

Inspection of a good school: Molehill Primary Academy

Hereford Road, Maidstone, Kent ME15 7ND

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 June 2023

Outcome

Molehill Primary 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 are extremely happy and confident. They enjoy school and talking about their learning. One pupil said they 'always have a smile' on their face when they come to school. Pupils show high levels of respect for staff and to each other. They know it is important to be kind, and they welcome everyone to their school. They are keen to include everyone. Older pupils demonstrate maturity and show this through the support they give to both their peers and younger pupils.

Pupils behave exceptionally well. They know what is expected of them and the rules they need to follow. This includes children in Reception and Nursery, where they begin to learn the routines of the school quickly. Leaders have created a strong culture of learning and nothing is allowed to disrupt this. Pupils feel safe in the school and know who they need to speak to if they have any worries.

Leaders ensure pupils have many opportunities to develop their own interests. Pupils attend clubs regularly and take part in a wide range of events and competitions. This includes trips to places like Shakespeare's Globe Theatre, the O2 arena and other, more local, events.

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

Leaders have designed a broad and highly ambitious curriculum meticulously. They have extremely high expectations of what pupils will achieve. Leaders have ensured the approach they take aligns with the national curriculum requirements, and pupils study a range of traditional subjects. Leaders have carefully considered the knowledge and skills they want pupils to gain and have broken these down into precise steps at each stage, beginning in the early years. There has been consideration of how pupils are prepared for the next steps of learning, including the transition to secondary school.

The multi-academy trust's support has been instrumental in the development of the curriculum. Trust leaders have ensured subject leaders are highly knowledgeable, which enables them to work with teachers to ensure the delivery of this highly ambitious curriculum is effective. Teachers are well equipped to make the right adaptations for pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff have high expectations of all pupils and ensure they all access the same high-quality curriculum. Teachers regularly check what pupils know and respond quickly to pupils' needs using a wide range of approaches.

Pupils' end-of-key-stage outcomes in the past do not reflect the high achievement of pupils currently in the school. Leaders' effective work to develop the curriculum means that pupils are learning exceptionally well. Pupils learn to read quickly. They become familiar with the sounds and vocabulary they need right from the earliest stages in Nursery. Teachers in early years demonstrate significant expertise in the teaching of phonics. Leaders also provide the training that staff need to ensure they know how to help pupils learn to read quickly. Pupils who need additional help with reading receive this immediately so that they can keep up with their peers. Where needed, further support is provided so that pupils become confident and fluent readers.

This same level of support is also evident in other subject areas. Pupils in mathematics talk about their learning with real enthusiasm, are very knowledgeable and see how it links to what they are learning now. Pupils demonstrate this in other areas of the curriculum. They produce work they are rightly proud of. Pupils are making rapid progress in a number of aspects and are curious to know more about the subjects they are studying.

Leaders value pupils' wider development highly. They provide a wide range of opportunities for pupils to take part in clubs, trips and events in school. These opportunities are woven throughout the curriculum carefully, and leaders take a thorough and thoughtful approach to enriching pupils' learning. In addition, leaders use links to the wider community effectively, such as the church and care home. They have also established productive links with schools in Malawi and Helsinki. Pupils learn how to connect their learning to the wider world, including the different pathways and careers they might pursue in the future.

The trust, local governors and school leaders are mindful of staff workload at all levels. They monitor this regularly, and teachers feel very well supported. Leaders' vision ensures there is clarity of purpose. This means the work staff do links closely to the values of the school and the trust, which aim to ensure all pupils learn well and make effective progress. Staff feel valued, and the school is led very effectively.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have created a strong culture of safeguarding. All staff are trained to identify risks and take action quickly. Leaders know the school community extremely well and are

proactive in making sure risks are minimized. Leaders follow up on actions in a timely way and reporting is robust. Governors and trustees make regular checks to monitor that this is happening.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe outside of school and when online. They know what to do if they have any concerns and know they have a range of trusted adults they can talk to.

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 January 2018.

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	138195
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10268969
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	301
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Frank Green
Principal	Laura Smith
Website	www.molehillprimaryacademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	30 and 31 January 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of Leigh Academies Trust.
- The school is governed by the trust and by a local academy board with delegated powers.
- The school does not use any alternative provision currently.
- The school has specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND on site. There is provision for pupils with speech, language and communication needs and provision for pupils with a hearing impairment.
- The school has Nursery provision on site and a breakfast club provided by the trust.

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 met with the headteacher, other school leaders, teaching staff, the chair of governors and a range of other members of the governing body. The inspector also

met with the chief executive officer of the trust and the academies director.

- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and art. 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 scrutinised a range of documents, including those relating to behaviour and SEND.
- The inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead. The single central record was also scrutinised. The inspector reviewed the school's safeguarding records.
- The inspector considered the view of pupils, parents and staff through discussions during the inspection and the Ofsted surveys.

Inspection team

Zoe Enser, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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