

Inspection of an outstanding school: Heronshaw School

Lichfield Down, Walnut Tree, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire MK7 7PG

Inspection dates:

14 and 15 September 2021

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 school's next inspection will therefore be a full (section 5) inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to Heronshaw because of the school's welcoming and nurturing atmosphere. Leaders have high expectations of what pupils can achieve both academically and personally. Pupils rise to this challenge. They love to learn and are eager to do well. Pupils show interest in the different subjects that they study. For example, pupils enjoy conducting experiments in science. They are keen to talk about what they have learned and do so confidently and enthusiastically.

The Heronshaw values of respect, friendship and kindness underpin the school's ethos. Pupils develop positive friendships, playing and working together happily. Teachers use strategies such as 'worry monsters' to identify when a pupil might need some help or support. Pupils feel safe and know whom to talk to if they have any worries or are feeling sad.

Pupils behave well. They move around the school calmly and follow the school's routines sensibly. Adults correct any poor behaviour patiently and sensitively. Pupils respond well to this guidance. Bullying is rare. Leaders take any bullying seriously and deal with it well if it does happen.

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

In most subjects, leaders have planned a challenging curriculum. They have identified the specific knowledge and skills that they want pupils to learn. Leaders have not, however, planned the history and geography curriculums effectively enough. They have not been clear enough about what they intend pupils to learn. As a result, pupils do not learn as well as they could in these subjects.

Leaders were committed to maintaining high-quality education for all pupils during the recent partial closure of the school. Leaders and teachers provided a wide range of online

resources and lessons. This offer was welcomed by many parents and carers. As one parent said, 'the quality of home learning and support available during the pandemic was amazing'.

Teachers create a sense of excitement and anticipation during lessons. They explain concepts well because they have strong subject knowledge. In mathematics, for example, teachers adapt their explanations and questions skilfully to meet the needs of all pupils. In early years, teachers plan stimulating activities to support children well in their learning of number. As a result, pupils develop a strong understanding of mathematics over time.

Leaders place a sharp focus on developing pupils' language. Teachers identify the key vocabulary that they want pupils to learn and understand. For example, in science, pupils practise scientific vocabulary regularly. This helps them to understand and remember important scientific words. Pupils use this key vocabulary to explain their learning in science confidently.

Leaders make learning to read a priority. They have invested in staff training. Teachers and teaching assistants are highly skilled in teaching phonics. Children get off to a quick start in learning phonics in early years. Their warm, nurturing relationships with adults help them to settle in quickly. In key stage 1, pupils broaden their reading skills further. Pupils practise the sounds they have been taught by reading books that are well matched to their ability. Leaders ensure that pupils are given extra help in learning to read if they begin to fall behind. This means that children become competent readers. Pupils also enjoy being read to by adults.

Pupils behave well during lessons. They have positive attitudes and are eager to learn. They listen attentively and work hard. Occasionally, some pupils lose focus and become distracted. However, this does not disrupt the learning of other pupils.

Staff ensure that they fully understand the individual needs of each pupil. This means that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are given the support and resources they need to learn well. Calm, caring staff provide high-quality support for these pupils, both academically and socially. Pupils with SEND are fully involved in school life and they do well.

Leaders provide a wide range of activities to promote pupils' wider development. For example, on 'international day', people from different cultures within the local community visit the school. This helps pupils to learn about different countries and cultures. Well-being days teach pupils different strategies to keep mentally and physically healthy. For example, pupils are taught yoga and calming breathing techniques.

The majority of parents are happy with the school's work. However, a small proportion of parents feel that leaders do not deal with their concerns well enough. Some parents expressed concerns about the communication between school and home.

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

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have created a culture in which pupils' welfare is given the highest priority. Leaders ensure that all adults working in school are well trained in safeguarding. All staff have a thorough understanding of what to do if they have any concerns about a child's safety. Leaders are vigilant in following up all concerns to keep pupils safe from harm.

Teachers use strategies such as 'worry monsters' to encourage pupils to share their worries. Adults talk to pupils, providing reassurance, help and support. Pupils feel confident that there is always an adult to turn to for help.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have developed an ambitious, coherently planned and sequenced curriculum in most subjects. The school's geography and history curriculums, however, are not yet planned in sufficient detail. Leaders need to make it clear exactly what pupils are expected to know and be able to do in these subjects. Leaders need to ensure that all subjects are coherently planned and sequenced.

Background

When we have 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 predecessor school, Heronshaw 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	146462
Local authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	10201088
Type of school	Infant
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	222
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Marilyn Hubbard
Headteacher	Melanie Saunders (Executive Headteacher) Jamie Ainscow (Head of School)
Website	www.heronshawschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Heronshaw School converted to become an academy on 1 January 2019, joining the Inspiring Futures Through Learning academy trust. When its predecessor school, Heronshaw School, was last inspected by Ofsted in February 2016, it was judged to be outstanding overall.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders, and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- The inspector met with senior leaders, staff and pupils. The inspector also met with the chief executive officer of the trust, and representatives from the school's local governing body and the board of trustees.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about

their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector also listened to pupils read.

- To inspect the school's safeguarding arrangements, the inspector met with leaders responsible for safeguarding and looked at relevant documentation, staff recruitment checks and training records. The inspector also talked to a range of staff and pupils.
- The inspector met with a range of pupils to discuss their views of the school. The inspector spoke to pupils informally during playtime, lunchtime and in lessons.
- The inspector spoke to parents and staff to gather their views. The inspector looked at 48 responses to Parent View, including 36 free-text responses. The inspector also considered 18 responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Leah Goulding, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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