

Inspection of Houghton Conquest Lower School

High Street, Houghton Conquest, Bedford, Bedfordshire MK45 3LL

Inspection dates: 4 and 5 June 2024

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Early years provision **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Community is at the very heart of this village school. Pupils, staff and parents appreciate and value this aspect of the school. Pupils benefit from the help, care and support that staff provide. Pupils feel safe. The school values of respect, honesty, teamwork, pride and resilience are woven across all areas of school life.

Staff have high aspirations for all pupils to achieve their best. Pupils live up to this. They concentrate, work hard in lessons and achieve well.

Pastoral support is strong. Pupils know the importance of both physical and mental health. 'Storm breaks' are used to teach pupils about the importance of being active and having a healthy mind. If any pupil needs more specific support, this is provided readily by trained members of staff. This helps pupils' readiness to learn.

Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), take full advantage of the range of activities that the school offers, such as running, forest school and arts and crafts. Pupils also have leadership opportunities. Older pupils can become school councillors and sports leaders, while regular debating assemblies allow all pupils to develop their ability to listen, speak and reason in a respectful manner.

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

The school has designed an ambitious and broad curriculum. Pupils' outcomes are typically improving year on year. A planned curriculum which starts in early years is in place. Some curriculum subjects are more established than others.

The school has considered what children learn in pre-school and how this prepares children for future learning. Children learn the routines of school quickly. They engage in meaningful planned learning tasks straight away. When required, adults support children in their learning. Equally, adults know when to step back and allow children to be independent learners. As a result, children in early years achieve well and are prepared for Year 1.

Reading is a priority. The early reading curriculum is precise. Children access letters and sounds in pre-school and are well prepared for phonics teaching in the reception class. Adults promote books by reading to pupils daily. Pupils read books regularly which match their stage in learning. Pupils who need additional help receive support to catch up. Older pupils speak fondly of visits to the library and new books they are able to read and enjoy. As a result, pupils learn to read fluently and develop a love of reading.

Teachers have been trained to teach the curriculum as leaders intend. Pupils typically learn new knowledge and vocabulary. They can talk about their learning with enthusiasm and confidence. However, in some subjects, the curriculum plans

are not clear enough. They do not explicitly identify the content that will help with pupils' next stage in learning. This means the knowledge pupils learn is not always clearly connected over time. In these subjects, pupils do not develop a depth of knowledge.

Support for pupils with SEND is strong. Pupils' specific additional needs are accurately identified. Systems ensure that pupils with SEND get the support that they need. Staff, with the support of leaders, make well-considered adjustments to their teaching approaches. This enables pupils with SEND to access the whole curriculum and achieve well.

Expectations of pupils' behaviour are high. Pupils know the school's 'golden rules'. They eagerly live up to these around school. As a result, lessons proceed in an orderly manner without disruption.

Despite the hard work of school leaders, some pupils do not attend school regularly enough. The school works closely with families and with external services. However, while this is starting to improve, there is more work to do to ensure some pupils attend school well. Pupils' attendance rightly remains a leadership priority.

Pupils' personal development is promoted well. Pupils confidently talk about how to keep themselves safe, including online. They have a good understanding of how to promote positive mental health. They learn to recognise healthy relationships. Pupils know the importance of being respectful and tolerant to others. Pupils play an active role in the community. They take part in events such as planting the village orchard. Trips, residentials and sporting events broaden their experiences. They are well prepared for their next stage of education.

Governors know the school well. They visit regularly and provide effective support and challenge to school leaders.

Staff feel well supported and are proud to work at this school. They appreciate the support and training they are given to do their jobs well. Staff know their well-being and workload are always considered when decisions are made by leaders.

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 core knowledge pupils need to know and remember is not clearly identified. This means pupils do not develop a depth of knowledge over time. In these subjects, subject leaders need to precisely identify the knowledge

pupils need to learn and remember so they build their knowledge cumulatively and successfully over time.

- A group of pupils do not attend school as regularly as they should. This means that they miss valuable learning and social interaction with peers. This has the potential to limit their progress and development. The school must continue to develop their analysis of attendance to inform bespoke support for those pupils who do not attend as regularly as they should.

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

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| Unique reference number | 109458 |
| Local authority | Central Bedfordshire |
| Inspection number | 10345084 |
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 2 to 9 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 141 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing body | Mark Lovell |
| Headteacher | Julie Heaslip |
| Website | www.hcschool.org.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 11 July 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.
- The school runs its own breakfast and after-school 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. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, phase leaders, subject leaders, teachers, members of the governing body and the representative from the local authority as part of the inspection.

- The inspection team carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and history. These included discussions with subject leaders, visits to lessons, meetings with staff and pupils, scrutiny of pupils' work and a review of any curriculum documentation.
- The inspector also considered curriculum documentation and spoke to leaders and pupils about the religious education curriculum.
- 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.
- The inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including behaviour logs, attendance records, pupil records, records of governing body meetings, school development plans and school self-evaluation documents.
- The inspectors gathered parents' views by reviewing responses submitted to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View.
- The inspection team considered the responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for school staff. Inspectors also met with staff throughout the inspection to gather their views.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils throughout the inspection to gather their views.

Inspection team

Jonny Wallace, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Joe Creswick

Ofsted Inspector

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