

Inspection of a good school: Hillcross Primary School

Ashridge Way, Morden, Surrey SM4 4EE

Inspection dates:

28 February and 1 March 2023

Outcome

Hillcross Primary School 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 love coming to this school. Pupils develop sophisticated knowledge through learning the curriculum. They are inquisitive and motivated to learn and sensible. Pupils feel safe here because adults listen to them and take what they say seriously. One parent, capturing the views of many, said, 'Our children are thriving at Hillcross.'

Ensuring that everyone feels valued and respected is taken very seriously here. Leaders are ambitious for all pupils to enjoy high levels of success. Pupils who need additional help are supported with kindness and understanding by adults and their peers alike. Pupils are considerate and treat their peers with sensitivity. Pupils cooperate exceptionally well together.

Pupils are well aware of bullying and the harm that it can cause. Staff take swift action so that it stops. One pupil reflected what many said about bullying: 'The reason it is so rare here is because teachers are so good at resolving it quickly.'

Pupils' opinions matter here. Leaders empower pupils to think for themselves. They regularly ask for pupils' views. The junior leadership team has an important role in improving the school's work on well-being, including forming a well-being committee and sharing a weekly well-being tip with the whole school.

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

Leaders have developed a highly ambitious, rich and interesting curriculum. They meticulously plan the knowledge pupils learn in small steps from the early years to Year 6. Each step builds precisely on the last. Teachers consistently model highly ambitious vocabulary. Pupils develop deep knowledge and make links between areas of learning. For example, pupils in Year 4 used what they have learned in science about the states of

matter to help them in geography when thinking about how rock becomes magma within a volcano.

Teachers use their expert subject knowledge to support and extend pupils' thinking. They give clear, interesting explanations and make highly effective use of examples. They insist on pupils using precise vocabulary. As a result, pupils are highly motivated to improve their own knowledge.

Teachers check pupils' understanding and check their independent work during lessons. Teachers use the information from these assessments to introduce new content at just the right moment, allowing pupils to build securely on what they already know. Teachers notice and intervene swiftly if a pupil has not understood something. This prevents gaps in their knowledge and helps all pupils to achieve highly.

Leaders ensure that reading is top of everyone's agenda. The 'reading pledge' guarantees that pupils read every day. Pupils delight in stories chosen to nurture their love of reading, deepen their knowledge of the curriculum and expose pupils to diverse experiences. Teachers are skilled at bringing stories to life. Pupils typically take on the expression teachers use to read their own books with emphasis and enthusiasm.

Children at the early stages of reading are well supported to develop their language and listening skills through regular stories and high-quality discussions with adults. They quickly gain the phonics knowledge they need to read with fluency and decode unfamiliar words accurately. Teachers support them skilfully. Leaders identify quickly those who need extra help and provide the support pupils need.

Children in the early years form very positive working relationships with adults and their peers. Children feel at home and become engrossed in well-designed learning that offers rich opportunities to find out about the world around them. For example, children enjoyed learning in the Nursery room about the life cycle of ducklings and were thrilled by a visit from a local farm.

Leaders have carefully designed a personal development programme which ensures that pupils are taught about key issues including healthy relationships, safety and current affairs. Pupils relish the excellent opportunities they have to extend their knowledge through a rich programme of outings, clubs and visitors to the school. They gain confidence through the wide range of opportunities they have, for example being shown how to perform first aid by a visiting doctor.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are exceptionally well supported. Leaders ensure that pupils with SEND succeed in learning the same curriculum as their peers. They also develop pupils' independence so that they are extremely well prepared when they move to secondary school. For example, pupils use 'independence checklists' to help them to break down tasks and think about steps to success during lessons.

Staff appreciate the clear direction and sense of teamwork provided by leaders. They are overwhelmingly positive about the support they receive, including the action leaders take to manage their workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders are determined to protect pupils from harm. They ensure that staff and governors receive comprehensive training, regularly updated, including through staff briefing and bulletins. Leaders have instilled in staff an 'it could happen here' attitude. As a result, staff are vigilant and report even the smallest indication that may suggest that a pupil might need help.

Leaders take swift action. This includes working closely with families and, where necessary, making referrals to external agencies.

Pupils are well informed about how to keep themselves safe in the community, online and within relationships. They are taught age-appropriate content, such as which parts of their bodies are private and how and when to say 'no'.

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 February 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	102655
Local authority	Merton
Inspection number	10269102
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	479
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Stuart Field and Robert Chidley
Headteacher	Lisa Francis
Website	www.hillcross.merton.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	21 and 22 February 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspector carried out this ungraded inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

- 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 have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, they discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, looked at pupils' work and spoke to teachers, and spoke to some pupils about their learning.
- The inspector also looked at curriculum information in other subjects.
- The inspector considered the school's policies and procedures for safeguarding and supporting pupils' health and safety as well as their welfare and well-being. This

included looking at case studies and reviewing the school's record of pre-employment checks.

- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher and other leaders. Inspectors also met with leaders with responsibility for behaviour and pupils' personal development.
- The inspector met with members of the local governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector considered responses to Ofsted's online surveys for parents, staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Rebecca Iles-Smith, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
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