

# Inspection of an outstanding school: Hamilton School

Hamilton Road, Handsworth, Birmingham, West Midlands B21 8AH

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Inspection dates:

15–16 October 2019

## **Outcome**

Hamilton School continues to be an outstanding school.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Hamilton School is an enjoyable place to learn, where pupils' safety is paramount. Pupils take pride in learning how to be independent and display exceptionally positive attitudes to learning. Pupils enjoy coming to school. Most parents and carers that we spoke to said they are delighted with the support that school offers pupils and families.

School is a welcoming environment. It is clear that pupils' welfare is at the heart of everything that Hamilton School offers. Through the curriculum, pupils are very well looked after by a dedicated and caring staff team.

Pupils model exemplary behaviour within lessons and during playtimes. Pupils are highly motivated to behave and achieve. They enjoy the reward systems that are in place. These include reward charts and missions to complete tasks around the school. Pupils also earn tokens towards weekly goody bags.

Pupils feel safe in and around school. They trust the adults in school to help them if they are worried and to help them learn how to keep themselves safe. Pupils say that teachers deal with any bullying that occurs.

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

Leaders have developed a curriculum that is suitable for all groups of pupils. As a result, pupils are doing very well.

Children in the early years learn how to solve simple number sequencing problems. This is through a range of activities, including number jigsaws and sorting toys. Pupils in key stage 1 are then able to build on this knowledge to match and compare small and large objects. In key stage 2, pupils learn how to solve mathematical problems using tens and units. The more-advanced learners use their addition and subtraction knowledge to solve fraction problems involving halves and quarters. Pupils learn how to use these skills by practising a range of everyday life activities. These include shopping, making sandwiches

and weighing ingredients to make cakes.

Leaders place a strong emphasis on encouraging and developing reading skills. The teaching of reading is a priority at Hamilton School. Reading corners in key stage 2 classrooms encourage most-able children to develop independent reading skills. Pupils have access to a variety of different ways to enjoy stories. Staff use a range of methods to bring stories alive for children in the early years and pupils in key stage 1. Visits to the cinema and the theatre further develop pupils' understanding and enjoyment of stories.

Teachers make strong, close links between communication, reading and writing. This helps to develop pupils' understanding. The use of communication boards supports pupils who are not able to form words to share their needs and wishes with adults and peers.

Teachers encourage the use of letter sounds in the early years and build on pupils' knowledge in key stages 1 and 2. As a result of this very well-planned and carefully implemented phonics programme, pupils are able to work out new and unfamiliar words.

A strong focus on personal, social and health education (PSHE) is threaded throughout all aspects of the school's curriculum. Leaders and teachers ensure that those pupils with the most complex needs have valuable opportunities to cook, shop and use technology. Frequent visits to local community shops help pupils to develop independent skills in a carefully managed environment.

Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to become independent learners. Pupils are able to use the skills they learn in school to complete tasks at home. In the early years, there is a strong emphasis on developing children's independent learning skills. Children learn how to dress and undress and use technology. A series of picture cues supports children's understanding of the sequence required for dressing. The same approach helps them to use a remote control and a telephone.

Leaders ensure that staff have access to high-quality training. This ensures that they are well trained to deliver the skills that pupils need to develop communication.

The headteacher and leadership team are supported by an exceptionally skilled board of governors, which ensures that pupils access a high-quality and enriched curriculum. The management of behaviour is a clear strength. Staff go to exceptional lengths to promote positive behaviour and support pupils who become upset or anxious. Staff use a range of techniques to encourage pupils to remain on-task. These techniques include a breakfast club and tasks that encourage self-direction. Pupils also like to complete 'important jobs' around the school.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are rigorous in their efforts to keep pupils safe. The school's procedures and policies are carefully followed and staff ensure that any concerns are dealt with immediately. Leaders and governors work closely with the local authority and other agencies to ensure

that pupils receive the support that they need.

Staff training is effective and this leads to the promotion of a strong safeguarding culture by all staff.

In PSHE, pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. For example, pupils are taught what to do if an unfamiliar adult approaches them.

## Background

When we have judged a special school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding on 10–11 December 2015.

## 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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	103600
<b>Local authority</b>	Birmingham
<b>Inspection number</b>	10088598
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary special
<b>School category</b>	Maintained special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	122
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Fiona Green
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jon Harris
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.hamilton.bham.sch.uk">www.hamilton.bham.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	10–11 December 2015

## Information about this school

- The school caters for pupils with autism spectrum disorder and communication needs.

## Information about this inspection

- Subjects considered as part of this inspection were reading, mathematics, PSHE and communication. We carried out visits to see these subjects being taught and looked at pupils' work. We talked to pupils about their work, spoke to teachers who taught these subjects and held discussions with subject leaders. We listened to pupils read.
- We spoke with parents and took into account 24 responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire and free-text service.
- We took account of the 31 responses to the online staff survey and the three responses to the pupil survey.
- We explored safeguarding arrangements. We reviewed safeguarding records and the school's checks on the safety of the site. We also talked to staff about safeguarding and to pupils about how they keep safe. We checked the school's single central record. We met with the school's designated safeguarding lead.

## **Inspection team**

Kim Ellis, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Susan Lowry

Ofsted Inspector

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