

Inspection of an outstanding school: Hernhill Church of England Primary School

Fostall, Hernhill, Faversham, Kent ME13 9JG

Inspection dates:

6 and 7 March 2024

Outcome

Hernhill Church of England Primary School continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

There is a demonstrable sense of community and belonging in this welcoming, inclusive and exceptional school. The school's 'People Rule', which is to 'treat others as you want to be treated', is deeply embedded in the school's culture. It is demonstrated incredibly well by everyone in every aspect of school life. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary, and they are safe, happy and they love school. They thoroughly enjoy learning because they say teachers always make it highly interesting and enjoyable. Pupils are extremely proud of their school and say they are lucky to have such incredible experiences.

The school has very high expectations for all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). There is an unwavering determination to empower all pupils to succeed, take risks and develop independence in a very positive and caring environment. As a result, pupils thrive and flourish as individuals academically and socially. They receive an excellent standard of education and achieve particularly highly in mathematics. Reflecting the views of many, one parent commented, 'The school offers a wide range of learning experiences, but also pushes them to challenge themselves and be ambitious and independent in their activity. This means they have skills and confidence that will serve them well in life.'

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

The school's curriculum is extremely rich and vibrant. The precise knowledge, skills and vocabulary pupils will learn are set out clearly. The curriculum is carefully and skilfully designed so that pupils frequently revisit the 'sticky knowledge' or the key concepts they need to remember to really deepen their learning. Teachers check pupils' understanding and use the information effectively to inform teaching. The school quickly identifies pupils' needs accurately so that pupils are challenged and supported appropriately. Highly skilled staff ensure that there are effective adaptations and resources to ensure that pupils with SEND have access to the full curriculum and equal opportunities to learn. Children receive

a great start to school in Reception. Activities inspire children's enjoyment and thirst for learning and successfully encourage the rapid development of early reading, writing and number skills. The school's exceptional provision for pupils to thrive and flourish through outdoor play and learning has an extremely positive impact. This is particularly evident in pupils' well-being, behaviour, confidence and learning.

Reading has high priority. Phonics skills are taught very effectively through a consistent approach and a well-structured programme that pupils enjoy. As a result, children quickly learn letters and the sounds that they make. Pupils read books that are carefully matched to the sounds they know and develop reading fluency and expression. Staff are quick to identify pupils who need additional support and give them extra help to keep up. Pupils are introduced to a wide range of increasingly challenging high-quality texts. Throughout the school, reading for pleasure is successfully promoted. Pupils read widely and are especially motivated by the fairy tale themed magical library.

Pupils' excellent attitudes are constantly evident in their lessons and in their play. The creativity, collaboration, support and togetherness they demonstrate is outstanding. Pupils are kind and caring. They listen to others' views and opinions, even if they do not agree with them. Pupils accept and respect the fact that some pupils think, behave, communicate and learn in different ways. As one pupil said, 'I'm different, but that's okay here.' A group of pupils agreed that, 'We are one big family and we all thrive.' The school has the highest expectations for attendance and punctuality. Staff work diligently with families to establish exceedingly strong partnerships. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school.

The school provides pupils with a rich range of experiences beyond the academic. These include a wide choice of clubs, visits and visitors to school and a wealth of sporting activities. The 'Hernhill Pledge' lists 37 varied experiences pupils have before they leave the school, which further enrich pupils' cultural, social and spiritual development. The current Year 6 pupils have already experienced 36 of these so far. Leadership skills are encouraged. The 'eco team', for example, has established a successful small business. The pupils sell eco-friendly and sustainable products to parents and the wider community and plough their profits back into the school community. Pupils' excellent personal skills and their academic achievements mean that they are exceedingly well prepared for the future.

Governors know the school very well. There is extremely strong teamwork and staff are unanimous in their view of being happy and proud to work at the school. They appreciate the consideration of their workload and well-being. The school is outward looking and the school's exemplary practice is willingly and rightly shared with other schools.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. 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 outstanding on 31 October and 1 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](#)' 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	118647
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10287921
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	210
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Helen Figgis
Headteacher	Sarah Alexander
Website	www.hernhill.kent.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	31 October and 1 November 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is a Church of England school in the Diocese of Canterbury. Its most recent section 48 inspection was in May 2019.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of the 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 headteacher, the deputy headteacher and other senior leaders. The inspector also met with subject leaders and many staff.
- The inspector met with four governors including the chair of the governing body.

- The inspector met with the local authority school improvement adviser and held telephone conversations with the deputy director of Canterbury Diocese and a virtual school headteacher from a London borough.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, physical education and history. 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 also looked at curriculum information for a range of other subjects.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documents, including the school's own evaluation of its effectiveness, priorities for improvement, external reviews and information relating to behaviour, attendance and SEND.
- The views of staff and pupils were gathered through both formal and informal discussions. Observations were made of pupils at play during lunchtimes.
- 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.

Inspection team

Margaret Coussins, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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