

Inspection of a good school: New Horizons Children's Academy

Park Crescent, Chatham, Kent ME4 6NR

Inspection dates:

24 and 25 May 2022

Outcome

New Horizons Children's Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

New Horizons is a school where every pupil is welcome and nurtured. Pupils enjoy attending school and appreciate the way staff look after them. They feel safe and happy. Pupils know whom they can talk to if they have any worries or problems.

Teachers have high expectations of pupils, and uphold the vision of 'Child first, aspire, challenge, achieve'. This helps pupils to have higher aspirations for themselves. They know teachers expect them to work hard. They have positive attitudes to learning, and achieve well. Pupils regularly attend the wide range of after-school clubs. These include musical theatre, science experiments, baking, sewing, cricket, art and football.

There are many opportunities for pupils to develop independence and take on roles of responsibility, as well as activities that support their local community. For example, pupils were raising funds for the hospital that one of their classmates attends.

Pupils behave well. They move around the school in a calm and orderly fashion and play together well in the playground. Those who struggle with their behaviour are supported effectively. Staff help pupils to resolve conflicts quickly. This includes any bullying, which most pupils say does not happen very often.

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

Senior leaders and staff are determined that all pupils will succeed, whatever their needs or circumstances. They strive to 'transform life chances' for all pupils and have high expectations for all. Staff feel that leaders in school, and from the multi-academy trust, support them well.

Leaders have developed a broad, ambitious and inspiring curriculum. They have created a stimulating and impressive environment indoors and outdoors. Pupils are very proud of the spectacular artworks and displays around the school. Leaders are uncompromising and relentless in their work to make sure that pupils are getting the best possible learning

experiences. Leaders constantly look at what they can do better. They have already started work to streamline the curriculum. However, more needs to be done to ensure that staff have total clarity about the key knowledge they need to teach.

Pupils are taught to use their 'thinking skills' to become successful learners in all subjects, for example 'thinking artistically', 'thinking academically' or 'thinking globally'. In subjects such as mathematics, expectations are high right from the beginning. This includes in Nursery, where teachers use good questioning skills to get children thinking.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported well. Leaders are ambitious for pupils with SEND. Pupils' needs are identified quickly. Appropriate plans are put in place to support their learning and achievement, including support from external agencies when needed.

Children often start in the Nursery or Reception with underdeveloped communication, speech and language skills. Staff concentrate on improving these skills and developing children's vocabulary. This continues successfully across the school, and extends and enriches pupils' vocabulary.

Leaders prioritise reading appropriately. Staff teach phonics well. They make sure that the books pupils read closely match the sounds they know. Pupils use their phonics knowledge well to help them read unfamiliar words. In Reception, phonics boards reinforce children's learning. Children love using these 'to be the teacher' and check that their friends know their sounds. Pupils who need extra help to learn to read receive effective support to catch up.

Children are encouraged to develop a love of reading right from the start. Children love looking at books, listening to stories and rhymes and singing songs in Nursery and Reception. Across the school, teachers foster a real enjoyment in reading. Teachers introduce older pupils to a wide range of high-quality and challenging texts that they may not have chosen for themselves. As a result, they enjoy books and develop as confident, fluent readers.

Pupils develop an awareness of how to be responsible citizens. For example, children learn about democracy from an early age when they vote for which book they would like to hear read to them in Reception. The values of tolerance and respect run throughout the school and most pupils demonstrate these attributes well. However, leaders need to help a small, but significant, number of pupils to develop their knowledge of difference and the concept of equality. This will help them to fully understand that some pupils need to be supported in different ways to ensure that they have equal opportunities to learn and to thrive.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils' well-being and safety are priorities for everyone. Appropriate checks are made on adults who work in the school. Staff take their safeguarding responsibilities very seriously. They are well trained in all aspects of keeping children safe. Staff know pupils very well. They quickly identify signs that a child may be at risk of harm. They know the procedures to follow if they have a concern. Leaders ensure that concerns are recorded in detail and appropriate actions are taken. Leaders work well with external agencies and, when necessary, provide funding for external support for pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school's curriculum thinking does not always clearly identify what key knowledge is to be taught. This does not help teachers to be explicit about what they teach. It also means that pupils do not always understand or develop the knowledge and skills that staff intend. Leaders need to continue with the work they have started in streamlining curriculum planning to ensure that pupils learn the key knowledge and concepts they need.
- Not all pupils have a secure understanding that difference is a positive. As a result, some pupils are very negative in their perception of the strategies staff use to support other pupils. This is particularly in cases where pupils find it difficult to manage their own behaviour. Leaders need to work with pupils to develop their understanding of difference and their understanding that all pupils have equality of opportunity to learn.

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 in May 2017.

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

Unique reference number	140215
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	10227916
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	650
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Peter Martin
Headteacher	Cormac Murphy
Website	www.newhorizonschildrensacademy.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	10 and 11 May 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is a sponsored academy, part of the Thinking Schools Academy Trust (TSAT).
- The headteacher joined the school in September 2020.
- The school has continued to grow since the last inspection and now has three classes in each year group from Reception to Year 6. The Nursery offers morning or afternoon sessions.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and other senior leaders, the special educational needs coordinator and other staff.
- The lead inspector also met with members of TSAT.

- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, art and history. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum planning, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspectors also looked at curriculum planning in some other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors spoke informally with staff and pupils. The lead inspector met with the school's designated safeguarding leaders and the safeguarding lead for TSAT. The lead inspector looked at the single central record of recruitment checks and safeguarding records.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils and to Ofsted Parent View, including written responses.

Inspection team

Margaret Coussins, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Stephen Jackson	Ofsted Inspector

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