

Inspection of Hilltop First School

Clewer Hill Road, Windsor, Berkshire SL4 4DW

Inspection dates: 29 and 30 November 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

This school was last inspected 12 years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils in this school are happy, settled and eager to share their thoughts. They articulate their ideas with enthusiasm. This begins with the youngest children in school. Pupils understand the golden rules and share these with zeal. They want to 'aim high and be kind'.

Pupils behave well. They are polite, friendly and supportive of one another. On the playground, they play together and take turns using the shared equipment. These routines begin in Nursery, where children are kind and considerate of each other. Pupils understand what bullying is and that it is not acceptable. They know that instances of being unkind are not tolerated and that adults will deal with these. Pupils learn the importance of speaking out if something makes them feel uncomfortable.

Leaders have high expectations. They are ambitious for all pupils. This is reflected in the curriculum where, for example, pupils learn French from Year 1 onwards. The caring ethos of this school is clear. Focused support is given to pupils based on their needs. There is no limit placed on what pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) can achieve.

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

Leaders and school staff want the best for all pupils. This ambition is realised through the curriculum design. This builds from the first days of school. There is a clear sequence of learning which helps pupils to remember more over time. Leaders have thought carefully about the two-year rolling programme to ensure that the mixed-age classes cover the curriculum. This provides pupils with full access to the national curriculum. There are, however, some inconsistencies in how the curriculum is delivered. Leaders are aware of this. A clear training programme is in place to support staff's knowledge of the subjects they teach.

Leaders and staff are passionate about every pupil learning to read. Leaders have prioritised training to support the development of staff's skills in teaching phonics. As a result, there is consistency across the school. All staff follow the school's phonics programme. Pupils enjoy the shared texts. The books that pupils read match the sounds they have learned. Staff give effective additional support to pupils who are struggling to learn to read. Pupils enjoy reading and are engaged during whole-class reading sessions.

Leaders work well with staff to identify any potential barriers to learning that pupils may have. There are clear processes in place for identifying pupils with SEND. Effective strategies are implemented for pupils with SEND to access learning successfully. There is a strong focus on working with parents and, where necessary, external agencies to meet pupils' needs. The school provides helpful support for pupils who are waiting for external assessments.

The two golden rules permeate throughout the school. Pupils are quick to explain what aiming high means and relate this to their learning. Strong attitudes to learning are fostered across the school. Everyone understands what is expected and pupils rise to these high expectations. Sometimes, though, families take extended holidays during term time, which means pupils miss important learning. Leaders are working hard to improve attendance.

Behaviour is positive. A calm and purposeful atmosphere is evident throughout the school. Teachers' questioning engages pupils in their learning. Clear expectations of learning routines are developed from Nursery, where children listen attentively and wait for their turn to contribute. Pupils have access to resources which support their learning. However, in the early years, adults do not always intervene during independent activities to move children's learning forward.

There are a wide range of opportunities for pupils' personal development. Year 4 pupils relish the chance to become a representative in the school. They are proud to be office assistants, eco-agents, librarians, mentors or head boy or girl. They take the application process seriously. Similarly, pupils across the school are clear about the importance of voting for the best candidate for school leadership roles rather than their friend. Through the curriculum, pupils learn about the importance of keeping healthy and forming positive relationships. This includes knowing what to do if a friend is not being kind. Pupils learn about beliefs and cultures different to their own. This helps to create an inclusive environment across the school.

Leaders have a clear understanding of their school. They have worked hard to develop leadership at all levels. As a result, subject leaders are growing in confidence and expertise. Governors understand their statutory duties and offer appropriate support and challenge. Staff feel valued and well supported. They are unanimously proud to work at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Everyone has a clear understanding of their responsibility for pupils' safety and well-being. Leaders ensure that staff are well trained to recognise the signs that all may not be well with a pupil. Where there are concerns that a child is at risk, leaders and staff act swiftly. Leaders champion the needs of pupils and seek support from external agencies. They ensure that all families understand the support they can access. Pupils across the school learn how to be safe. This includes thinking about who are safe adults and being safe in the park.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few subjects, there is some variability in staff subject knowledge. This means that pupils do not always learn as well as they could. Leaders need to continue providing bespoke training and monitor the effectiveness of this.
- In the early years, adults do not always deepen learning through targeted interactions. This means that children are not consistently exposed to a broad, rich vocabulary. Leaders need to continue to train staff so they have the skills needed to intervene effectively during learning activities.

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	109833
Local authority	Windsor and Maidenhead
Inspection number	10256355
Type of school	First
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	230
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Darren James
Headteacher	Lynn Bima
Website	www.hilltopfirst.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	27 to 28 May 2010

Information about this school

- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.
- The headteacher has been appointed since the last inspection, and most of the staff were not in post when the school was last inspected.
- The school provides a breakfast club and an after-school club.

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 and the assistant headteachers. They also met with other school leaders, staff and pupils.

- The lead inspector met with four governors, including the chair of the governing body. Inspectors also spoke with a representative from Windsor and Maidenhead local authority.
- The inspection team carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, French and design technology. For each deep dive, inspectors 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.
- Inspectors also reviewed curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about other subject areas.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors checked the single central record of recruitment checks and talked to leaders responsible for safeguarding. Inspectors also talked to a range of staff and pupils informally.
- The inspection team considered the responses to the confidential staff survey and spoke to a range of staff about their views on the school.
- Inspectors took account of the 74 responses to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire and the additional 42 free-text responses. An inspector talked with some parents on the first morning of the inspection.
- The inspection team met with a range of pupils to discuss their views about the school and talked to pupils informally during social times and in lessons.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including the school development priorities and pupil premium funding plan.

Inspection team

Sara Staggs, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Simon Francis

Ofsted Inspector

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