

Inspection of Highfields Primary Academy

Coppice Road, Highfields, Doncaster, South Yorkshire DN6 7JB

Inspection dates: 23 and 24 February 2022

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 Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders have made Highfields a haven of calm in the heart of the community. There are high expectations for what pupils can achieve. Trust and school leaders support pupils to live up to these expectations through emotional and practical support. For example, each pupil is given a personalised electronic tablet to use in computing and other subjects. Staff work hand in hand with parents and carers to provide support for pupils and their families. Staff chat with parents and knock on doors to pass on information or support. This personal touch is well received by the community.

Pupils are mature and polite to each other and staff in school. Pupils have a deep understanding of what respect means and how to show it. They have confidence in staff to sort out issues like bullying or silly behaviour, but think that they all get on so well that this is not needed most of the time.

Pupils are taught about the importance of treating each other with kindness. They are aware of different family structures, such as same-sex parents or children living with their grandparents. Pupils know that everyone is welcome and that it is important to be respectful to all.

Pupils enjoy the clubs and activities that staff put on for them. They improve their resilience through their forest school lessons and enjoy learning about camp craft. Leaders make sure that all pupils get to attend the clubs like cooking or football at some point in the year if they want to. Parents and pupils appreciate this. One parent said, 'Children have equal opportunities to extra-curricular activities'.

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

Trust leaders have managed the recent change in leadership well. The handover from the previous head of academy to the current head of academy has been thorough and so it has been a smooth transition. The academy advisory body (AAB) members check that planning for each area of school improvement is on track. Trustees have kept a close eye on the impact that these actions have had. There is a commitment to provide support to leaders, staff, families and pupils to enable them to be successful. All of this contributes to the school being a happy and productive place to be.

Leaders have worked with leaders at other trust schools to design a curriculum that sets out the important knowledge for pupils. School leaders have then carefully considered how this curriculum will work for their school. For example, in computing there is a focus on word processing skills that leaders know pupils do not enter the school with. Leaders have also made sure that what pupils are taught in one year builds on what they already know within the mixed-age classes.

Teachers use the 'feedforward' method of assessment successfully to find out what pupils know and have understood. Teachers make changes to what they will teach

next based on this information. Any misconceptions that pupils have are quickly removed as teachers spot them before they become an issue.

Teachers follow the school's curriculum and ensure that pupils learn new words in each subject and discuss what they have been taught. However, sometimes, teachers do not build on what pupils have been taught in previous years. Even though this has been planned out for them by leaders, some are not clear on how to do this. Leaders have not trained teachers in how to use teaching methods that build on the prior knowledge of pupils. Pupils sometimes forget what they have been taught in the past, for example when the Romans invaded England or the beliefs and customs of different religions.

Leaders make sure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are listened to and their thoughts considered. Teachers support pupils with SEND effectively because they are clear on their needs and what to do to help them. Some of this is subtle, like sitting closer to the board to help concentration. If needed, staff will give pupils with SEND short extra sessions, for example in times tables or spelling.

Leaders have a clear focus on developing language and literacy skills from an early age. Children in the early years listen to a variety of stories and poems. They retell these stories to a teacher and each other. Children who need extra help with their speech are quickly assessed and get bespoke support. This focus on language and reading continues as pupils move through school. Teachers read books to them that they enjoy. Teachers help pupils accumulate a wider range of words to use in speaking and writing.

Leaders recognise the importance of ensuring children quickly learn to read well. Leaders have brought in a phonics curriculum that shows teachers which sound to teach and when. Teachers assess how well pupils are keeping up with this curriculum and put in extra support if they are falling behind. Leaders have less clarity about when and how tricky words that cannot be sounded out should be taught. These words have not been matched with the books that pupils read and there is no clear method for how staff should teach the reading of these words.

Leaders have worked with parents and families to make sure that pupils come to school more. Very few pupils are persistently absent and those that are receive help and support to come more often.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders are rightfully proud of their hard work to keep children safe. There is a strong culture of safeguarding that all staff contribute to. Leaders keep detailed logs of events of concerning incidents. Staff refer any doubts or issues they might have about a child to leaders, who pick these up and act on them decisively.

Leaders' work with families is an important part of making sure pupils are safe and thriving in the school. Leaders provide support, such as advice about routines, so that pupils come to school ready to learn.

Leaders have thought carefully about what pupils need to learn about how to keep themselves safe in the community. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe online and how to resist peer pressure at a suitable age.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some aspects of how the phonics curriculum is implemented lack important rigour. This is particularly the case for the common exception words that pupils need to read on sight. Some staff are not sure how to teach these words. Pupils do not practise reading them enough. Some pupils then struggle to read these words in books, and this means their reading fluency and confidence are affected. Leaders should ensure that all staff are trained in how and when to teach these words and to enable pupils to practise using them. The books that pupils read should be matched with both the sounds that pupils know, which is currently the case, and the common exception words that they know.
- Although revisiting knowledge is built into the curriculum design in a way that should strengthen pupils' long-term memory, some teachers are not implementing this successfully. Pupils can forget important knowledge that they have been taught in the past in foundation subjects. Leaders should train teachers in pedagogical techniques that ensure pupils remember what they have been taught in previous terms or years so that the memory of this knowledge is strengthened and subsequently utilised in further 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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

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

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| Unique reference number | 138083 |
| Local authority | Doncaster |
| Inspection number | 10211680 |
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Academy sponsor-led |
| Age range of pupils | 3 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 123 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair of trust | Steve Hodsman |
| Head of academy | Benjamin Williams |
| Website | www.highfieldspa.org.uk/ |
| Date of previous inspection | 16 and 17 May 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- The school has a nursery for three- and four-year-olds.
- The current head of academy took up the post in January 2022. Prior to this, he was an assistant principal. An executive principal supports the school for one day a week.
- At the time of the inspection, all pupils were in the school full time for all of their education.
- Since the last inspection, there has been a sharp rise in the number of pupils who receive free school meals. Three quarters of pupils now receive this.

Information about this inspection

The inspector(s) carried out this 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.

- Inspectors spoke to the executive principal, the head of academy, the assistant principal, the chief executive officer (CEO) and deputy CEO of Delta Academies Trust, and a member of the AAB about changes since the last inspection and the overall vision of leaders.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, history and computing. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also looked at the curriculum for languages, geography and science and talked to a group of pupils about what they have been taught in science.
- Inspectors spoke to safeguarding leaders about what they do to ensure pupils are kept safe. Inspectors looked at the records leaders keep for some pupils and spoke to staff about safeguarding training they have had.
- Inspectors looked at the personal, social, health and economic education of the school and how this was being used by teachers.
- Inspectors spoke to groups of pupils about what their life in school is like.
- Inspectors evaluated the seven responses from parents to Ofsted's online survey. They spoke with some parents dropping their children off at school. Inspectors also evaluated the responses that staff made to Ofsted's online survey.

Inspection team

Matthew Knox, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Dughall McCormick

Ofsted Inspector

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