

Inspection of a good school: Hillmead Primary School

Woburn Avenue, Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire CM23 4PW

Inspection dates:

20 and 21 March 2024

Outcome

Hillmead Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a nurturing and inclusive school where pupils are happy. Pupils work hard to reach the school's high expectations. Pupils achieve well because teachers generally explain things clearly and check to make sure pupils understand. Pupils are polite and well mannered. They respect differences. Pupils are understanding of the additional needs of their classmates. They are supportive of each other and openly praise each other's achievements.

Pupils develop a range of interests by engaging in activities before and after school and taking part in competitions. These include quiz club, cheerleading, trampolining, drama, hockey, netball and football. This also helps pupils to develop their confidence. Pupils proudly show off their individual talents, whether it is performing with their musical instruments for parents and the school community or demonstrating their skills in martial arts or dance.

Pupils show an awareness of world affairs and express mature perspectives on a range of issues. As they move through the school, they develop into confident and thoughtful citizens.

One parent described the views of many when they said, 'The progression my child has made and the self-belief they have gained while being at Hillmead has been wonderful to see.'

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

The school has designed a curriculum that is ambitious. Leaders have set out the important knowledge that they want pupils to learn. Across subjects, teachers introduce new content that builds on what pupils already know and can do. In design and technology, for example, pupils progress from basic tasks, such as making gingerbread men in early years, to more complex tasks in later years. These involve attaching materials, stitching, designing kites and working with levers and mechanical cams. Pupils

achieve well as they have the prior knowledge they need when new learning is introduced.

The teaching of reading is taught well across the school, with targeted support to help pupils to catch up. In Nursery, children learn sounds through stories, games and songs effectively. Books are carefully selected so that children hear and learn a wide range of stories. In the Reception class, they develop the skills to apply their phonics confidently in writing, preparing them well for key stage 1.

Pupils enjoy reading. They especially like the different authors and types of books they read. As pupils become fluent, they use a range of strategies to help them understand what they are reading. This helps pupils achieve well in reading by the end of key stage 2.

Teachers adapt the curriculum to meet the specific needs of pupils. For example, they provide pupils with visual resources to support them to communicate their understanding. This enables pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to access the curriculum alongside their peers. As a result, pupils with SEND learn well. For pupils with severe, complex needs, the school has designed curriculums that are tailored precisely to their individual needs. This helps pupils make significant strides and achieve their personal targets.

Sometimes, teachers plan work for pupils that is too easy or too difficult. This means that some pupils do not achieve as well as they should. However, overall, the curriculum is taught effectively, enabling pupils to develop crucial skills and retain essential knowledge over time.

Children in early years settle to routines and develop a good level of independence early on. Leaders use a range of strategies to pinpoint any weaknesses in children's communication and language abilities, tailoring the curriculum to address these areas. Adults interact with children effectively. Consequently, children learn new vocabulary and use it appropriately.

Pupils enjoy school and most attend well. Staff follow up on attendance issues meticulously and provide support to families who need it. This work is helping to improve rates of attendance.

Pupils behave well in and out of lessons. Staff are skilled at supporting pupils who need help to manage their behaviour. Pupils are taught how to stay safe online and to look after their own well-being. Pupils learn about different religions. The curriculum ensures that pupils learn about a range of diverse themes across all subjects. This includes learning about slavery and significant figures, such as Harriet Tubman. As a result, pupils are thoughtful and respect differences. Pupils understand what it means to be democratic and value the opportunities to raise money for charities. They enjoy representing their school in a range of sporting tournaments and taking on responsibilities such as being school councillors.

The governing body knows the school well. Governors make regular visits to the school to check leaders' actions towards school improvement. Leaders have implemented effective strategies to reduce staff's workload. Staff appreciate the actions leaders have taken to support their well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- On some occasions, teachers do not plan work for pupils that matches their ability. Sometimes they set work that is too easy or too difficult for them. This means that, at times, some pupils are not being provided with work that helps them make the progress they should. Teachers need to make sure that they set tasks that precisely match pupils' needs so they can be successful in their learning.

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 May 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	117310
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10294975
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	232
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Gareth Lewis
Headteacher	Michelle Shenston
Website	www.hillmead.herts.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	9 and 10 May 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school currently uses two unregistered alternative providers.

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. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, other senior leaders and members of the local governing body and held a telephone meeting with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and design and technology. For each deep dive, she discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.

- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: 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 inspector reviewed a range of documents, including behaviour logs, bullying records, records of governors' meetings, school development plans and school policies.
- The inspector considered the views of parents through the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, Ofsted Parent View. The inspector also spoke to several parents at the beginning of day 2.
- The inspector considered the views of staff and pupils through meetings and informal discussions and through their responses to Ofsted's surveys.

Inspection team

Cindy Impey, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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