

Inspection of a good school: Harrow Gate Academy

Piper Knowle Road, Hardwick, Stockton-on-Tees, Cleveland TS19 8DE

Inspection dates:

13 and 14 December 2022

Outcome

Harrow Gate Academy continues to be a good school. There is enough evidence of improved performance to suggest that the school could be judged outstanding if we were to carry out a graded (section 5) inspection now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Harrow Gate Academy say that their school is like a family. They feel welcome, happy and safe in school and behave exceptionally well. Pupils demonstrate an ability to empathise with others. They play cooperatively with each other at playtimes and make full use of the wide range of equipment on offer to them. Bullying is not a problem in the school. Pupils are confident that if it were to happen, adults would deal with it quickly.

Leaders have ensured that the school has excellent resources to support the curriculum. There is a beautiful school library, biodome and science, technology, engineering and mathematics laboratory. Pupils regularly visit the forest school where they can feed the birds, observe the bug hotel or do some pond dipping. They talk enthusiastically about their learning.

Leaders have high aspirations for all pupils. As well as the opportunity to achieve well academically, leaders offer pupils an extensive range of opportunities to develop their character, talents and interests. Pupils talk about their 'cultural learning'. They know that art encompasses more than 'drawing and painting'. They can talk about significant figures from both the past and the present and how they are positive role models, for example Josephine Baker and Edward Grieg. There is a wide range of after-school clubs on offer, which pupils say they enjoy.

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

Leaders work hard to create a curriculum that meets the needs of all pupils. They review the curriculum regularly to ensure it is fit for purpose and inclusive. Subject leaders are skilled and knowledgeable. They support staff effectively to ensure that teaching is high quality. Systems are in place for checking what pupils know and remember. This prevents pupils from falling behind with their learning. Pupils behave well in lessons and display

positive attitudes to learning. No incidents of low-level disruption were seen during the inspection.

Reading is a real priority for leaders. In Nursery, children enjoy and are enthusiastic when they are listening to stories. They can make some predictions about what will happen in a story and show understanding of how characters are feeling. In Reception and key stage 1, pupils benefit from highly effective phonics teaching. All staff are trained to deliver the phonics programme and do so with consistency. Pupils' reading books match the sounds that they have learned. If pupils are struggling with reading, teachers quickly put support in place to help them catch up. All staff promote reading for pleasure. Older pupils speak positively about reading and discuss their favourite books and authors. They understand why it is so important to be able to read.

The curriculum in mathematics is coherently sequenced and organised. Leaders have carefully considered how to break learning into small steps so that pupils build their knowledge and skills over time. Teachers regularly check pupils' understanding. They put support or additional challenge in place for those pupils who need it. Children in the early years have access to a range of mathematical resources and activities. In Nursery, an adult was using mathematical vocabulary while supporting children to wrap presents of different shapes and sizes. In Reception, a 'maths in action' display shows children counting, measuring and exploring patterns and shapes.

The wider curriculum is underpinned by the school's 'global curriculum'. This enables pupils to learn about themes such as social justice and equality, sustainable development, and power and governance in the context of subjects such as history and geography. The global curriculum also helps pupils to develop critical thinking skills, empathy and self-awareness. As a result, pupils demonstrate mature attitudes when discussing challenging topics. The global curriculum is supporting pupils' achievement and their personal development.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are very well catered for in the school. Children with potential SEND in the early years are identified quickly. Leaders have high expectations for pupils with SEND. They carefully tailor provision to match the needs of pupils. The special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator (SENDCo) is experienced and knowledgeable. Staff receive regular training on different aspects of SEND provision. Leaders draw upon the expertise of a wide range of external agencies to ensure that pupils with SEND and their families receive high-quality support.

Leaders are supported and challenged effectively by the academy improvement committee as well as by the trust. This support has contributed to the improvements made in the school since the last inspection. Leaders have worked hard to tackle the areas for improvement outlined in the last inspection report. In discussion with the principal, we agreed that the achievement of pupils with SEND, levels of persistent absence and pupils' ability to demonstrate consistently high levels of respect for others and self-control may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding policies and procedures in the school are robust. All staff and members of the academy improvement committee receive regular safeguarding training which is monitored by the trust. Appropriate procedures are in place to ensure the right staff are recruited. Staff are alert to the signs and symptoms of abuse. They know pupils and their families well. Leaders are tenacious about following up concerns with the local authority. They make effective use of external agencies to support pupils and their families. The curriculum teaches pupils how to lead safe, healthy lifestyles.

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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in June 2017.

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	141301
Local authority	Stockton-on-Tees
Inspection number	10240324
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	453
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Jack Harrison
Principal	Victoria Galt
Website	www.harrowgateacademy.org
Date of previous inspection	6 to 9 June 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has nursery provision for three-year-old children.
- The school operates a breakfast club for pupils which is led and managed by school staff.
- The school does not make use of 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 the headteacher and the leadership team. The inspector also met with subject leaders, the SENDCo, members of the academy improvement committee, the chief executive officer of the trust, a member of the board of trustees and the academy school improvement team.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and religious 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 also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in science, and art and design. They looked at samples of pupils' work in English and geography. The inspector reviewed how school leaders support pupils' wider development.
- The inspector observed pupils reading to familiar adults.
- The inspector observed the behaviour of pupils in lessons, at the breakfast club and during breaktimes.
- The inspector examined the single central record and looked at how safeguarding incidents are reported. The inspector spoke to leaders, teachers, support staff, governors and pupils about the culture of safeguarding in the school.
- The inspector considered the responses made by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. This included any free-text responses. The inspector also considered the responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Philippa Kermotschuk, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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