

Highlees Primary School

Ashton Road, Westwood, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire PE3 7ER

Inspection dates

12–13 June 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The executive principal and head of school provide focused and determined leadership. This has led to considerable improvements to the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes.
- The school's capacity for further improvement is good. Middle leaders have a sound understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They have clear plans to bring about change and make further improvements.
- Leaders and governors accurately evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Governors visit regularly to find out for themselves how the school is performing.
- The Elliot Foundation Academies Trust provides clear strategic guidance through strong support and effective challenge to senior leaders.
- The school's curriculum is increasingly exciting for pupils. It is especially effective in preparing them for life in modern Britain through a wide range of well-planned experiences which inspire pupils to be the best they can be.
- Recently, there have been many changes in teaching staff. As a result of effective training, high expectations and rigorous performance management, teaching is good across the school.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They respect each other and are proud of their school.
- Leaders ensure that the provision in the early years is good. Staff are skilled in meeting the diverse needs of children.
- Subject leaders are keen and contribute effectively to ensuring that pupils are taught a broad range of subjects. However, many are new to their roles and do not yet take a full part in leading improvements within their areas of responsibility.
- Differences in progress and attainment between disadvantaged pupils and others in the school are diminishing. However, leaders have rightly identified that the achievement of disadvantaged pupils still needs to improve further.
- Teachers generally build upon pupils' earlier learning effectively and manage pupils' needs well. However, the work for pupils, including the most able, is not always demanding enough so that pupils achieve as well as they should.
- Leaders have introduced a tracking system in the foundation subjects that measures pupils' progress and identifies their next steps in learning. However, this needs to be embedded further to ensure that all pupils achieve well across a wide range of subjects.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and governance by ensuring that:
 - the pupil premium funding builds upon recent improvements, so that disadvantaged pupils across the school make consistent and more accelerated progress in English and mathematics
 - the skills and confidence of foundation subject leaders are further developed so that they can continue to improve the quality of teaching and, subsequently, raise standards in their areas of responsibility.
- Accelerate pupils' progress and raise standards in reading, writing and mathematics by ensuring that pupils, including the most able, are consistently set work which challenges and stretches them to achieve as well as they can.
- Ensure that the recently introduced assessment systems for tracking the progress of pupils in foundation subjects are firmly in place so that any underachievement is quickly addressed and pupils achieve well across a wide range of subjects.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Highlees Primary School is a positive, happy place where pupils learn and develop well. The executive principal, head of school and other senior leaders are ambitious and committed to improving the life chances of all pupils. A particular challenge for leaders and governors is the high number of pupils who start or leave the school other than at the usual times. These pupils, many of whom speak English as an additional language, benefit from the strong support and nurture the school provides. This ensures that pupils settle quickly and are ready to learn.
- In 2016 and 2017, standards of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics fell below the national averages at end of key stage 1 and key stage 2. A significant number of teachers left the school, and six of the current 14 teachers joined in September 2017. Senior leaders embarked immediately on a period of change that sought to improve teaching across the school and raise expectations of what pupils should achieve.
- The professional development of staff has been a priority of the leadership team. The trust provides a wide range of training activities linked to the school's improvement priorities and pupils' achievement. Staff have reacted positively to improve their practice, adapting to new approaches to teaching and assessment. As a result, the quality of teaching is consistently effective.
- Senior leaders work well together and share a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. For this reason, the school's self-evaluation is accurate. Leaders, including governors, make regular checks on teaching and learning. This means that there is strong consistency in the application of policy and practices in classes across the school.
- Middle leaders, new to their posts in September 2017, are growing quickly into their leadership roles, because of the effective training and coaching offered by senior colleagues. Middle leaders check teaching and learning, and write accurate plans for improvement. Alongside senior leaders and governors, they have the capacity to play an active part in developing the school further.
- Strong leadership of the provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities by the knowledgeable special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) ensures that funding is well spent. Highly personalised provision and close monitoring of pupils' progress ensure that teaching, including programmes of support, is well suited to pupils' needs. Consequently, these pupils make good progress from their different starting points and achieve well.
- The primary physical education (PE) and sport premium funding is used well. Pupils now take part in more physical activities, including inter-school competitions with other local schools. Pupils have access to a range of sports resources, including at lunchtime. More pupils now regularly attend after-school sports clubs and pupils report an increased level of enjoyment in PE.
- Leaders are ambitious for the curriculum they plan for their pupils. They have demonstrated this by giving pupils a wide range of exciting opportunities to learn

through carefully thought-out topics. The school's '70 things to do before you leave Highlees', such as watching a chick hatch and visiting a castle, capture the imagination of pupils and further support their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on their own lives and the lives of others. For example, pupils consider the beliefs of Hindus and Muslims and how religion affects the lives of others. Pupils are respectful and tolerant towards those of different faiths and beliefs. The school, therefore, prepares pupils positively for life in modern Britain.

