

Highlees Primary School

Ashton Road, Westwood, Peterborough, PE3 7ER

Inspection dates 21–22 May 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected as an academy	
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management	Good		2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good		2
Quality of teaching	Good		2
Achievement of pupils	Good		2
Early years provision	Good		2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The Principal and Vice Principal provide very strong leadership. Together with other leaders, governors and the Academies Trust, they have been successful in raising achievement and improving teaching.
- The academy has exceptionally thorough systems for checking on the progress of different groups of pupils. Leaders use the resulting information very well to drive improvement.
- The quality of teaching is good. The fact that new teachers receive effective support has enabled the academy to improve teaching despite a significant number of staff changes.
- Provision in the early years is good, and children are developing their skills well.
- Pupils' achievement is good in the rest of the academy and standards are rising. Pupils currently in the academy have made good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- A wide range of support programmes enables disadvantaged pupils and those at the early stages of learning English to make good progress.
- Most pupils behave well and they are polite and helpful. They have positive attitudes to learning and feel safe in school.
- The academy provides outstanding support for pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. It works very closely with their families and with other agencies, and has excellent procedures for making sure that pupils are protected.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers and teaching assistants do not always question pupils effectively in mathematics to check how much they understand or make practical equipment available to support their learning.
- At times, some activities in the early years do not promote children's learning as well as they could.
- The academy does not provide as much support as it could for those less-able pupils at Key Stage 1 - and for a few older pupils – who have difficulty forming their letters.
- Occasionally, teachers do not challenge the most-able pupils enough in some lessons, though their overall progress is good.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team visited 30 lessons. In combination with looking at pupils’ books, talking to them about their work and checking their progress over time, this provided a balance of evidence on teaching and learning. Inspectors heard a small number of Year 1 pupils read, looked at lunchtime and playtime arrangements, talked with a group of pupils and observed two assemblies.
- Meetings were held with: the Principal and Vice-Principal, who is also the acting early years leader; the inclusion manager; the special educational needs co-ordinator; the literacy and numeracy leaders; and other staff in key leadership roles. Discussions took place with five representatives of the governing body and with the primary director of the Elliot Foundation Academies Trust.
- There were too few responses to the online survey, Parent View, for these to be taken into account but the inspection team looked at the findings of the academy’s own parental questionnaire and an inspector spoke with some parents when they brought their children to the academy. The inspection team also considered the 27 completed staff questionnaires.
- The inspection team observed the academy’s work and looked at a range of documentation. This included: the academy’s self-evaluation and development plan; records of pupils’ attainment, progress, behaviour and attendance; and systems for protecting and safeguarding pupils.

