

Inspection of Hillocks Primary Academy

Unwin Road, Sutton-in-Ashfield NG17 4ND

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 September 2023

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

The principal of this school is Claire Gledhill. This school is part of Diverse Academies Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, David Cotton, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Mike Quigley. There is also an executive principal, Lucy Spacey, who is responsible for this school and three others.

What is it like to attend this school?

Hillocks is a warm and friendly school. Staff have created an environment that makes pupils feel happy, safe, and welcome. It is a place where children come first.

Staff really get to know every pupil. Pupils know that the adults at Hillocks will help them deal with any worries they might have. This gives pupils a strong sense of belonging and a feeling of security.

The school is well supported by Diverse Academies Trust. The trust has overseen significant improvements at Hillocks in recent years. Everyone associated with the school has high ambition and aspiration for all pupils. However, there is still further work to do to develop the quality of teaching and learning so that pupils acquire the knowledge and skills they need for the next stage of their education.

Pupils behave well. They treat others as they want to be treated. The caring ethos at the school is built on the values of respect, curiosity, kindness, and determination. Staff model these values, and they encourage pupils to display them in lessons and on the playground. This is called 'putting on a Hillocks show!' Pupils strive to earn golden tickets for meeting these expectations.

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

The school's curriculum plans are set out in a precise, logical order in each subject so that it is clear what pupils must know and when. However, pupils do not remember what they have learned before in sufficient detail. They recall the activities they have done rather than the key knowledge they need for future learning. This is because staff do not emphasise the crucial content that pupils must retain, or systematically revisit important prior learning in all subjects.

The sequence of learning is not as well defined in the early years. The curriculum for some areas of learning in the early years is not broken down into small steps. This prevents children from building their knowledge and skills gradually over time.

Children begin to learn to read as soon as they start in Reception. Staff teach phonics well. They encourage pupils to spot sounds made by more than one letter. This helps pupils blend letter sounds together to read whole words. However, the books given to pupils who find reading more difficult are not always matched to the letter sounds they know. This means they cannot read their books accurately by themselves to develop their confidence and fluency. Older pupils enjoy reading challenging chapter books as a whole class. By 'echoing' their teachers, pupils practise expressive, speedy reading. In addition to reading lessons, pupils are regularly exposed to short texts in other subjects. This approach gives pupils a wider reading experience, enabling them to use and apply their reading skills often.

The school has ensured that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well catered for at Hillocks. They receive precise, timely support matched to their individual needs.

Pupils sometimes spend time doing work that is too easy or too hard. The school has not ensured that staff check closely enough on learning during lessons so that pupils' misconceptions are addressed quickly.

The school has reviewed the effectiveness of procedures for managing and improving attendance. Leaders track absence closely and intervene early to stop pupils having too much time off. However, reducing the rate of absence remains a priority for the school.

Pupils benefit from a personal development offer that prepares them for life in their local community, modern Britain, and the wider world. The school has ensured that pupils are equipped to deal with risks that are relevant to where they live. Pupils hold respectful, inclusive attitudes towards difference and diversity. They understand the importance of equality. There are plenty of opportunities to broaden pupils' horizons, such as the residential visit to Bristol to see the achievements of Isambard Kingdom Brunel.

Staff love working at the school. They are invested in the Hillocks journey, and they are determined for the school and all its pupils to thrive. Staff appreciate the support and encouragement they receive. Leaders are considerate of workload when new initiatives are introduced, providing staff with time to complete their subject leadership responsibilities.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils do not reliably remember the important knowledge they have covered before in sufficient detail. This leaves pupils unable to add to what they already know and deepen their understanding of important concepts. The school should review the approach to the recall of prior learning so that teachers routinely revisit and check on the key content that pupils need to use again, helping them to remember it over the long term.
- The school's arrangements for checking closely on pupils' learning are not consistently implemented. Sometimes pupils spend time doing work that is too easy or too hard. Misconceptions and errors are not always addressed quickly enough. The school must ensure that teachers sharpen their use of formative assessment so that pupils are moved on to new content when they are ready, and misconceptions are addressed swiftly.

- Some pupils are given reading books that are too difficult for them. This prevents these pupils from reading their books successfully by themselves and developing their fluency. The school should ensure that all pupils in the early stages of learning to read are given books that are matched to the letter sounds they know.
- The early years curriculum has not been broken down into a precise enough sequence. As a result, children do not build their knowledge and skills systematically in all areas of learning. The school must review the early years curriculum, ensuring that children build their knowledge and skills step by step in readiness for key stage one.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	145847
Local authority	Nottinghamshire County Council
Inspection number	10288365
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	298
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Mike Quigley
Principal	Claire Gledhill (Principal) Lucy Spacey (Executive Principal)
Website	www.hillocksprimary-ac.org.uk
Date(s) of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The principal took up her role in September 2023.
- Hillocks Primary Academy converted to become an academy school in December 2020 as part of Diverse Academies Trust. When its predecessor school, Hillocks Primary and Nursery School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be inadequate overall.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics, history, art and design and physical education. For the deep dives, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke to teachers and pupils, and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculums for English and science. They visited English lessons and talked to pupils about their learning in science.
- Inspectors met with the executive principal, the principal, subject leaders and a sample of teaching and support staff, including teachers in the early stages of their teaching career. Inspectors met with the leaders with responsibility for pupils with SEND, the early years, behaviour, and personal development.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors examined a range of school documentation, including leaders' self-evaluation, the academy improvement plan, and documentation relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance, and governance.
- The lead inspector listened to a sample of pupils in Years 1, 2 and 3 read to a familiar adult. Inspectors met with groups of pupils from across the school.
- The lead inspector met with executive leaders from Diverse Academies Trust, as well as governors and trustees.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, and the results of the Ofsted staff survey.

Inspection team

Shaun Carter, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Alison Adair

Ofsted Inspector

Steve Tague

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children’s social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children’s services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2023