

Inspection of a good school: Hamilton Academy

Priory Avenue, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire HP13 6SG

Inspection dates:

24 and 25 April 2024

Outcome

Hamilton Academy continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Stephen Nunn. This school is governed by a single academy trust, Hamilton Academy. The trust is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Paul Basham.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a school full of smiling pupils. Pupils' behaviour on both sites is rightly a source of pride for the adults. Staff set high expectations for pupils. Pupils learn well. Published outcomes at the end of key stages 1 and 2 are in line with the national picture.

Pupils are eager to learn more and get involved in everything the school has to offer. There is always something happening at Hamilton to enrich pupils' experiences outside of the classroom. The school makes sure that all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, benefit from this. During the inspection, Year 5 pupils were learning opera in preparation for audience participation in an up-and-coming theatre visit. Pupils love the wide range of clubs available, such as chess, darts and Bollywood dance. The football teams burst with pride recounting the successes of the season. Hamilton is a busy school with pupils who feel happy and safe.

Pupils understand the school's 'aspire' values such as self-belief and respect well. For example, pupils learn to respect others and the environment. They spoke with pride about the 600 saplings they had planted in the 'tiny forest' to help respect their planet.

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

Over the last couple of years, the school has completely reviewed the curriculum. For all subjects, it has identified the key knowledge, skills and vocabulary it wants pupils to know and remember with absolute clarity. This means that teachers know exactly what to teach and check in lessons. In most subjects, staff have strong subject knowledge. Teachers present new information clearly, asking effective questions to check pupils' understanding. This results, in the stronger subjects, with pupils learning exceptionally

well. For example, in computing, Year 4 pupils confidently explain how to use data loggers and sensors to measure light intensity.

In some foundation subjects, staff are still getting to grips with the new curriculum content. Occasionally, subject knowledge is not as strong as it could be. Sometimes, teachers plan activities that do not support pupils to learn the identified knowledge well enough. This hinders how well pupils learn. There is much expertise in the school. The school is in a strong place to be able to fully equip staff with the skills and knowledge they need to implement the curriculum consistently well.

Reading is at the heart of the curriculum. Staff teach phonics well. Children get off to a flying start in early years. Many children join the school speaking English as an additional language. Adults immerse children in language, stories, songs and rhymes as soon as they start school. Staff use phonics assessments well. The books that pupils read match the sounds that they already know. Staff give effective support to enable any weaker readers to catch up. By the end of key stage 1, most pupils can read with fluency and accuracy. Older pupils talk enthusiastically about authors and the type of books they like. They love taking part in the school's holiday reading challenges, reading a wide range of books.

The school accurately identifies the additional needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They are fully included in all aspects of school life. However, pupils with SEND do not always learn as well as they could. This is because, for some pupils with SEND, support plans are too vague or not focused on what will make the most difference.

The school prioritises pupils' personal development well. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe in a wide range of circumstances, such as when near roads, water and trains. They know how to keep themselves healthy, including in their relationships. The school prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain. Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive. They treat each other with kindness and respect. As one pupil said, 'This school includes everyone and we all belong.' Staff talk about the 'Hamilton family'. Leaders support staff to fulfil their roles well. For example, the design of the school's new curriculum helps them with their workload. They are proud to work in this school.

In the past, attendance has not been good enough. The school has faced this challenge head on. It has reviewed all processes and implemented an effective action plan. This is making a great difference and attendance is currently more in line with the national picture. However, leaders know that they must maintain their focus in this area. They continue to work closely with families to ensure that they understand the importance of attending school every day.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few foundation subjects, teachers' subject knowledge is not consistently strong and, occasionally, teachers plan activities that do not support the intended curriculum well enough. This means that in those subjects, pupils are not learning as well as they could. The school should make sure that teachers have the training they need to teach the curriculum well.
- Sometimes, support plans for pupils with SEND are not tight or useful enough. This hampers these pupils' ability to access and learn the curriculum as well as they could. The school should support teachers in being able to identify the most important next steps in learning for pupils with SEND.

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 November 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	137964
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10321949
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	671
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Paul Basham
Headteacher	Stephen Nunn
Website	www.hamiltonacademy.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	31 October and 1 November 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school converted to academy status in April 2012 and is governed by a single academy trust, Hamilton Academy.
- The school operates on two sites. The Priory Road site caters for children in Nursery and Reception and pupils in Years 3 and 4. The Hampden Road site caters for pupils in Years 1, 2, 5 and 6.
- 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. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, history and science. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils

about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector also heard pupils read to a member of staff.

- The lead inspector also looked at other aspects of the school's curriculum.
- Inspectors met with leaders, staff and pupils. The lead inspector met with the three trustees, including the chair. She also held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at school. They also considered the views of pupils shared through Ofsted's online survey for pupils.
- Inspectors spoke with staff about their workload and well-being. They also considered the views of staff shared through Ofsted's online survey for staff.
- They considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. An inspector spoke with parents at the beginning and the end of the school day.
- 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 culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

Inspection team

Lea Hannam, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Claire Britnell	Ofsted Inspector
Andy Platt	Ofsted Inspector

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