Inspection team

Margaret Goodchild, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Debra Whiting	Additional Inspector
Damien Turrell	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This was the first inspection since Highlees Primary became an academy on 1 September 2013, sponsored by the Elliot Foundation Academies Trust.
- The academy is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who join and leave the academy other than at the usual points is much higher than in most schools. Since September 2014, 58 pupils have joined and 44 pupils have left the academy.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is well above average. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is also well above average. These pupils are mostly new arrivals to the United Kingdom, predominantly from Eastern Europe.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by pupil premium funding is well above average. This funding is for pupils looked after by the local authority and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is slightly above average.
- Children in the two Reception classes attend full time.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- There have been a number of staff changes since Highlees Primary became an academy. The Vice-Principal took over the role of acting early years leader in the autumn term; a newly appointed leader will take on this role at the beginning of the next academic year.
- The school runs its own breakfast club.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards and build on existing strengths in teaching by:
 - making sure that questioning by teachers and teaching assistants in mathematics is sufficiently focused to determine how much pupils understand and that they provide practical equipment to help pupils with their calculations
 - providing more support for pupils who have difficulty forming their letters
 - regularly checking to make sure that all activities in the early years promote children's learning effectively
 - making sure that teachers always give the most-able pupils work that is difficult enough for them.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The very strong leadership of the Principal and Vice-Principal has brought about rapid improvement since Highlees Primary gained academy status. Senior leaders have a clear shared vision and commitment to making the academy as good as possible and it is well placed to improve further. Leaders have established a culture in which relationships are positive, teaching can flourish and pupils are expected to behave well.
- The academy has exceptionally thorough systems for gathering and analysing assessment information and tracking the progress of different groups of pupils. Leaders use the resulting information very well to identify development priorities and to identify which pupils need extra support. This helps them to ensure that pupils receive equal opportunities and prevents any discrimination.
- The leadership of teaching is good and senior leaders have been rigorous in managing teachers' performance. They tackled ineffective teaching in the early stages of the school gaining academy status and have put in place good systems for coaching and supporting new teachers. Where relative weaknesses are identified, leaders provide good support to bring about the required improvements.
- The academy uses its pupil premium funding well to support disadvantaged pupils. It uses the funding to provide individual and small-group tuition, to support pupils who need extra help with reading and phonics (the sounds that letters represent) and to subsidise activities such as breakfast club, school trips and music tuition for eligible pupils. This is helping disadvantaged pupils to make good progress.
- The academy makes effective use of its primary physical education and sport premium to increase pupils' physical skills and improve their health and well-being. It has used the funding to increase pupils' involvement in sports festivals and competitions with other schools, to provide football and basketball coaching and to pay for staff training in dance and gymnastics. It has also used the funding to train Year 5 pupils as playground leaders and to fund fitness sessions.
- The curriculum promotes pupils' academic and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. A good range of educational visits, clubs and special events stimulate pupils' learning. A strong focus on the 'five Cs' - care, courtesy, consideration, cooperation and courage - underpin the academy's work and its promotion of British values. The academy also prepares pupils effectively for life in modern Britain. It promotes harmony among the different ethnic groups represented in the academy and provides pupils with opportunities to learn about different cultures, lifestyles and beliefs.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements. The academy conducts rigorous checks on staff and has exceptionally good procedures for making sure that pupils are protected. It works very closely with other agencies and keeps thorough records. The development of The Hub, where the academy provides support and special activities for parents and families, is an important aspect of the excellent support provided for pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable.
- The high quality leadership of the Assistant Principal for Inclusion is a major factor in the way the academy meets the needs of the many pupils who join other than at the usual times, often with no English. Other teachers with responsibilities for key aspects of the academy's work generally make a good contribution to its efforts to raise standards and improve teaching. The very recently appointed mathematics leader has made a positive start and the Vice-Principal is providing effective support for early years staff until a new permanent leader takes over the position in September. The academy is currently developing the role of leaders in non-core subjects.
- The academy's own parental survey shows that parents are satisfied with the education their children receive. Parents who spoke with an inspector confirmed that they are happy with the way the academy meets their children's needs.
- The Academies Trust shares with the Principal a strong vision and high expectations. The academy has worked closely with its progress partner, an external consultant provided by the Academies Trust, who has

helped to strengthen leadership and improve teaching and learning. In addition, the academy has drawn effectively on links with other schools sponsored by the trust to inform aspects of its practice.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governance is effective and the governing body provides very good support and challenge to senior leaders. Governors have a detailed understanding of the academy's effectiveness and make a meaningful contribution to its development.
- Governors regularly visit the academy and receive detailed reports about its work. This helps to ensure that they are well informed about teaching and pupils' achievement. They make sure that teachers' performance is managed effectively, and that the impact of their work on pupils' achievement informs decisions about their pay. They have supported the Principal in rewarding good teaching and tackling past underperformance. The governing body regularly checks data to see how well the academy is performing and makes sure that pupil premium funding is having a positive impact on the progress of eligible pupils.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils display positive attitudes to learning and enjoy school. They are polite and helpful, and are respectful towards one another and the staff.
- Children in the early years develop an enthusiasm for learning and play harmoniously together. In the rest of the academy, most pupils apply themselves well in lessons, listening carefully to their teachers and cooperating well. Older pupils, in particular, readily help one another, discuss their work sensibly and take a pride in their achievement. Pupils who join the academy other than at the usual times settle in quickly and soon integrate into the community that makes up Highlees Primary.
- The academy uses rewards and a range of other strategies to encourage pupils to attend regularly. This is proving effective and the academy has succeeded in raising the attendance rate so that it is now broadly average. The breakfast club provides a positive start to the day for pupils who use the facility and this has been a contributory factor in improvements in the academy's attendance rate.
- Carefully tailored individual support programmes are provided for pupils whose behaviour can be challenging and the academy has good systems for managing behaviour. As a result, pupils behave well in most lessons, around the academy and when they come together for assembly.
- Nevertheless, low-level disruption occurs in a few lessons, mostly at Key Stage 1. While inappropriate behaviour is not significant enough to disrupt others' learning, it means that the pupils themselves do not make as much progress as they should.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say that they feel safe and the academy has made good use of surveys of pupils' views to identify and act upon any concerns that they have. It is also quick to act in response to any areas of concern flagged up by parents or the local community. Nearly all parents believe that the academy deals effectively with bullying and manages pupils' behaviour appropriately.
- Pupils have a good awareness of how to keep themselves safe and benefit from a termly focus on different aspects of safety. This helps pupils to identify possible dangers in the outside world and raises their awareness of how to avoid risk when using the internet and mobile phones. Pupils understand about different types of bullying and say that there are very few instances of bullying in the academy. When any incidents occur, they say that they are promptly dealt with by the staff.

