

Inspection of a school judged outstanding for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Highlands Primary School

Highlands Gardens, Ilford, Essex IG1 3LE

Inspection dates:

26 and 27 November 2024

Outcome

Highlands Primary School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and proud to attend this welcoming and caring school. There is a strong sense of community, both within the school and beyond. Staff greet pupils and parents and carers warmly each morning. Positive and nurturing relationships exist between pupils, staff and teachers. Everyone treats each other with high levels of respect and courtesy.

The school has high expectations of pupils' achievement and behaviour. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), try their best to meet these expectations by listening carefully and working hard. They achieve very highly. Provisional outcomes for the end of key stage national tests in 2024 show that pupils attain very well. Pupils leave the school thoroughly equipped for the challenges of secondary education.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Classrooms are calm and inviting and low-level disruption is not tolerated. As a result, pupils behave well. Around the school, pupils show kindness to each other. They encourage and support their peers. Pupils know that adults will respond swiftly to any concerns they raise.

Pupils enjoy taking part in the many and varied experiences and opportunities that the school offers them. They enjoy residential visits and visits to museums, galleries and places of worship.

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

The school has designed an exceptional curriculum. It has been carefully crafted so that pupils with different starting points and needs can access learning successfully. The knowledge, skills and vocabulary that pupils should learn and remember from Nursery to Year 6 are clearly set out. Subject content is sequenced so that pupils secure basic facts and principles before using these to help them understand more complex ideas. There are regular opportunities for pupils to recap on previous learning.

Teachers receive comprehensive professional development which builds on their existing expertise. They have strong subject knowledge and skilfully present what pupils need to know. Teachers deliver the curriculum exceedingly well. They break the curriculum down into manageable steps. Teachers carry out effective checks on pupils' learning. They use this information to help pupils iron out any misconceptions. Pupils who need it get extra support from skilled staff, both in class and small groups.

Reading is at the heart of the curriculum. The school places the highest priority on making sure that pupils quickly learn to read. In the Nursery classes, staff introduce children to nursery rhymes, stories and songs. Children are taught to read from the start of Reception. The programme for early reading is very well sequenced and staff are well trained in delivering phonics. Pupils with gaps in their reading receive the help and support that they need to catch up quickly. Pupils read and write with developing fluency. Early mathematics is equally well considered. Children in early years regularly practise the skills of early number. This is built on year on year, resulting in pupils achieving well and being fully prepared for the next stage in their education.

Pupils who are vulnerable, including those with SEND, are swiftly identified by the school. Leaders and staff put carefully designed programmes of support into place for these pupils. These programmes impact positively on pupils' learning. Teachers adapt learning well so that these pupils can access the same curriculum as their peers. The school works effectively with many external partners to successfully support all pupils. As a result, pupils with SEND achieve well.

An exceptional personal development programme enables pupils to understand their own rights and responsibilities and those of others. Pupils understand the importance of fundamental British values, such as democracy, tolerance and respect. They learn about the different cultures, beliefs and religions represented in their school and wider society. Pupils understand about healthy relationships and know what it means to be a good friend. They know how to keep themselves physically and mentally healthy, as well as how to stay safe online and in the wider community.

Pupils know that they have a 'voice' and can help improve the school even more. They relish the opportunities to help improve the school for others by being, for example, well-being ambassadors, school parliamentarians and sports leaders. Pupils enjoy a wide range of extra-curricular clubs, including sign language, chess and karate.

Raising attendance remains an ongoing priority. The school has a clear understanding of the reasons for pupils' absence. It takes swift and effective action to provide support for these pupils and their families. As a result, pupils' rates of attendance are improving.

Those responsible for governance are extremely knowledgeable about the school. They use their experience well to challenge and support leaders. Staff report high levels of support for their workload and well-being. They collaborate well and are incredibly positive about working at this highly inclusive school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be outstanding for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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 outstanding for overall effectiveness in March 2019.

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

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| Unique reference number | 131013 |
| Local authority | Redbridge |
| Inspection number | 10345865 |
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 3 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 693 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing body | Ayesha Khanom |
| Headteacher | Kulvarn Atwal (Executive Headteacher) Sandeep Kaur (Associate Headteacher) |
| Website | www.highlandsprimary.co.uk |
| Dates of previous inspection | 6 and 7 March 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- The school is part of The Thinking Schools Federation. This comprises two schools in the local area with a shared governing body.
- The school does not use any alternative provision for pupils.
- The school provides a breakfast club and an after-school facility on the school site.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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 inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- The inspectors met with the executive headteacher, the associate headteacher, other senior leaders, school staff and members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- An inspector also spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at pupils' work. An inspector listened to pupils read to an adult.
- 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.
- The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site. In addition, they met with pupils, formally and informally, to hear their views.
- The inspectors considered the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. They also took into consideration the responses to the online surveys for pupils and staff.

Inspection team

Chris Birtles, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Lisa Smith

His Majesty's Inspector

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