

Inspection of a good school: Halfway Houses Primary School

Danley Road, Minster-on-Sea, Sheerness, Kent ME12 3AP

Inspection dates: 12 and 13 March 2024

Outcome

Halfway Houses Primary School continues to be a good school.

The head of school is Lindsay Fordyce. This school is part of The Island Learning Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Debbie Rousell, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Howard Fisher. There is also an executive headteacher, Ryan Driver, who is also responsible for this school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy learning in this school. They benefit from a thoughtfully designed curriculum and achieve well. Pupils know the importance of the school's 'ROAR' values of resilience, optimism, ambition and responsibility. They take pride in demonstrating them and working hard.

There are high expectations for pupils' behaviour. The school's rules and rewards are well known. Pupils behave well, showing courtesy to others. Around the school site, pupils are sensible and walk maturely along corridors, greeting staff and visitors politely. Pupils have a firm understanding of what bullying is. They say that it is rare but know to report it if it happens. Pupils feel safe and are confident they will get support when needed.

Pupils appreciate the frequent opportunities to contribute to school life. This includes acting responsibly as school parliament members, sports leaders and reading buddies. The varied extra-curricular clubs on offer are valued. School trips are remembered fondly. Year 6 pupils can eagerly describe how a visit to Leeds Castle inspired them to want to be historians.

The school is committed to providing care to its pupils and wider community when this is needed. Families who need extra help are well supported. The school's food bank and work with local charities provide additional assistance, which many families value.

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

Pupils learn through an ambitious and broad curriculum. The precise knowledge that pupils need to learn is clearly identified from Reception onwards. The school's curriculum is organised so that learning builds on what pupils already know. Teachers frequently refer to prior learning and help pupils to develop links across key concepts. For example, in early years, recent learning about spaceships has helped children to develop their understanding of different types of transport. The school ensures that pupils acquire a strong understanding of new vocabulary across all subjects. Teachers know how to check what pupils already know to quickly identify and address any gaps in pupils' understanding.

Pupils achieve well at this school. The way that writing is taught is a particular strength. Teachers have strong subject knowledge. In many subjects, they have the expertise to deliver the curriculum well. Where this is the case, staff introduce new learning clearly and provide activities that help pupils to develop understanding. However, in some subjects, the tasks selected for pupils to complete do not always help them to learn as well as they could.

The individual needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are known well. Teaching assistants are adept at breaking learning down into manageable chunks. Interventions are carefully planned to provide additional support and learning to those who need it, including those in Reception who may need further help with the development of their speech and language. Where pupils need more specialised help, the school engages well with external services. However, some amendments to learning to help meet the individual needs of pupils are not always as well considered as they could be. When this happens, some pupils with SEND can find it more difficult to learn important knowledge and skills.

Reading is a fundamental part of the school's provision. The library, book vending machine and reading corners are stocked with high-quality texts. Pupils love to read and do so often. The school's chosen phonics programme is taught well. Teachers introduce new sounds and words in a logical order from the very start of learning in Reception. Checks are made to identify any pupils who are finding it more difficult to learn to read to ensure they get extra help to catch up.

The school has high expectations for pupils' behaviour and attendance. Most pupils attend school regularly. Classrooms are calm and focused. Pupils respond quickly to their teachers' instructions. They show positive attitudes to learning. A small number of pupils, including some with SEND, who find it more difficult to regulate their own behaviour, receive extra support from caring staff. This is helping them to improve their focus and learning.

The school carefully considers how to make sure pupils are ready for life beyond the school. Pupils learn about healthy relationships and how to stay safe. Pupils develop a firm understanding of protected characteristics. They know the importance of being respectful to everyone. School assemblies help pupils to gain an understanding of

fundamental British values. Classroom discussions build on these, providing opportunities to discuss and gain appreciation for different viewpoints.

Governors and trustees share school leaders' ambition for the school and its pupils. They provide constructive challenge. Careful consideration is given to the well-being of all members of the school community.

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 way new learning is introduced and the activities that are set for pupils do not always help pupils to learn the intended curriculum. Consequently, pupils do not always learn as well as they could. Leaders need to ensure that staff deliver the curriculum consistently well across all subjects so that pupils understand and remember more of what they are taught.
- In some subjects, teachers do not always adapt learning well enough to meet the needs of pupils with SEND. This means that these pupils do not always develop a secure understanding of what they have learned. The school should ensure that teachers have the training they need so that pupils with SEND can achieve well across all subjects.

Background

When we have judged 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 predecessor school Halfway Houses Primary School to be good in April 2015.

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	143605
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10322025
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	568
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Howard Fisher
Headteacher	Lindsay Fordyce (head of school)
CEO of the trust	Debbie Rousell
Website	www.halfwayhouses.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	13 November 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the last inspection, there have been a number of changes in staff, including the appointment of the headteacher.
- The school is part of The Island Learning Trust.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

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 his evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders, the leader responsible for pupils with SEND, other teachers and support staff.

- The inspector met with trustees, governors, the executive headteacher, the chief executive officer and other representatives of the trust.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics 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.
- 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.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils and staff to hear their views.
- The inspector considered the responses to the confidential Ofsted surveys for staff, pupils and Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Martin Smith, inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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