

Inspection of Highwood Primary School

Mead Way, Bushey, Hertfordshire WD23 2AW

Inspection dates: 27 and 28 June 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy at Highwood Primary. They enjoy their learning. They feel safe and know that adults will help them if they are worried or concerned. Pupils know what bullying is, and they know how to report it if it occurs. Pupils trust adults to deal with situations and keep them safe.

Pupils welcome visitors with enthusiasm, and they are confident to share what they have been learning. From the early years onwards, adults and pupils treat each other with kindness.

The curriculum is broad and interesting. Leaders are ambitious and have high expectations for pupils. This helps pupils to enjoy school. Most pupils have positive attitudes towards learning. Pupils achieve well and are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Pupils have opportunities to participate in a range of activities. These include trips, workshop days in school and a range of clubs, including sports, singing and dance. Pupils are proud to take on a range of leadership roles, such as play leaders, anti-bullying ambassadors, dining room ambassadors and school councillors. They know that they make a positive contribution to school life.

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

Leaders have designed a broad and ambitious curriculum to meet pupils' needs. In most subjects, leaders have set out clearly what they want pupils to learn. Teachers help pupils to master new skills. They explain new concepts clearly and give pupils more time, when needed, to learn something new. They use assessment well and check what pupils have understood. Teachers revisit learning when needed. Subject leaders are knowledgeable. They carry out regular checks on how the curriculum is being implemented and check that pupils are remembering what has been taught. Pupils usually achieve well. However, there are a few subjects where leaders have not been clear enough about what they want pupils to learn. As a result, pupils struggle to recall what they have been taught in these subjects.

Reading is a priority. There is a consistent approach to the teaching of phonics across the school. Pupils read books that are closely matched to the sounds they are learning. Children in the early years learn to read well. Those who are not keeping up with the programme get the support they need to catch up. All pupils enjoy the '100 best books' that have been set out by leaders, which encourages pupils to read for enjoyment.

The development of vocabulary has a high profile across the school, from early years onwards, with the use of tiered 'vocabulary cakes'. This promotes the ambitious use of vocabulary during lessons, enabling all pupils to access subject-specific language.

Children in the early years are very settled and happy. The highly ambitious curriculum enables all children to achieve very well. Children show well-developed learning behaviours, such as respect for others, as they work and play together. They show high levels of resilience when learning new things. Children are proud of their learning. Staff skilfully support all children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to deepen their learning through careful and effective questioning and support. Children leave the early years very well prepared for the next stage of learning.

Leaders have created an inclusive school. Staff know what needs to be in place for individual pupils with SEND. They implement this to ensure that support is provided at the right time. Successful adaptations to the curriculum ensure that pupils with SEND are accessing the curriculum in line with their peers.

Pupils mostly meet high expectations for behaviour in the classroom. They know it is important to listen. They show calm behaviour and have a high level of self-control. A small minority sometimes do not behave in this way, and teachers deal with this effectively. Away from lessons, some pupils struggle to behave in an appropriate way towards their peers, and some staff do not always address this well.

Pupils learn about democracy and tolerance through a well-planned programme of assemblies, trips and clubs. They know why it is important to learn about difference and respect other cultures. Pupils learn about staying healthy and keeping safe. They use the 'safe hands' technique to choose up to five teachers or friends they would talk to if they had worries.

Governors provide strong support and challenge. They help leaders to bring their ambition to provide a good-quality education for all to life. Leaders have focused on a well-trained and effective staff team. Staff value the support of leaders for their professional development, and they are proud to work at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff and leaders know their pupils and families well. Leaders have created a culture of vigilance. All staff keep up to date with local issues. Staff are well trained and confident to spot concerns about pupils. Staff are quick to report concerns. Leaders act on the concerns, and their actions keep pupils safe. Leaders work well with external agencies to secure the help that pupils and their families need.

Leaders carry out the necessary checks on staff to make sure they are suitable to work with children.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, leaders have not clearly identified the key knowledge they want pupils to learn. This means that, in these subjects, pupils do not learn in a sequenced way to build on what they already know, and they struggle to recall key learning. Leaders need to identify precisely the knowledge they want pupils to learn and order it in a way that helps pupils build on previous learning so that pupils know and remember more.
- Leaders and staff do not consistently set out their expectations for behaviour. This means that a small minority of pupils do not always make the right choice with their behaviour. This leads to some instances where pupils' behaviour falls below leaders' expectations. Leaders and staff need to continue to further establish the expectations for behaviour so that staff can apply these consistently and encourage pupils to behave consistently well at all times.

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](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	117089
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10255083
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	439
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Joanne Johnson
Headteacher	Bindu Rai
Website	www.highwood.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	21 November 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher was appointed in 2021.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school has a breakfast and after-school club.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, music, history and design and technology. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with the subject leader, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about

their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspectors also looked at other curriculum plans.

- The inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher, subject leaders and the special educational needs coordinator.
- To inspect safeguarding, meetings were held with the designated safeguarding lead, teachers and pupils. The lead inspector also reviewed records, policies and documents relating to safeguarding.
- To evaluate aspects of the school and leaders' work, the lead inspector met with seven governors and the local authority improvement partner.
- The inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.
- To gather pupils' views, inspectors observed and spoke to pupils, including at breaktimes. Inspectors reviewed the 46 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for pupils.
- Inspectors reviewed the 97 responses and the 70 free-text comments submitted to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents.
- The inspectors took account of the 46 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for school staff.

Inspection team

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