

Inspection of Highcliffe St Mark Primary School

Greenways, Highcliffe, Christchurch, Dorset BH23 5AZ

Inspection dates: 11 and 12 June 2024

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and safe. They live up to the school's high expectations of their behaviour. Pupils know that any unkind words or actions will not be tolerated. They follow routines willingly and need only the occasional reminder to behave in class. As a result, the school has a calm atmosphere, and there is minimal disruption to learning.

The school has raised its expectations of the breadth and depth of pupils' learning. It has started to make improvements to the quality of education. However, many positive changes are recent and need time to embed.

Pupils make a meaningful contribution to school life. For instance, some pupils are 'house captains' or 'children's champions'. They are proud to hold these roles and the responsibilities they entail. Older pupils write for the school's newspaper, 'The Highcliffe Hub', and help organise lunchtime activities for younger pupils. Pupils develop their confidence and leadership skills through these opportunities.

Pupils develop an understanding of good citizenship. They raise money for charity and promote important causes, such as sustainability. Pupils, of all ages, value time in the school's outdoor area, where they learn to care for nature and how to work in teams. The school provides opportunities for pupils to debate and discuss ideas, which they do respectfully and thoughtfully.

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

As much of the curriculum is new, pupils lack depth in their subject knowledge and skills. For example, in some subjects, pupils recall some key facts, but cannot make connections between different aspects of a subject. While the curriculum is ambitious in its aims, it is not currently having the impact in all areas that the school intends. This is reflected in pupils' outcomes in some subjects.

The school has started to make improvements. For example, it has now identified and ordered what pupils should learn in almost all subjects. In mathematics, for instance, pupils gain a secure knowledge of number in the Reception Year. However, older pupils do not always deepen their mathematical understanding. Across the curriculum, the quality of pupils' written work is not high enough.

As a result of useful professional development, teachers are growing in confidence to implement the new curriculum. However, they still lack the subject expertise needed to implement the curriculum as leaders intend. For example, the way in which the curriculum is taught sometimes does not present new knowledge clearly or is not matched well to what is important for pupils to learn. Leaders' oversight of the impact of the curriculum on the development of pupils' learning is not strong enough.

The school has strengthened how it uses assessment in some subjects. Where this is the case, it identifies gaps in pupils' knowledge and acts to remedy these. However, assessment is not used consistently well in some subjects. This means that teaching is not well informed by the identification of gaps or misconceptions in pupils' knowledge or skills. As a result, pupils do not always have a secure foundation for future learning.

Pupils start learning to read when they join the Reception Year. They read books that are well matched to the sounds they are learning. Consequently, younger pupils learn to read with increasing accuracy and fluency. However, some older pupils lack confidence in reading, or do not read for pleasure.

The school has strengthened its support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils' needs are now identified and assessed accurately early on in their time at the school. The school plans suitable adaptations to the curriculum, working together with parents. As a result, most pupils' needs are met.

Staff care for pupils' well-being. They teach pupils how to be physically and mentally healthy and how to keep themselves safe online. The school adapts its personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme according to the local issues. For example, pupils learn about water safety.

Pupils have good attendance and are punctual. The school takes swift and supportive action to reduce pupils' absence. It provides effective support for pupils who need help to improve their behaviour.

Pupils have positive attitudes to most of their learning. Younger pupils enthuse about the books that teachers read to them, for example. Children in the Reception Year sustain their concentration on carefully planned activities. These have a strong focus on developing children's communication and language, such as about their feelings. As a result, children in the Reception Year develop their independence well.

Pupils benefit from a wide range of extracurricular opportunities. The school is determined to provide these experiences to all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged. Pupils enjoy clubs, such as coding, water polo and creative arts. They value trips and residential activities, which develop their confidence.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, some teachers do not always have the subject knowledge they need to teach the curriculum well. As a result, teaching in those subjects areas does not provide pupils with opportunities to secure and deepen their subject

knowledge. The school should ensure that teachers have sufficient subject expertise to implement the curriculum effectively.

- In some subjects, some teaching does not identify pupils' misconceptions, or gaps in their knowledge. Consequently, the curriculum is not consistently adapted to remedy these. The school needs to ensure that assessment is used to check pupils' knowledge and understanding carefully to inform what comes next.
- The school's oversight of how effectively the curriculum is taught is at an early stage. As a result, it is not always clear how well pupils learn what is intended. The school must evaluate how successfully the curriculum develops pupils' understanding, so it can make improvements where needed.

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	134987
Local authority	Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole
Inspection number	10322237
Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	640
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Lisa Caola
Headteacher	Claire Barker
Website	www.highcliffeprimary.dorset.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	18 July 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is a Church of England School in the Diocese of Winchester. It received its last section 48 inspection in October 2023.
- The headteacher took up the position in February 2024.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, English, history and computing. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the

curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' written work. Inspectors also met with leaders, visited lessons and reviewed a sample of pupils' work to evaluate the school's PSHE education programme.

- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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 considered the responses to the questionnaire for parents, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments. Inspectors also considered the responses to the online surveys for pupils and staff.

Inspection team

James Oldham, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Debbie Tregellas	Ofsted Inspector
Carl Thornton	Ofsted Inspector
Kevin Martin	Ofsted Inspector

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