

Inspection of a good school: Highshore School

135 Farmers Road, Camberwell, London SE5 0TW

Inspection dates:

28 February and 1 March 2023

Outcome

Highshore School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Parents and carers are very positive about this school. They describe it as a 'family'. They say that their children are achieving well, both academically and in their personal development.

Highshore is a calm, happy and safe environment. Classrooms and corridors are full of colourful displays. Leaders make sure that therapy support for pupils is given the priority it needs. This includes through the provision of holiday activities and help for parents. Even the school lift offers the pupils that use it a sensory experience.

Leaders have high expectations for pupils. They have created a school where everyone works together to make sure that pupils' confidence and ability to communicate and be independent flourish during their time at the school. Students in the sixth form benefit from college placements and/or external work experience opportunities that help prepare them well for adulthood and employment.

Pupils are kept safe and are well looked after. They know that adults are there for them. They say that everyone is kind and respectful towards each other. As a result, pupils get on well together during lessons and at social times. Any incidents of poor behaviour or bullying are rare.

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

Leaders make sure that they use each pupil's education, health and care (EHC) plan and their checks on what pupils already know and can do when deciding on the right curriculum pathway for the pupil. Leaders also make sure that in each pathway, pupils study a broad range of subjects, including appropriate courses that lead to different qualifications for pupils in key stages 4 and 5. They keep what pupils learn under regular review. For example, a new approach to phonics was launched at the beginning of this academic year.

In most subjects and pathways, leaders have thought about what pupils will learn, and why and when. They find ways of helping pupils to remember knowledge, for example through lots of repetition in mathematics. In some other subjects or pathways, curriculum thinking is not as clear. Sometimes, what pupils will learn is not as precisely identified and well sequenced as it could be. This means that teachers choose activities that can lack a focus on subject-specific learning. This holds some pupils back from building up a deep body of knowledge and skills.

Reading is prioritised at the school. Leaders have made a lot of progress with their new phonics approach. Leaders make sure that the books pupils read match the sounds they are learning. Pupils are becoming more confident in learning to read. That said, some staff lack the expertise needed and do not promote pupils' use of phonics as well as they should. Pupils enjoy reading and use the school library each week as part of their literacy curriculum.

Teachers have secure subject knowledge and use it well to present knowledge and explain concepts to pupils at the right level. For example, in art, Year 10 pupils have used a range of materials to produce their own, high-quality piece of work that reflects the style of the artist whom they had been studying. Staff successfully adapt activities to include pupils who need to use communication devices and assisted technologies. Most staff use assessment well to check that pupils are learning what they want them to. Staff also use other methods, such as photographs, to record pupils' achievements. However, sometimes teaching and the feedback staff give to pupils can focus too much on the activity rather than on what pupils should have learned.

Pupils enjoy school and behave well. Low-level disruption is rare, so teachers can concentrate on helping pupils to get on with their learning.

Pupils go on to achieve qualifications, including at GCSE, functional skills and/or entry level, to help them secure an appropriate placement when the time comes to leave school. Leaders support pupils well to prepare for their future lives. This includes a lot of targeted support, for example with independent travel training and personal safety. Sixth-form students speak enthusiastically about their work experience and what they learn about the world of work. Leaders use personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) to teach pupils about a wide range of topics. This includes healthy relationships, staying safe when online and careers education. Pupils can join a range of after-school clubs, such as those for cycling, dance and drumming. Leaders work with external organisations to help pupils engage in exciting projects and sports, including drama and hockey.

Staff feel very well supported at Highshore. They like their half-termly well-being breakfast and Friday treats. They say that leaders listen to them and that leaders are approachable and have a clear focus on staff as well as pupil well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders know pupils' needs and vulnerabilities well. They have a proactive approach towards working with different agencies, which supports families in accessing any help they need as early as possible. Staff treat pupils with dignity and respect.

Staff know the risks that pupils may face in their lives. They help pupils in a variety of different ways, including through the PSHE curriculum, to look after themselves. Parents are very confident that their children are well cared for. It was summed up by one who said, 'From the moment she comes through the front door, I know my daughter is safe.'

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have reviewed their curriculum intent across the curriculum. Some of their curriculum thinking is not as precise and well sequenced across all subjects and pathways. As a result, sometimes teachers do not identify and give feedback to pupils on important subject knowledge they should be learning from their activities. Leaders should refine their curriculum thinking across all subjects and pathways. They should provide further training for staff in helping them to think about the purpose of their chosen learning activities.
- The support for some pupils who need to improve their reading fluency is not as well developed as it should be. This is because a few staff lack expertise in how to deliver the phonics curriculum. Sometimes, they do not promote pupils' phonics knowledge as well as they could. Leaders should ensure that all staff have a high level of expertise in the teaching of reading.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in February 2013.

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	100872
Local authority	Southwark
Inspection number	10255528
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	152
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	59
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Shane Holland
Headteacher	Eileen Ollieuz
Website	www.highshore.southwark.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	28 November 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- All pupils at the school have an EHC plan and have severe or moderate learning difficulties. Pupils have a range of different special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- There are no pupils using any alternative provision.
- Students in the sixth form access college courses one day a week at Lewisham College as part of their curriculum.

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 inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and a range of other senior leaders. The lead inspector also held meetings with representatives from the governing body and the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in literacy (with a focus on reading), mathematics and music. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited a sample of lessons and spoke to teachers and pupils about their learning. Inspectors looked at samples of pupils' work and listened to some pupils reading.
- Inspectors spoke to leaders and reviewed curriculum documentation about other subjects, including art, PSHE and humanities. They visited lessons and reviewed pupils' work in these subjects, including in the sixth form.
- Inspectors met with leaders with responsibility for safeguarding and behaviour. They reviewed a range of documentation, including pre-employment checks on staff, case studies and behaviour information. Inspectors also considered the views of parents, staff and pupils.
- Inspectors considered replies to Ofsted Parent View and the online surveys for staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Sam Hainey, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Martyn Patterson

Ofsted Inspector

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