

Inspection of Higham Primary School

School Lane, Higham, Rochester, Kent ME3 7JL

Inspection dates: 24 and 25 January 2024

Overall effectiveness	Good
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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?

Pupils at Higham Primary School say it is a good place to be. They feel a strong sense of belonging within their school community. Daily, pupils work hard to live up the school's motto of 'grow, learn, believe, achieve'. Parents recognise the positive impact of the school on their children's self-belief and confidence.

The school has high expectations for all pupils' achievement. Pupils recognise this and approach their learning with a great sense of positivity and enthusiasm. In the strongest subjects, such as art and design, pupils develop a real love of learning and this is reflected in the high-quality work they produce.

Pupils have recently worked with staff to redevelop the school's approach to managing behaviour. Pupils told inspectors that the new approach is working well and that their learning is rarely disrupted. Pupils work hard to demonstrate the positive behaviour and values that staff expect.

Pupils particularly enjoy the daily opportunities they have to play and learn outdoors within the school's extensive grounds, 'trim trail' and climbing wall. Pupils talk animatedly about the broad range of trips and activities they participate in. For example, during the inspection pupils in Year 2 represented the school in a 'kurling' competition.

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

The school has developed a broad and ambitious curriculum. In the strongest subjects, leaders have carefully considered the important knowledge that pupils need to learn and broken this knowledge down into clear, small steps. This careful mapping of the curriculum supports teachers to understand, and focus their teaching on, the core knowledge and understanding that pupils need to develop at each stage. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are identified early and well supported within the school. Teachers and support staff receive ongoing training so that they can effectively adapt the curriculum to ensure that pupils with SEND get the right teaching and support.

In early years, leaders carefully adapt the curriculum in response to children's starting points and interests. There is a clear focus on children's communication and language. Any children who have difficulties with their communication and language are quickly identified and receive targeted support. Storytelling and talking about books are used effectively to promote children's comprehension, language and engagement. The school has not, however, fully considered what they want children to know and be able to do by the end of Reception to be prepared for Year 1 and beyond.

Reading is a top priority throughout the school. The school has a well-established and effective early reading curriculum. All staff are trained in the teaching of early reading. Daily phonics sessions support those at an early stage of learning to read

on their journey to reading fluency. Children's love of reading is promoted from the start of early years through the regular reading aloud of high-quality, engaging texts.

The school ensures that teachers are supported well in developing their subject knowledge across the subjects that they teach. In most subjects, this enables teachers to adapt the curriculum effectively to meet the needs of all pupils. This work is, however, at an earlier stage in a small number of subjects, including mathematics, where some teachers' knowledge is not as fully developed. The school has identified this, and work to support teachers' subject knowledge is already underway.

The school's personal development programme is a strength. Leaders ensure pupils receive a strong personal, social and health education with a clear focus on supporting all pupils to become good citizens, with a sense of their place in the world and an understanding of how to contribute to society. Pupils' mental health and well-being are carefully considered and supported.

Pupils understand how their views are sought and represented through the 'pupil council'. The school is consistently inclusive of all, for example by ensuring that every pupil can represent the school in a sporting event over the course of each year. Most pupils attend school regularly because they enjoy coming.

Leaders keep the quality of education that pupils receive under constant review. They recognise when areas of the curriculum need further development and take effective action. Leaders are supported by governors, who know the school well. Together, they are determined to ensure that the education pupils receive at Higham Primary School has a highly positive impact.

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 small number of subjects, some teachers' subject knowledge is not yet as strong as it could be. Consequently, teachers do not adapt the curriculum in these subjects as well as they might in order to ensure that every pupil is sufficiently challenged. Leaders should continue their work to develop teachers' subject knowledge so that teachers ensure the whole curriculum meets the needs of all pupils effectively.
- The school has developed the early years curriculum in isolation and has not considered how it links with Year 1 carefully enough. As a result, some children start Year 1 with gaps in their knowledge and understanding that could have been

addressed earlier. The school needs to ensure that the early years curriculum is refined so that it prepares children fully for their subsequent learning.

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	118262
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10296252
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	208
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Brian Maynard
Headteacher	Catherine Grattan
Website	www.higham.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	6 June 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher was appointed in April 2019. The headteacher was in post as acting headteacher from September 2018 to April 2019.
- The school is using one unregistered alternative provider.
- The school operates before- and after-school clubs for pupils.

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 and the leadership team. The lead inspector met with representatives of the school's governing board, including the chair of governors, and spoke to a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, art and design and physical education. 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. Early years was included within all deep dives. Inspectors discussed the curriculum for early years and some other subjects with leaders.
- Inspectors considered pupils' behaviour and attitudes throughout the inspection and discussed the school's analysis of pupils' behaviour and attendance with leaders.
- Inspectors considered personal development through all deep dives. They met with leaders to discuss the school's personal development programme, including the curriculum for personal, social and health education (PSHE) and relationships education. Inspectors talked to pupils about PSHE and other aspects of the school's personal development programme.
- 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' interests first.

Inspection team

Alice Roberts, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Tash Hurtado

Ofsted Inspector

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