- Leaders have been well supported by the trust in improving standards within the school. In addition, opportunities provided to share and develop good practice through working with other academies within the trust have been used effectively. The resources, specialist teachers and training programmes the trust provides have improved the quality of teaching, pupils' outcomes and the transition for pupils moving on to Year 7. As a result, pupils are being well prepared for the next stages of their education.
- The majority of parents and carers are happy with the school and the progress their children are making. Parents spoken with during the inspection, and their responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire Parent View demonstrate that they hold senior leaders in high regard and appreciate the hard work of staff. Parents also recognise the wide range of activities provided for their children and the many opportunities they themselves have to come into the school. One parent spoke for many by saying the school: 'is great at encouraging parents to become more involved in school life. This helps me understand what my child has been learning in school'.
- Over time, governors have not ensured that the pupil premium funding has been spent effectively. As a result, disadvantaged pupils' outcomes have been below those of other pupils nationally. Leaders have taken action and commissioned a review of the school's spending decisions. There is now a strong focus on ensuring that disadvantaged pupils achieve well. As a result, the progress of disadvantaged pupils is improving and their attainment is moving closer to that of other pupils nationally. Leaders know there is still work to do to ensure that the chosen approaches are effective and these pupils make consistently strong progress across the school.
- The English and mathematics leaders provide effective leadership. They are knowledgeable and monitor their areas closely, and the implementation of their action plans is improving provision across the school. Most of the leaders for the foundation subjects are new to their roles and some are also new to the school. Senior leaders are providing support and training which these subject leaders value. Currently, their monitoring and assessment practices are less well established. They do not yet use the information they gather on the quality of teaching and pupil outcomes to decide accurately the priorities for improving standards further in their subjects.

Governance of the school

- The governing body shares the determination of senior leaders to make sure that the school continually improves. Between them, governors have a wide range of relevant skills and experience. Their skills have been further enhanced with suitable training.
- Regular visits are carried out by governors to find out, at first-hand, about the school's work. As a result, the governing body understands the needs of the school well. Governors' minutes of meetings show that they provide effective support for school

leaders. They ask probing questions and ensure that they receive detailed answers to enable them to hold leaders to account.

- Governors carry out their statutory duties rigorously, including in relation to safeguarding. They are now ensuring that additional funding, such as the pupil premium funding, is deployed with increasing effectiveness, for example, to overcome barriers to learning for disadvantaged pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders ensure that all statutory requirements, including checks on staff before they start working at the school, are fully met. There is a strong culture of safeguarding across the school, led by the head of school, key personnel such as the human resources manager and the school's learning mentors. Annual training for all staff ensures that safeguarding training requirements are fully met. Staff also receive regular updates to keep them abreast of any changes in statutory guidance.
- The school works effectively with external agencies to support vulnerable pupils. Leaders are tenacious in ensuring that pupils are kept safe. When needed, they challenge external agencies so that pupils and their families receive the support they need, and in a timely manner.
- The overwhelming majority of parents recognise and appreciate that the school places a high priority on maintaining pupils' safety and care.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The high expectations of leaders and appropriate training for staff have resulted in improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school. As a result, most pupils make good progress from their starting points in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The relationship between pupils and staff is positive, encouraging and highly conducive to learning. Teaching is lively and enthusiastic and engages pupils well. Pupils enjoy the activities planned for them. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and the quality of their work.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge. They give clear explanations and often model what they expect from pupils. Teachers question pupils skilfully to help them explain their ideas and think more deeply.
- High-quality feedback and accurate assessment inform lesson planning well. Teachers assess pupils' learning as a matter of routine and address any misconceptions swiftly. Teachers inform pupils of how well they are doing so they can be moved on quickly, when appropriate.
- Teaching assistants are deployed well by the school. They have received training and apply it skilfully to provide effective support for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and for disadvantaged pupils. Teaching assistants plan closely with teachers. As a result, teaching assistants' work contributes effectively to the increasing progress that pupils make when in their care.