The quality of teaching is good

- Lesson observations, work in pupils' books and the academy's own records indicate that teaching is good.

- Classrooms are vibrant and attractive, with information that stimulates and supports pupils' learning. Teachers make tasks interesting so that pupils are keen to learn. Teachers have good subject knowledge, especially in Years 5 and 6, and provide plenty of opportunities for pupils to think for themselves.
- The teaching of reading is good. The academy has recently improved the way it teaches phonics and observations show that learning is generally matched well to the next steps in pupils' learning. There is a good focus on making sure that pupils understand new vocabulary. In guided reading sessions, they are encouraged to explain why they have come to a particular view about a plot or character. For instance, teachers often challenge pupils to justify the conclusion they have reached.
- The teaching of writing is mostly good and teachers provide pupils with regular opportunities to develop their skills in a range of subjects. Pupils are encouraged to use dictionaries and to pay careful attention to their spelling. Teachers do not always correct pupils when they form their letters incorrectly, however, and the academy does not provide enough help for those who struggle with their letter formation.
- The teaching of mathematics is generally good, especially at Key Stage 2 where teachers get pupils to explain their thinking and usually reshape tasks well in response to any misconceptions pupils have. This was particularly evident in mathematics lessons in Year 6, where the teachers' questioning helped pupils to explore all possibilities as they identified patterns and used predictions to solve problems. Work was pitched at the right level and the most-able pupils were able to tackle tasks at a deeper and more complex level.
- The large number of pupils who join the academy at points other than the usual ones make at least good progress as a result of the well-planned support programmes. Teachers quickly identify their learning needs and, with the help of teaching assistants, provide appropriate support for them. The many small groups led by teaching assistants provide well for these pupils, and for those who are at the early stages of learning English or who are disadvantaged. This is because work is usually matched well to pupils' learning needs.
- When marking pupils' work, teachers provide them with both encouragement and useful advice about how they could improve. Teachers usually also make sure that pupils have time to act upon their comments.
- On many occasions, teachers and other adults question pupils well to find out how much they know and to get them to think deeply. In a mathematics support session led by a teaching assistant in Year 5, pupils made outstanding progress as a result of the quick fire questions that pushed them further and further in their understanding. However, teachers and teaching assistants do not always ask questions that are focused enough to check pupils' understanding in mathematics or to pinpoint exactly what help they need. At times, teachers do not make practical equipment available to support pupils' learning in mathematics, especially in Key Stage 1.

