

Inspection of a good school: Highfields Primary Academy

Elder Lane, Burntwood, Staffordshire WS7 9BT

Inspection dates:

21 and 22 May 2024

Outcome

Highfields Primary Academy continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Mark Wilkes. This school is part of Primitas Learning Partnership, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Mark Maydew, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Jason Marsden.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils attend Highfields Primary Academy readily and regularly. They know staff care for them and understand them well. This helps them to feel safe in school. The school has high expectations for all its pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They are determined that all pupils have a 'growth mindset'. This encourages them to try hard and to achieve the aims the school has for them to the best of their ability.

Pupils are polite, well-mannered, courteous and extremely articulate. They relish the opportunity to talk about their learning because they are enthused by it. They get on well with each other and are respectful of differences. This leads to a calm and harmonious environment in which pupils can thrive.

Pupils behave very well. They appreciate the actions the school takes to help them reflect on their behaviour at times when they find this more difficult. The school ensures that there is always someone for pupils to talk to about any worries or concerns they might have. The worry box provides an alternative way for pupils to share these as they arise. These are dealt with in a sensitive and appropriate way. This further strengthens the sense of safety and wellbeing pupils feel when in school.

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

The school has used the same phonics programme for a long period of time. However, training linked to the chosen scheme has not been regular enough to keep teachers up to date with the most recent changes and current expectations in how to assess whether

pupils are making progress at the rates expected. This means that some pupils are not yet reading at the appropriate level for their stage of education. The school recognises this, and plans are in place to address it. Despite this, pupils can apply the phonics knowledge they have to read new texts within the level they are currently working at and are beginning to do so with greater fluency.

The school places a high priority on developing a love of reading. No space in the beautiful school environment is wasted in celebrating and promoting interesting and varied stories and texts. 'Reading councillors' enjoy the responsibility of choosing books for reading boxes that pupils can enjoy during social times. They talk enthusiastically about stories they have enjoyed staff reading to them.

Due to factors beyond control of the school, some areas of the curriculum have seen a delay in plans being completed. This means that assessment in some areas of the curriculum has also been delayed. Pupils can talk confidently about their current and previous learning. They show very good attitudes in lessons. The school encourages them to believe in the power of 'yet' and pupils show impressive resilience in continuing to try hard with aspects of learning they find more difficult. This includes pupils with SEND who work seamlessly alongside their peers and achieve well.

Pupils behave beautifully at all points of the day. They show an impressive level of concentration within lessons and routinely work hard. This is reflected in the work they produce. It is presented to a very high standard. Pupils' writing is a particular strength.

Pupils understand the three simple rules of 'ready, respectful, safe' well. They are articulate and polite. Pupils clearly understand the need to be kind to each other and they are. Staff model this through all aspects of their work. The mutual respect and positive relationships between staff and pupils are clear to see.

The school is held in high regard by many parents. They appreciate the care and the education their children receive. The trust delegates many responsibilities to the local governing board. They carry out these responsibilities exceptionally well, providing both support and challenge that is appropriate. They have a very good understanding of the schools' strengths and the areas where further improvements could be made. The school is led with a determination for it to be the very best it can be, continually reflecting on how well they are working towards achieving these aims.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Curriculum planning in some foundation subjects are not yet finalised. Series of lessons in these subjects do not enable pupils to make links between concepts securely enough

so that they build knowledge as well as they might. The school should continue to embed a coherently sequenced curriculum from Reception to Year 6 for those subjects still being developed.

- Some teachers do not use assessment well enough to identify if pupils are working at the expected standard. As a result, some pupils do not achieve as well as they could. Leaders should ensure that teachers receive training to enable them to understand assessment effectively to help identify whether pupils are working at the expected standard for their age and stage.
- The school have not ensured that staff have received effective training to understand and deliver the phonics scheme consistently well. This means that some pupils are not making the progress they could in early reading. Leaders should ensure that all staff receive the relevant phonics training to further strengthen the teaching of phonics.

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 predecessor school, Highfields primary school, to be good in November 2016.

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	148718
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10322924
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	208
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Jason Marsden
Headteacher	Mark Wilkes
Website	www.highfields.staffs.sch.uk
Date(s) of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average primary school.
- The school joined the Primitas trust in September 2021.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.
- The school provides a breakfast club and after school care.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher and senior leaders.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector 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.

- The inspector also looked at samples of pupils' work in a range of subjects including English, geography, science and art and design.
- The inspector spoke with two governors and the chair of trustees.
- The inspector listened to a sample of pupils read to a familiar adult.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons at different times of the day and at breaktimes and lunchtimes. They spoke formally with groups of pupils, as well as talking to pupils in lessons and around school.
- 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 wide range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans and information on the school's website.
- The inspector talked informally with pupils and staff to gather general information about school life. In addition, they took account of the responses to Ofsted's surveys of staff's and parents' views. No pupil surveys were returned.

Inspection team

Keri Baylis, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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