- Phonics is taught well across the school, and pupils make strong progress. Highly structured sessions provide pupils with a range of linked activities to develop their understanding of sounds.
- Reading has a high profile across the school. Leaders have introduced a new chosen teaching approach that better meets the needs of the pupils, particularly in the development of pupils' vocabulary and comprehension skills. Focused training has enabled teachers and teaching assistants to teach the development of these skills consistently well.
- Pupils show a love of reading. One pupil commented: 'I enjoy reading because it expands my vocabulary.' Pupils have access to a wide variety of fiction and non-fiction books which are age appropriate. Many displays encourage pupils to enjoy reading a range of books. As a result, the teaching of reading has quickly improved and most pupils are making strong progress in this area.
- There has been a steady improvement in the teaching of writing this year. Pupils are given many interesting themes and engaging experiences to write about. For example, Year 6 pupils were asked to write about whether horses should have been used on the battlefields in the First World War. Grammar and punctuation are taught well, with corrections noted carefully by pupils so that they learn from their mistakes.
- Improved teaching in mathematics results in pupils achieving well. Leaders have introduced a whole-school focus to increase pupils' understanding of basic mathematical concepts. Pupils are also given many opportunities to apply their problem-solving and reasoning skills in lessons. Teachers regularly check pupils' understanding and reinforce previous learning.
- Teachers assess pupils' work regularly and plan interesting tasks to build upon their earlier learning. Activities are often challenging, but sometimes pupils, including the most able, finish their work quickly and wait too long to be moved on. This limits the progress some pupils make.
- Effective assessment procedures in reading, writing and mathematics ensure that leaders at all levels are able to track pupils' achievement to identify quickly individuals or groups who are at risk of falling behind their classmates. Equally, this information is used to ensure that additional provision is put in place to meet pupils' needs. Leaders have identified that a systematic approach needs to be firmly put in place for the foundation subjects, so that pupils' progress can be checked rigorously to ensure that they achieve well across all subjects.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and are proud to be part of Highlees Primary. They told inspectors they 'love everything' and 'couldn't ask for a better school'.
- The attention given to raising pupils' aspirations and preparing them for adult life is a notable feature of the school. Staff organise a well-thought-out programme of experiences and events, where pupils learn about many different professions, higher

education and career opportunities. Pupils consider the skills they need to be successful in their chosen career and the manageable steps to achieve their goals. Staff help pupils to consider their future careers in constructive ways so that they feel good about themselves, life and learning.

- Pupils live up to the school's mission of 'bringing out the best' through their commitment to learning. They know and understand the school's 'five Cs' of care, courtesy, consideration, cooperation and courage. They told inspectors that such qualities will enable them to become helpful and responsible adults in the future. Pupils commented that living out the school's values is important as they: 'make our school a better place. We will need them to get through life.'
- Older pupils enjoy making a contribution to the school through taking on additional roles such as those of members of the school council and eco committee, assembly helpers, language buddies, and playground pals. Pupils understand that these roles develop their own confidence and organisational skills.
- Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe in school. Pupils clearly explained how they make sure that they keep themselves safe from strangers and when they are using the internet. They said they 'always have a person to talk to' should they have a concern or a worry. Pupils also told inspectors that there is very little bullying in the school. If bullying does happen, then pupils are confident the adults will sort it out quickly.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They are polite and courteous and show consideration for one another as they move around the school. At breaktimes, pupils make good use of the games and equipment the school provides. They play with joy and enthusiasm. Disagreements are rare and, when they do occur, pupils know that adults are available to help. In the dining hall, pupils are well-mannered and sociable.
- Pupils appreciate their teachers, saying they are 'the best', and understand how to behave in class. They settle to work quickly and generally persevere with activities. They enjoy working together and use resources sensibly. Pupils told inspectors: 'We help each other. We work together and share our ideas.'
- Leaders have worked hard to promote the importance of good attendance with pupils and their families, including those who are disadvantaged. Staff closely monitor why pupils are absent and follow up concerns with parents quickly. Leaders work closely with the academy attendance officer to ensure that any attendance concerns are addressed. As a result, attendance rates are improving and are now close to the national average. The proportion of pupils who regularly miss school is also reducing and, although still high, is moving nearer to national figures.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- In 2016 and 2017, the proportion of pupils who attained the expected and higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2 was below the national average. The school's assessment information shows that the high number of pupils who start and leave the school other than at the usual times affected outcomes. Leaders' determination to improve teaching and learning has swiftly

addressed this decline in standards. Across the school and within each key stage, most pupils make consistently good progress and attainment is rapidly improving.

- The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the national phonics check at the end of Year 1 is rapidly increasing. The school's assessment information demonstrates that pupils are making better progress in developing and using their understanding of phonics throughout the school. This is because phonics is taught systematically, and pupils use their phonics skills accurately when they read books.
- Pupils have many opportunities to practise their literacy and mathematical skills through their topic work. Following the introduction of a new approach to teaching handwriting, most pupils' work is neat and well presented. The school's assessment information and work on display and in pupils' books show that most groups of pupils are making good progress in a wide range of subjects, including science, history, geography and art.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make strong progress. This is because their needs are quickly identified by staff, and they are effectively supported in their learning. A number of parents told inspectors that they were pleased with the way that the school helps their children to succeed.
- In all year groups, teachers successfully meet the needs of the very high numbers of pupils who speak English as an additional language and those who join the school at various times with no English. Pupils receive targeted support to help them to improve their speaking skills quickly. For example, teachers model how to structure sentences and check that pupils understand new vocabulary as soon as it is introduced. Consequently, these pupils make similar progress to their classmates.
- The school has a high proportion of disadvantaged pupils. They progress at broadly similar rates to the other pupils at the school, often supported skilfully through carefully planned small-group work. Despite their progress being good, their performance is not yet sufficiently strong to ensure that a high proportion leave the school with the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The work in current pupils' books shows clear evidence of teachers building on previous learning. Routines encourage pupils to support each other. There is a constant focus to move pupils on in their learning. However, at times, pupils, including the most able, are not challenged sufficiently to make better progress in reading, writing and mathematics. As a result, some pupils do not achieve the higher standards that they are capable of.