The achievement of pupils is good

- The high proportion of pupils who join or leave the academy other than at the usual times mean that published results are not an entirely accurate reflection of overall achievement. Furthermore, improvements in the quality of education have led to an increase in the proportion of pupils currently in the academy who have made good progress so that standards are rising in reading, writing and mathematics.
- A significant proportion of children join the early years with skills that are below those typically found for their age in reading, writing, shape, space and measure, knowledge of the world and in their imaginative development. In other areas of learning, their skills are broadly typical for their age. The proportion of children who reached a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year in 2014 was below average overall, though results were close to those nationally in some areas. Children currently in the academy are achieving well and an increased number are on track to reach expected levels by the end of the year.
- While results in the screening of phonics at the end of Year 1 were below average in 2014, children in the

Reception classes and pupils in Year 1 are now making good progress in learning about phonics. At the end of Year 2, standards were below average in writing and low in reading and mathematics in 2014, partly reflecting the high number of pupils who join Key Stage 1 having freshly arrived in the country. The achievement of pupils currently in Year 2 shows clear improvement and their attainment is broadly in line with national expectations.

- At the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment in 2014 was average in reading and writing and pupils made good progress in these areas during their time in Key Stage 2. Standards were below average in English grammar, spelling and punctuation, however, and low in mathematics where pupils made less progress than their national counterparts.
- Pupils currently in Year 6 are performing in line with national expectations in mathematics and reading, and attainment is above expectations in writing. Standards have improved in all three subject areas since the school became an academy, and pupils have made good progress during their time in Key Stage 2. All pupils in the current Year 6 have made the expected amount of progress across the key stage and a significant proportion have made better than expected progress.
- At the end of Year 6 in 2014, the attainment of disadvantaged pupils was a term ahead of their classmates in reading and mathematics and in line with them in writing. The attainment of disadvantaged pupils was a term behind other pupils nationally in reading and writing and a year behind in mathematics. Disadvantaged pupils made less progress than their classmates and than other pupils nationally in mathematics. They made slightly less progress than the rest of the class in reading and writing, similar progress to other pupils nationally in reading and slightly more than pupils nationally in writing.
- The academy's own records show that pupils who are disadvantaged and those learning English as an additional language are currently making good progress. These groups benefit from the wide range of support programmes the academy provides for them. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, including those who join the academy other than at the usual times, also make good progress.
- The progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is good. This is because the academy identifies their needs carefully and provides good support sessions for them. Their needs are usually met well in lessons through tasks that match the next steps in their learning.
- Lesson observations and work in pupils' books confirm that achievement is good overall. However, the academy does not provide as much support as it could for those less-able pupils at Key Stage 1 - and for a few older pupils – who have difficulty forming their letters. This slows these pupils' progress in some lessons.
- The most-able pupils normally make the same good progress as their classmates and records show that their overall achievement is good. They produce a substantial amount of work in mathematics and some thoughtful written work. A Year 6 pupil wrote, 'As the sky, which was covered in a blanket of mist, began to lighten with the eerie glow of the moon, a starving beast came swiftly out of the dark undergrowth'. Just occasionally, teachers do not challenge the most able enough within individual lessons, for example, when they are ready to move on more quickly to more difficult work.

The early years provision

is good

- The early years is led and managed well and the Vice-Principal is providing good support and direction for the staff. The academy has effective systems for finding out what children can already do when they join the Reception classes. Staff meet regularly with parents and keep them well informed about how they can support their children's learning at home.
- Achievement in the early years is good and children are well prepared for moving up to Year 1. Although children join the academy with skills below those typically found, their attainment was close to the national average in a number of areas in 2014.
- Lesson observations, children's books and 'learning journals' show that teaching is good. As a result,

children currently in the academy are making good progress, including in reading and writing. Their books show that they write for a range of purposes and make good use of their knowledge of phonics to spell words. They are making good progress in other areas of learning and do particularly well in developing their communication and language. This is because staff provide plenty of opportunities for them to talk and express their ideas.

- Children behave well and readily engage in activities. They develop trusting relationships with the staff, play harmoniously together and feel safe.

- While children have opportunities to take part in varied activities and the Vice-Principal analyses assessment information carefully to identify gaps in their knowledge, activities do not all promote children's learning as well as they could. During sessions aimed at developing children's literacy skills, some activities did not promote reading or writing skills sufficiently well. There were also instances where teachers did not check closely enough on children's learning when they were using the equipment and materials. As a result, they made less progress than they could.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	139930
Local authority	Peterborough
Inspection number	450305

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	392
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Elaine Hedgecock
Principal	Emma Ward
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected as an academy
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