

Inspection of High Ongar Primary School

The Street, High Ongar, Ongar, Essex CM5 9NB

Inspection dates: 17 and 18 January 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils flourish at High Ongar Primary School as pupil well-being is at the heart of everyday life. Pupils know staff understand their individual needs. Staff care about pupils doing well. Pupils and staff work respectfully together to create a positive environment to learn in.

All pupils receive a good education. Pupils are motivated to learn and rise to the high standards set by their teachers. They relish the learning opportunities on offer, including the chance to develop their sporting, musical, debating and volunteering interests. They speak enthusiastically about going on residential visits, earning community awards, winning the class attendance award and taking part in house and team competitions. Pupils enjoy sharing their views with leaders on aspects of school life. They like having extra responsibilities, such as being a house captain or play leader.

Pupils follow the school motto of 'ready, respectful, safe', both in class and when playing outside. Pupils develop firm friendships and get along well. Pupils know what bullying is and say it rarely happens. If it did, they know adults will deal with it. This makes them feel safe. They are in no doubt that they have trusted adults who they can turn to for advice.

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

Leaders have updated the curriculum to ensure it is broad, ambitious and builds pupil's knowledge logically over time. Leaders are now working on where to place pupils' learning of wider concepts within the curriculum sequence. Leaders provide effective training for staff on how to deliver the school curriculum. Leaders and teachers regularly check what knowledge pupils have gained and make successful adaptations for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), so that they also achieve well. Tasks are well matched to the aims of the curriculum across the school and teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Pupils can recall their most recent learning. However, in the few foundation subjects which are the most recently updated, staff have yet to cover all of the required learning. This means pupils cannot confidently remember all the prior knowledge they need to know when making links to new learning.

Leaders prioritise reading from as soon as children start in the early years. Pupils follow a systematic approach to learning phonics and quickly develop fluency through regular practise. The books pupils read contain sounds they know and builds their reading confidence. Across the school, teachers provide pupils, including those in early years, with high-quality texts and comprehension activities. Teachers swiftly identify pupils who need help with reading. Timely support from well-trained adults means these pupils quickly catch up. Pupils refer to the wide range of books they have read and enjoyed.

As well as reading, children in Reception also benefit from meaningful learning experiences that develop their mathematical understanding and successfully prepare them for Year 1. They quickly settle into routines and listen well. They play and learn cooperatively and are curious about the range of learning experiences on offer. Adults support them in their play. Leaders continue to work with staff to develop their questioning, so all staff know how to enrich children's learning across the whole early years curriculum.

Throughout the school, pupils engage well in lessons and pay attention to what is being taught. Adults skilfully support pupils with SEND who need additional reminders or strategies to stay focused. This means all pupils learn in a calm and orderly environment.

Leaders provide a wealth of pastoral support to all pupils and especially to those in most need. Staff pride themselves on adopting a 'mentally healthy' approach and have extended this to the personal development curriculum. Pupils are taught about how to manage worries and deal with setbacks. They also know how to stay healthy and how to eat well. Through assemblies, religious education lessons and visitors into school, for example from a local mosque, pupils have a growing awareness of other faiths and beliefs. They understand about discrimination and are becoming more conscious of respecting differences. Through elections to the school council and house captains pupils understand democracy and have weekly debates in assembly about topical local and national news items. This contributes to their understanding of British values.

Staff feel valued at this school by leaders and the wider community. Staff report that leaders carefully consider their workload and respond to their views on this.

Governors know the school and community well. They provide appropriate challenge and support to leaders. They fulfil their statutory duties. The trust supports the school effectively with training, curriculum development and regular monitoring of standards.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured pupils know how to stay safe by building in regular safeguarding teaching through the curriculum and assemblies. As well as online safety, pupils are taught about managing risk linked to fire and water safety. They are taught about the risk of drugs and gun and knife crime.

Pupils are comfortable talking to trusted adults if they are worried. Adults respond swiftly and sensitively to concerns and staff know how to report these to leaders. The school and the trust ensure appropriate checks are in place for all adults who work in school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- A few foundation subjects have been recently updated and pupils do not yet have the prior knowledge needed to understand some of the revised curriculum. Leaders need to ensure that all teachers are reminded of this when starting a new topic and ensure that teachers plan in time to allow for these gaps to be filled securely and recalled in enough detail before moving on to new learning.
- In a few foundation subjects, leaders have not precisely set out the knowledge pupils need about the wider concepts they want pupils to understand. This means that teachers do not build these concepts securely into their curriculum sequence and so pupils cannot yet apply their understanding in the way leaders fully intend. Leaders should ensure that these curriculum plans are clear and understood by the staff that teach them.

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	146139
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10255142
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	132
Appropriate authority	Board of Trustees
Chair of trust	Keith Mogford
Headteacher	Jodie Evans
Website	http://www.highongar.essex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- High Ongar Primary School converted to become an academy school in September 2018. When its predecessor school, High Ongar Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.

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 held meetings with the headteacher, assistant headteacher and special educational needs coordinator, subject leaders, teachers and support staff.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: reading, mathematics, history and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors spoke to subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke with pupils, looked at pupils' workbooks and spoke with teachers and support staff.

- The inspection team met representatives from the local governing body, including both co-chairs of governors. Inspectors met the chief executive officer as well as the director of primary from the multi-academy trust.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including minutes of meetings of the governing body, trust visit reports and the school development plan.
- Inspectors looked at the arrangements for safeguarding, including the single central record of recruitment checks. Inspectors spoke with leaders about the systems and processes to support safeguarding, and the safeguarding ethos in the school.
- The inspection team spoke to parents at school drop off.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted’s online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including the 41 free-text comments. Inspectors also considered the 13 pupils survey responses. There were no responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Sara Boyce, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Susan Sutton

Ofsted Inspector

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