

Inspection of a good school: Hillside Community First School

Hillside Road, Verwood, Dorset BH31 7HE

Inspection dates: 10 and 11 May 2023

Outcome

Hillside Community First School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Staff at Hillside Community First School help pupils to become respectful, tolerant and responsible. Pupils build trusted relationships with each other and with adults. They feel safe and happy. Pupils talk proudly of their school.

Leaders have high expectations of what all pupils can achieve. Pupils are well mannered and considerate. Staff recognise pupils who behave well so they receive praise and encouragement. Staff provide additional support for the few pupils who struggle to manage their behaviour. As a result, pupils are motivated in their learning both in and out of the classroom.

Pupils lead on many projects, such as being members of the school parliament, eco-warriors and play leaders. These responsibilities offer them a chance to make a meaningful contribution to school life. Staff provide clubs, including tennis, creative media, gardening and a variety of sports clubs. These help to foster pupils' interests.

Parents speak highly of the school. They comment that they feel part of a community. They say that their children are excited to tell them about the many school events that enhance pupils' wider development. These include museum trips and sports competitions.

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

Leaders are ambitious in their vision to improve the quality of education for all pupils. The local academy committee and trustees provide appropriate challenge and support to drive the school towards its ambition.

Leaders have put curriculum development at the heart of the school. They have thought carefully about what pupils learn and in what order. Leaders have selected the vocabulary they want pupils to know. Staff emphasise and repeat this new vocabulary. As a result, in many cases, pupils can explain what new words mean and use them in context.

Leaders have put in place a well-structured mathematics curriculum, which begins in the early years. Children apply their mathematical understanding to classroom routines and the world around them. For example, children study the life cycles of animals and measure their lengths to observe and record changes. Children leave the early years with the knowledge they need for Year 1. Beyond early years, pupils develop secure mathematical fluency. For example, they use known division facts to help them learn new information about fractions. However, leaders do not provide enough opportunities for all pupils to reason and problem-solve regularly. Consequently, pupils do not apply their mathematical knowledge to more complex ideas and procedures.

Leaders aspire for all pupils to develop a love of reading. In Reception Year, children learn to recognise the sounds that different letters make soon after they start school. Leaders provide staff with training so they can teach the recently introduced phonics programme with confidence. Staff assess pupils' knowledge of sounds regularly. This means leaders can address any gaps quickly. Pupils practise reading with books that match the sounds they know. Reading challenges motivate pupils to read regularly. When pupils leave Hillside, they are confident and competent readers.

Leaders have constructed new religious education and computing curriculums. These are in the early stages of implementation. As a result, some pupils do not have a secure understanding of the knowledge that leaders intend.

Staff support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to learn the same curriculum as their peers. Leaders meet pupils' individual needs effectively. A minority of pupils receive bespoke support. This helps them to learn the curriculum with success. Leaders review the support they provide for pupils to ensure it matches what they need. Therefore, most pupils with SEND achieve well.

Leaders have considered how to support pupils' personal development. They ensure that pupils learn about different families and what healthy lifestyles and relationships look like. Pupils have a firm understanding of appropriate touch and being respectful. They have hosted fundraising events for various charities, including a sponsored bounce. As a result, pupils learn how to contribute positively to society.

Pupils understand how staff expect them to behave. Learning is largely uninterrupted by misbehaviour. On the odd occasion when pupils do not follow the school rules, staff address it quickly. Pupils walk sensibly around the school site. They show care and compassion for others, particularly at social times.

The local academy committee and trust leaders are knowledgeable about the school's work. Staff feel appreciated at Hillside. They value the regular training provided for them by the school and trust leaders. Staff are positive about the contributions they have had in the development of the curriculum.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that staff are well trained to notice the signs that a child may be at risk. Staff are confident in how to report and record concerns. Record-keeping is thorough. Leaders work well with families and external agencies so that pupils are given the help they need.

Leaders provide pupils with a variety of ways to raise any worries. Pupils know that adults will listen to any concerns they may have. Staff teach pupils about how to identify and manage risks, including online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to develop their reasoning and problem-solving skills. As a result, not all pupils deepen their mathematical knowledge and reason confidently. Leaders must ensure that the mathematics curriculum is implemented effectively to enable all pupils to reason and problem-solve well.
- Leaders' new curriculum plans in some subjects are not fully implemented. This means that, in these subjects, some pupils do not have a secure enough understanding of the subject. This leads to gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding. Leaders need to ensure that new curriculum is fully implemented so that pupils learn the subject-specific content.

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 predecessor school, Hillside Community First School, to be good in January 2011.

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	146690
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	10268502
Type of school	First
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	204
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	John Kingston
Headteacher	David Graves
Website	www.hillsidefirstschool.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Hillside Community First School converted to become an academy school in January 2019. When its predecessor school, Hillside Community First School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- The school joined Wimborne Academy Trust in January 2019. The trust has recently merged to become Initio Learning Trust.
- The headteacher took up post in September 2022.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.

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 her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, school staff and pupils.
- The inspector met with members of the local academy committee. She also spoke with the chief executive officer, the chair of trustees and representatives from the trust.

- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and physical education. 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 listened to pupils read from Years 1, 2 and 3.
- The inspector evaluated the effectiveness of safeguarding. She looked at the school's single central record and records of concerns and at how staff work to keep pupils safe. The inspector spoke to pupils, staff, the academy committee and trust representatives about safeguarding practices.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school, including at lunchtime and breaktimes. In addition, she met with pupils formally and informally to hear their views.
- The inspector considered responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text responses. She also looked at responses to the surveys for pupils and staff.

Inspection team

Lakmini Harkus, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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