Early years provision

Good

- Children join the early years with knowledge and skills that are below those typical for their age, particularly in the areas of communication and language. A large proportion speak English as an additional language. Through good provision in the early years, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development has grown year on year. It is now closer to the national average. Consequently, children are better prepared for their transition to Year 1.
- The provision in the early years is well led and managed. The recently appointed early years leader has a good understanding of the strengths and areas for development.

- Expectations are high and provision is improving, because staff are encouraged to try new ideas linked to the children's needs and interests. Funding for disadvantaged children and those who have SEN and/or disabilities is used well to provide additional support and resources.
- Staff recognise the limited speaking and listening skills of some children when they join the school. Consequently, there is an emphasis on encouraging children to speak clearly and in complete sentences. Teachers and teaching assistants ask insightful questions and give children time to reply. Staff model the use of language well. As a result, children's speech and language skills quickly improve.
- Staff know the children well and have ensured that all welfare requirements are met. Children are supported to be ready and willing to learn. Rules and routines are established so that children settle promptly and respond well to their teachers' expectations of behaviour.
- There are a range of opportunities for children to play, discover and learn, particularly outside. Many children display good levels of independence and are able to cooperate, share ideas and persevere in their learning. Whether 'making pies' in the sand tray, deciding how to build a pig pen outside or acting out a story about farm animals, children make good use of the skills they have learned.
- The teaching of phonics is effective. Teachers model the links between letters and sounds well and encourage children to copy these. Children use their knowledge to read simple words and form short sentences when writing. Teachers guide children well and encourage them to enjoy books and stories for pleasure. Children's learning records demonstrate that children make good progress from their starting points.
- Parents of children in the early years are well informed and feel involved in their children's learning because staff provide a range of informative meetings and workshops. These events help parents to understand how to support their children's learning at home.
- Through the children's online learning records, parents are encouraged to take an active part in their children's learning. For example, parents are asked to reflect on their child's achievements and their next steps. Staff use this information to help plan tailored learning experiences to meet the needs of the children that ensure continued progress.

School details

Unique reference number	139930
Local authority	Peterborough
Inspection number	10046399

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	407
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Elaine Hedgecock
Executive Principal	Emma Ward
Telephone number	01733 264294
Website	www.highleesprimary.co.uk
Email address	highleesoffice@hefed.org
Date of previous inspection	21–22 May 2015

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school. It is a member of the Elliot Foundation Academies Trust.
- The school is part of a federation with Eyrescroft Primary School. The two schools share a governing body and executive principal.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is well above the national average, as is the proportion of pupils whose first language is not English.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for support through the government's pupil premium funding is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and those who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is broadly in line with the national average.

- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in every class. Some of the observations were carried out jointly with senior leaders.
- A wide range of pupils' workbooks were examined by inspectors throughout the inspection.
- Inspectors held meetings with the executive principal, the head of school, the vice principal, the SENCo, several middle and subject leaders, a trainee teacher and the human resources manager. The lead inspector also met with several governors and representatives from the trust.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils informally in class and around the school at break and lunchtimes to seek their views about the school. They also met with three different groups of pupils more formally to discuss their learning and many aspects of school life. An inspector attended a whole school assembly.
- Members of the inspection team heard some pupils read. Inspectors talked to pupils about their reading habits and looked at their reading records.
- The inspection team scrutinised the school's website and a range of school documents, including: assessment information; minutes from the governing body meetings; reports produced by the trust; the school's own evaluation; improvement plans; and records about behaviour, safeguarding and attendance.
- Inspectors considered the 16 responses made by parents to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and eight responses to the Ofsted free-text system. Inspectors also took account of the school's own survey, which included the views of 61 parents. Inspectors spoke to some parents before school. Additionally, inspectors took account of the 32 responses to Ofsted's online staff survey and the 26 responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey.

Inspection team

Fiona Webb, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Deborah Leahy	Ofsted Inspector
Ahson Mohammed	Ofsted Inspector

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