

Inspection of Headcorn Primary School

Kings Road, Headcorn, Kent TN27 9QT

Inspection dates:	10 and 11 December 2024
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud to be part of this welcoming and friendly school, where they know teachers want them to be the best they can be. The school's values are known by pupils who strive to live up to them. The school sets ambitious goals for pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils work hard in lessons and achieve well.

Pupils know they can talk to a trusted adult or post any concerns in the school's worry boxes to get help. The lunchtime 'calm corner' club offers a quiet space where help is at hand from experts in well-being support. Pupils build respectful and trusting relationships with adults and each other. They rightly feel safe and happy.

The school sets high standards for behaviour, and pupils typically live up to these standards. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is respectful and calm. At social times, pupils play harmoniously together. When pupils struggle with behaviour, their needs are understood well, and the school uses effective approaches to support them.

The school offers many opportunities for pupils to develop their confidence. Older reading ambassadors encourage younger pupils by reading stories to them and sharing their favourite books. Eco warriors recycle paper and batteries and protect the environment by litter picking.

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

The school's improvement journey has gained momentum since its previous inspection. Staff have worked successfully to provide pupils with the best possible education. Governors work closely with the school on the shared aspirational vision. They understand the school's strengths and challenges. Governors have appropriate systems in place to make sure the school's policies are followed and the school's work is having the desired impact. The school is considerate of staff well-being and workload. Staff's professional development is focused on areas which have the most impact on pupils' achievement.

In recent times, more ambitious schemes of work have been introduced in some of the wider curriculum subjects. All areas of the school's curriculum from Reception to Year 6 are coherently set out so that pupils' learning builds securely. Some curriculum thinking has been further refined so that teachers know precisely what to teach and revisit, so that pupils deepen their understanding and remember long term what they have learned.

Teachers have secure subject knowledge and understand pupils' needs. Many children start Reception with limited vocabulary and lack confidence to speak in discussions. Practising talk is a focus in Reception, and adults act as role models through conversations with children as well as involving them in songs and rhyme. The school is quick to identify any additional needs that pupils may have. Typically, these pupils are supported effectively, and they achieve well.

Teachers help pupils to remember the curriculum by recapping previous learning regularly. They use resources well, to help pupils understand new ideas. Teachers routinely check that pupils understand what they are learning. Most lesson activities are designed to help pupils build their knowledge. In some, less well-established, subjects, activities do not match closely to the intended curriculum. Some pupils do not achieve as well as they might in these areas.

Reading is taught well. The school places importance on pupils being confident and fluent readers. In Reception, children listen to many stories, songs and rhymes closely linked to the curriculum. They quickly learn the consistent routines of phonics lessons and have opportunities to practise saying and writing letter sounds with adults through play. Teachers check pupils' learning and quickly spot any pupils falling behind. Expert teachers support struggling readers to close gaps in their phonics knowledge. Pupils learn to read well.

The school prioritises pupils' attendance, and it is steadily increasing as a result. Pupils and their families are known well, and staff work closely with them to reduce any barriers to attendance. Persistently absent pupils are kept high on the agenda through regular contact. The school persists with determination to get pupils back into school regularly, working effectively with external agencies. Governors keep a close eye on attendance levels, ensuring the school does all it possibly can.

Pupils benefit from a range of trips and visitors. Children in Reception meet the local dentist and police as they learn about people who help them. Older pupils visit local places of historical interest and go to London museums on the train. These experiences help pupils deepen their understanding of the curriculum and the wider world. Pupils have a strong knowledge of how fundamental British values have influenced law and politics. They learn about significant people from different backgrounds, cultures and faiths. Pupils are taught how to recognise healthy and unhealthy relationships. They know there are many kinds of families. Pupils understand the importance of valuing people's differences and treating everyone equally. This understanding also helps create the thoughtful and respectful behaviour seen across the school.

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 foundation subjects, activities pupils undertake in lessons are not closely matched to what adults want them to learn. Consequently, pupils do not learn some curriculum content as well as they should. As the curriculum develops further, the school should ensure that appropriate activities are used to teach the intended knowledge so that pupils learn equally well across all curriculum areas.

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	118291
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10341477
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	397
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Jack Keeler MBE
Headteacher	Sarah Symonds
Website	www.headcorn.kent.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	4 and 5 May 2022, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.
- The school has recently completed a process of expansion. There are now two classes in each year group from Reception to Year 6.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth-form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.

- During the inspection, the inspectors met with the headteacher, the senior leadership team and representatives from the local authority. The lead inspector also met with members of the school's governing body.
- The inspectors met with groups of pupils about their learning.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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' interest first.
- The inspectors considered parents' views expressed through Ofsted Parent View.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects, reading, mathematics, history, music and design and technology. For each deep dive, inspectors 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.
- Throughout the inspection, the inspectors met with groups of staff. They also considered the opinions expressed through the staff survey.

Inspection team

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