

Inspection of Higham Ferrers Junior School

Saffron Road, Higham Ferrers, Rushden, Northamptonshire NN10 8ED

Inspection dates: 24 and 25 January 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They know that their teachers have high expectations of how they should behave. Pupils respond well to these expectations. They value the emphasis that leaders place on everyone being kind to each other. Pupils look out for each other. Social times are happy and friendly occasions. Pupils know that the adults in school will be there for them if they are upset. Bullying is not tolerated. Pupils are kept safe.

Leaders are determined that pupils will be positive members of their school community and beyond. Pupils are provided with many opportunities for responsibility. A head boy and head girl are interviewed and appointed each year. Pupils can also stand to be elected as school councillors, house captains, peer mentors or well-being warriors. Every pupil is a member of a house. Each house has a different coloured tie. Pupils wear these with pride. Everyone wants to win team points for their house.

Staff enjoy their work. Many parents reference how happy their child is at the school. Nevertheless, leaders have not kept a close enough eye on how well the curriculum is being taught, or how well pupils are remembering the intended learning in every subject.

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

Leaders have designed the curriculum with care. Curriculum plans match the ambition of the national curriculum. These plans identify the important knowledge leaders want pupils to learn. Plans are structured to enable pupils' knowledge to build up step by step over time.

The checks that leaders make about how well the intended curriculum is being taught are not rigorous enough. Leaders, including subject leaders, do not have a precise understanding of what is working well in each subject, or where adjustments need to be made to improve curriculum plans further. They have not identified where pupils cannot recall prior learning. For example, in geography, some Year 6 pupils could not locate the United Kingdom on a map or recall how a grid reference is used. Leaders have not spotted that some subjects are not being taught in every class.

Leaders have made reading a top priority for the school. Teachers read increasingly challenging books to pupils as they move through the school. Pupils enjoy the books they read in class. They provide inspiration for pupils' own writing. After reading an extract from 'The Iron Man', a Year 3 pupil wrote: 'All around me the darkness gazed up at the moonlit sky.' Pupils who need extra help to learn to read are quickly identified. However, they do not always get the right help. Leaders have not ensured that all staff have the skills they need to support these pupils to become fluent and confident readers.

Pupils with special educational needs/and or disabilities (SEND) are well known. They receive strong pastoral support to make sure they are ready to learn. Sometimes leaders' expectations of what pupils with SEND can achieve are not high enough. At other times, when pupils with SEND are taught alongside their peers, they find it difficult to access the learning because they are not consistently provided with the support they need to succeed.

Leaders' recent work to improve behaviour has made a significant difference to pupils' attitudes to learning. Pupils work hard. They are polite at all times. They attend well. They live up to the school's motto 'Be the best you can be.'

Leaders have planned carefully for pupils' personal development. The personal, social and health education curriculum successfully prepares pupils for the next stage of their lives in meaningful ways. Pupils are taught how to recognise and manage their feelings. Year 6 pupils' understanding of British values were deepened through a visit from a magistrate and the chance to set up their own magistrate's court.

Governors work closely with leaders. They fulfil their statutory duties.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders prioritise pupils' safety. There are clear systems in place to report concerns about a pupil. Staff are knowledgeable about the signs that indicate a pupil may be at risk of harm. They raise their concerns with safeguarding leaders and keep appropriate records. Leaders do not waste time in making sure that pupils get the help they need. Some of this help is provided by the school. Leaders also involve external agencies at the right time.

Pupils are taught about how to behave responsibly online. Leaders provide parents with updates about how they can support their children to stay safe online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils who need extra help to learn to read are not consistently supported well. They do not learn to read as quickly as they could. Leaders must ensure that staff are trained so that they can provide effective support for these pupils.
- Leaders, including subject leaders, have not ensured that all subjects are taught in all classes or that the delivery of the curriculum and its impact is effectively monitored. As a consequence, leaders do not have a precise understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in each subject. Leaders must routinely and strategically complete monitoring activities that will assure them that pupils know and remember more of the intended learning over time.

- Pupils with SEND do not consistently receive the support they need to learn well. They cannot always access the intended learning. Leaders must ensure that all staff have the skills and knowledge they need to support pupils with SEND to achieve as well as they can.

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	121828
Local authority	North Northamptonshire
Inspection number	10254844
Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	336
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	John Ireland
Headteacher	Victoria Bull
Website	www.highamferrersjunior.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	11 January 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The current headteacher took up post in September 2019.
- The majority of governors have been appointed since the previous inspection, including the chair of governors.
- The school operates a breakfast club that is managed by the governing body.
- Leaders do not make use of any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

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

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, two assistant headteachers and the inclusion leader. The lead inspector met with four members of the governing body, including the chair and vice-chair of governors. She also

held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, geography and art and design. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and pupils from the lessons visited and looked at examples of pupils' work. As part of the reading deep dive, an inspector listened to pupils in Year 3 and Year 6 reading to a familiar adult. Inspectors also reviewed curriculum plans for English, science and religious education.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors met with the designated safeguarding leads and reviewed a range of documentation, including safeguarding records and policies, to ensure that appropriate actions are being taken to keep children safe. Inspectors spoke to staff to check their safeguarding knowledge and to pupils about how safe they feel in school.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, at playtime and lunchtime, in assembly and around the school. They also spoke to pupils about their views on behaviour. Behaviour and attendance records were reviewed.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the surveys for pupils, parents and staff. They also spoke to parents at the start of the school day.

Inspection team

Caroline Poole, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Elizabeth Mace

Ofsted Inspector

Shazia Lydon

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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