

Inspection of a good school: Falconhurst School

High Trees, Chaffron Way, Eaglestone, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire, MK6 5AX

Inspection dates:

16 and 17 November 2021

Outcome

Falconhurst School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to school. It is a safe and enjoyable place in which to learn. Leaders, and staff want the best for pupils and form caring and supportive relationships with them. Pupils are proud to talk about how diverse their school is and how much they enjoy learning about the different lives of their friends and classmates.

Falconhurst serves its community well. Parents have particularly appreciated the online support given to them during the pandemic. Leaders clearly care for pupils and their families. Staff go out of their way to support pupils and keep them from harm. Parents are welcomed into the school. This strong sense of community helps children joining Nursery and Reception classes get off to a good start. They settle quickly and gain the skills needed for the next stage.

Caring adults provide effective support for the minority of pupils who have difficulty managing their emotions. Staff deal with issues calmly and sensitively in order to cause the least disruption to learning possible. Pupils confirm that bullying is rare and say that adults sort any problems quickly.

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

Leaders have prioritised curriculum development. They have thought carefully about how the curriculum can be delivered successfully in the school's mixed-age classes. Leaders have designed a new, ambitious curriculum and updated planning materials. Curriculum plans set out the important knowledge that pupils need to know and remember. Staff say this change has been manageable and they feel well supported by leaders.

The mathematics curriculum is strong. Building upon what pupils already know, teachers introduce new ideas and concepts in manageable ways. This helps pupils to know more and remember more over time. They make checks on what pupils have remembered. Leaders have recently adapted plans to ensure that pupils receive additional support to

recall number facts. Teachers ensure that any pupils who need additional support are given extra help.

In other subjects, such as geography, teachers make sure that pupils in the mixed-age classes cover the curriculum and learn through interesting topics. Pupils remember what they have been taught recently. However, pupils are not always clear about how this new knowledge links with the knowledge they have learned before. Leaders are ambitious to strengthen and link topics even more, so that pupils' learning can be deepened further.

Leaders have made improvements to the teaching of phonics and early reading. Teachers follow a common approach to introducing new letters and sounds and teach pupils how to blend these sounds into words and sentences. Young pupils read books that enable them to practise the sounds they are learning. Staff are supportive and help pupils to practise new learning in an active, enjoyable way. However, on occasions, pupils do not retain the subject knowledge needed to complete complex reading tasks. Teachers' use of assessment does not always identify where foundations need to be stronger. Leaders are aware of this and are already working to deepen pupils' knowledge across the curriculum.

Leaders ensure that the youngest children are happy, settled and are looked after effectively. The provision for three-year-olds and Reception Year is well-thought through. Quickly, children learn to concentrate. They demonstrate sustained focus and independence when involved in learning activities. This is because adults are skilful in planning learning that is appropriate to children's needs and interests.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities get the help that they need. Staff are sensitive, caring and want the best for every pupil. Teachers and teaching assistants know the learning needs of pupils and support them to access the curriculum well. As a result, they make rapid progress.

Leaders have ensured that a range of activities are provided to support pupils' wider development. Pupils learn how to be healthy and how to keep themselves safe. Pupils develop a deep respect for all forms of equality. Leaders link this work through assemblies, lessons and the books pupils read. Teachers build pupils' confidence and self-esteem. One pupil said that through aspirational assemblies he has learned 'not to give up but to reach for the top'.

Governors know the school well. They are committed to supporting the school and the community. They have a firm grasp of the quality of education on offer and hold leaders to account well. Staff welcome the support and training they have received. Staff praise the headteacher for her care in ensuring their well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Senior leaders ensure that all staff are thoroughly trained in how to keep children safe. They update staff on safeguarding issues in a timely manner. Staff are highly attentive to pupils' needs. They know what to do if they have concerns over pupils' welfare. Leaders pursue any concerns over pupils' safety in a thorough and sensitive manner. When necessary, they work with external partners to support pupils and families.

Leaders have developed a curriculum that helps pupils to be mindful of risks and how to manage them. Leaders carry out thorough checks on the suitability of adults working at the school. Governors are well trained on safeguarding issues.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There are some inconsistencies in teachers' implementation of the planned curriculum across the school. As a result, a few pupils do not build on what they have already learned over time. Leaders should ensure that across all subjects, pupils deepen their knowledge and build their learning by making links with what has gone before.
- While assessment is used effectively in mathematics, there is no consistent approach to assessment in other subjects. As a result, teachers do not securely build on what pupils have learned in the past and remember from prior learning. Leaders need to ensure that teachers make better use of assessment and retrieval to more appropriately challenge pupils across the foundation subjects.

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 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 school to be good on 21 September 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

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| Unique reference number | 110355 |
| Local authority | Milton Keynes |
| Inspection number | 10200087 |
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 3 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mr Will Swann |
| Headteacher | Mrs Louise Aird |
| Website | www.falconhurstschool.co.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 21 September 2016 |

Information about this school

- The school does use alternative, off-site provision for 3 pupils.
- Most pupils are white British. A higher-than-average proportion of pupils have English as an additional language.

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 school leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation.
- The inspector met with senior leaders, including the safeguarding team, teaching staff and some support staff. Meetings were also held with some governors, including the chair of the governing body, and a representative of the local authority.
- Deep dives were carried out in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- A range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the school and priorities for improvement were scrutinised.

- The inspector reviewed arrangements for safeguarding by scrutinising records and through discussions with staff and pupils.
- The inspector took account of the views of pupils, parents and staff, as gathered through discussions and Ofsted's online surveys.

Inspection team

Mineza Maher, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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