

Inspection of an outstanding school: Old Hutton CofE School

Old Hutton, Kendal, Cumbria LA8 0NQ

Inspection dates:

3 March 2022

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of outstanding as a result of this initial (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a full inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a full (section 5) inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive in the nurturing environment that leaders have created in this small, rural school. Pupils arrive each day happy and eager to learn. Children in the early years enjoy exploring and learning together. Parents speak very highly of the school and would recommend it to others. Pupils try their best to live up to the high expectations that leaders and staff have of them. Most pupils achieve well. However, in a small number of subjects, some pupils struggle to remember what they have been taught.

Pupils learn about other faiths and cultures. They know the importance of treating everyone with understanding and respect. Pupils behave well and feel safe in school. They are confident that any bullying, should it occur, will be resolved quickly by staff.

Older pupils contribute to the life of the school as 'buddies' for the younger children. As members of committees, pupils help to organise fundraising events which help to support a school in Senegal. Pupils enjoy the opportunities leaders provide, including performing on stage in the school's annual production and learning in the outdoors. They also appreciate the wide range of clubs that they can join, such as the school's rock band and gardening club. Pupils' confidence and resilience are developed further through residential trips to cities.

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

Leaders have designed a broad and balanced curriculum. This meets the needs of pupils well, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders have carefully considered what pupils need to know and the order in which it should be taught. This ensures that the curriculum works well for pupils who are taught in the mixed-age classes.

Subjects are led well. Staff work together to share ideas and expertise, including with colleagues in other schools. This enhances the staff's subject knowledge further. Leaders check how effectively the planned curriculum is delivered. Teachers use assessment information well to plan what pupils need to learn next.

In most subjects, the curriculum builds clearly on pupils' prior learning. This helps pupils to achieve well in these subjects. However, in a few subjects, the key knowledge that pupils need to know is not clear. Some pupils struggle to recall what they have been taught previously. This hinders pupils' ability to apply what they already know when they learn something new.

Pupils from the early years to Year 6 talked enthusiastically about their favourite books and authors. From the time children start at the school, they are immersed in quality texts from the well-resourced school library. Pupils enjoy listening to stories. They explain how learning new vocabulary helps them to improve their own writing. Pupils are excited about their success in a recent poetry competition and the final anthology that is soon to be published.

Skilled staff deliver the phonics programme consistently well. Consequently, from the start of Reception class, children quickly learn the sounds that letters represent. The books that children in Reception and pupils in key stage 1 read match the sounds that they are learning. This helps most to quickly become confident and fluent readers. Pupils who find reading challenging benefit from the extra help that they receive from skilled staff. This includes those at the early stages of reading in key stage 2.

There is an extremely positive culture throughout the school. Pupils are polite and well-mannered. They work hard and there are few disruptions in lessons. Staff are very adept at identifying and supporting pupils with SEND. Pupils who may sometimes struggle to manage their emotions are supported well. This enables pupils with SEND to access all that the school has to offer, such as learning how to play an instrument.

Pupils benefit from the wide range of opportunities that leaders provide. Fieldwork and trips to places of interest help to support pupils' learning in a range of subjects. Older pupils enjoy practising their French when writing to their pen pals at a school in Senegal. Pupils support the local community through fundraising events and caring for the environment, for example by planting trees at the local wildlife park.

Staff and governors are proud to be part of the school. Governors know the school well. They use their knowledge to provide leaders with appropriate challenge and support. Governors are mindful of the staff's well-being. Staff feel well supported by leaders.

In discussion with the headteacher, the inspectors agreed that history and geography may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff know pupils well. Training enables them to identify any subtle changes in pupils' demeanour. Staff understand the procedures to follow should they have any concerns about pupils' welfare. Leaders ensure that vulnerable pupils quickly receive the help that they need.

Pupils know what makes a good friend. They are taught how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations. This could be when they are learning outdoors or when they use the internet. Guidance for parents helps them to understand how to keep their children safe when they use the internet at home.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, the important knowledge that leaders want pupils to know and remember is not clearly identified. Some pupils struggle to recall prior learning. This hinders their ability to apply what they know when they are learning something new. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum identifies the important knowledge that pupils will learn. This will help teachers to build on what pupils already know, so pupils achieve well in all subjects.

Background

When we have previously judged a 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 or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, 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 deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in February 2016.

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.

If you are the school and 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

Unique reference number	112263
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10211916
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	100
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Jules Natlacen
Headteacher	Nick Turley
Website	www.oldhuttonschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	11 and 12 February 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- A new headteacher has been appointed since the last inspection.
- A new chair of the governing body has been appointed since the last inspection.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school had its most recent section 48 inspection, undertaken by the Diocese of Carlisle, in October 2015.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- During the inspection, inspectors spoke with representatives from the governing body, the headteacher, members of the leadership team and staff. They also reviewed a range of documentation, including documents relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority and a representative from the diocese.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and music. Inspectors also reviewed a range of evidence for history and geography. They discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited lessons and spoke to staff. They spoke to pupils about their learning and their experiences of the school. Inspectors also looked at pupils' work and listened to pupils read.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also met with parents at the start of the school day. Inspectors considered the responses to the pupil and staff surveys.

Inspection team

Amanda Stringer, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Louise McArdle

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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