs its own breakfast and after-school clubs.

## 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 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 leaders, including the co-headteachers, the special educational needs coordinator and other subject leaders.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of the local governing body.
- The lead inspector spoke to the school's link trustee.
- Deep dives were carried out in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also looked more widely at a range of pupils' work in different subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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 safeguarding culture that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspectors gathered evidence to explore the impact of pupils' behaviour and the school's wider curriculum.
- The inspectors talked to pupils and staff throughout the inspection to gain their views about the school. This included the views of staff submitted via Ofsted's confidential surveys.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents submitted via Ofsted's parent survey.

## **Inspection team**

Maria Roberts, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Susan Kelly

Ofsted Inspector

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