

Inspection of a good school: Houghton Primary School

Chapel Lane, Houghton, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire PE28 2AY

Inspection dates:

22 and 23 March 2023

Outcome

Houghton Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy attending Houghton Primary School. Pupils and staff have fostered relationships that make the school feel like an extended family. Older pupils look out for and support younger pupils. Pupils understand that staff have high expectations of how they should behave. Every pupil understands these expectations and demonstrates them in their conduct.

Pupils enjoy learning and have a real thirst for knowledge. They benefit from an engaging curriculum that is well planned. Parents value how their children are encouraged to learn more. The views of many parents were exemplified by one who said, 'Children wake every morning excited to go to school and come home bubbling with enthusiasm'.

Pupils feel happy and safe. They understand what bullying is, and they say that it rarely happens. When it does happen, it is dealt with quickly.

Pupils enjoy the opportunity to take part in a wide range of clubs and experiences. They relish the chance to represent their school in fixtures and tournaments. Other opportunities include taking part in the annual 'Young Voices' event, where pupils sing alongside professional musicians and artists.

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

Leaders have designed an ambitious curriculum for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). In most subjects, they have broken knowledge down into small chunks. These are carefully sequenced from the early years to Year 6. Teachers value the support they have received from recently appointed subject specialists, which has improved their understanding of the curriculum. Consequently, teachers are able to layer new learning on existing knowledge.

Most teachers provide clear, model answers to questions. They use these to support pupils to break down complex tasks into small parts. When this happens, pupils' learning is secure, and they can link new concepts to previous learning. They can transfer knowledge in a rich and detailed way to other areas of the curriculum. Sometimes, pupils are not as clear about how to break a task into manageable parts. They are uncertain about their intended learning and how to complete an activity. As a result, some pupils disengage from learning and develop gaps in their knowledge.

Leaders have implemented a consistent process of gathering information about what pupils know. Regular assessments provide useful information about how much pupils can recall. Teachers use this information to identify where there are gaps in pupils' knowledge. They then plan future learning and fill these gaps effectively. However, some teachers are not efficient in checking pupils' work quickly enough. This means that the progress of some pupils is slowed, while others pick up and embed misconceptions.

Leaders set reading at the heart of the school curriculum. Children begin to develop their phonics knowledge from the minute they start school. The phonics programme sets out clear progression through the early years and Year 1. Books are carefully mapped to match the sounds that pupils have learned. Leaders check progress and are quick to intervene if a pupil begins to fall behind. As a result, pupils are generally fluent and confident readers. They enjoy reading and are enthusiastic when discussing what they are reading.

Pupils with SEND are well provided for. Leaders carefully consider curriculum and teaching adaptations. This helps pupils to make progress through the curriculum. Highly trained staff support pupils with SEND in class. Extra support is timely and focused. It is effective in moving pupils on while building their independence.

Pupils generally behave well. There are few incidents of behaviour that disrupts the learning of others.

Leaders have ensured that the early years provision is ambitious and stimulating. Learning opportunities are mapped to topics and other curriculum areas. Children use the established routines to remain purposeful. Staff enable children to expand their vocabulary over time. Children are well prepared for Year 1.

Pupils are keen to take on roles and responsibilities. The recently reformed school council has worked with catering staff to revise the lunch menus. Pupils act as reading buddies for younger children and take responsibility to run the school library. These opportunities mean that pupils feel part of the wider school community. They understand the importance of making a positive contribution to society.

Staff work together collaboratively. They recognise that leaders and governors are considerate of their workload. They are proud to work at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have embedded a strong culture of safeguarding across the school. All staff receive regular safeguarding training. This means all staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities and are vigilant. Staff report concerns quickly. Leaders review every case in detail and respond with swift and appropriate action where necessary.

Governors are effective in supporting leaders to ensure policies and practices are reviewed. Leaders carry out all the necessary checks on adults in the school.

Pupils know how to keep themselves and each other safe, on and offline. Pupils know to report any worries to adults, who they trust to deal with concerns.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers do not always explain precisely the knowledge that pupils need to know. Some teachers do not clearly set out how pupils should successfully apply knowledge to a learning activity. This means that some pupils are unable to complete the task. They sometimes disengage from learning. Their knowledge is insecure or has gaps. Leaders should ensure that subject specialists work with teachers to support them to explain domain-specific information precisely and use appropriate strategies to help pupils progress.
- Assessment is not always used effectively to inform teachers about what all pupils have understood and of their readiness to progress. The result of this is that some pupils struggle to complete an activity and others embed misconceptions. Leaders should ensure that all teachers make use of effective assessment strategies that enable teachers to reach timely, informed decisions about what pupils know and can do in order to support their learning further.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in February 2014

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](#)' 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

Unique reference number	110680
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10268628
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	185
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Sally Michaels
Headteacher	Andrew Spencer
Website	www.houghton.cambs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	30 November 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Houghton Primary School is a smaller-than-average primary school.
- The headteacher joined the school in April 2022. The deputy headteacher joined the school in September 2022.
- There is childcare provision on the school site. This is run by a separately registered and inspected childcare provider.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- The inspector held meetings with leaders, including the headteacher, deputy headteacher, early years leader, special educational needs coordinator, the chair of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and art. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to staff, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector also listened to a sample of pupils read to a familiar adult.
- To further inspect the curriculum, the inspector reviewed curriculum documentation for history, physical education, geography and computing, scrutinised pupils' workbooks from across the curriculum, and reviewed documentation setting out support for pupils with SEND.
- To inspect safeguarding, the inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead to review safeguarding records and the office manager to scrutinise the single central record of recruitment and vetting checks. To further evaluate safeguarding, the inspector also spoke to governors, staff, pupils and parents, and reviewed surveys.
- To gather pupils' views, the inspector spent time observing and speaking to pupils. The inspector also reviewed the 61 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.
- To gather parents' views, the inspector reviewed the 66 responses and 46 free-text responses submitted to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View.
- To gather staff's views, the inspector spoke to several staff and reviewed the 23 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Dave Gibson, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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