

Inspection of Howitt Primary Community School

Holmes Street, Heanor, Derbyshire DE75 7FS

Inspection dates: 27 and 28 June 2023

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are at the heart of this inclusive and caring school. The values of 'achieve, care and enjoy' are central to school life. Pupils model these values well. They look after each other, love learning and achieve well.

Leaders have high expectations of pupils' learning and behaviour. They are determined that all pupils will succeed. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. Comments such as, 'This is a fantastic school, the staff go above and beyond' are typical.

Pupils enjoy coming to school and feel safe. Staff know pupils well. They provide strong pastoral support. Pupils are polite and confident. They understand that 'everyone is treated with respect and care'. Pupils have positive attitudes to each other and adults. They behave well in lessons and around the school. Pupils understand what bullying is. They say that it rarely happens. Pupils say that staff would deal with it quickly if it did.

Leaders encourage pupils to earn an 'embark award'. Pupils strive to receive medals for undertaking activities based on the core beliefs of 'family, integrity, teamwork and success'. Pupils benefit from many enrichment experiences. These include trips to the theatre in London, singing in the choir, and sporting competitions.

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

Leaders have created a well-planned and ambitious curriculum. They have thought carefully about what pupils at Howitt Primary need to learn and in what order. In most subjects, leaders have identified the precise knowledge that pupils will learn. In a small number of subjects, the knowledge that pupils will learn is not set out as precisely. This makes it more difficult for teachers to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge.

Leaders place reading at the centre of the curriculum. Younger pupils learn to read well through a consistent approach to the teaching of phonics. Staff provide pupils with a range of stories, songs and rhymes to develop their communication skills. Careful use of assessment means that teachers know what sounds pupils know and what they need to use next. Books are matched to the letters and sounds that pupils know. Staff ensure that those pupils who are falling behind have the support to catch up quickly. The well-stocked library provides pupils with a vast array of books to choose to read for pleasure.

Pupils learn well because teachers have strong subject knowledge. Teachers explain new ideas and concepts clearly. They help pupils to recall their prior learning. In most subjects, teachers use assessment well to identify gaps in pupils' learning and adapt their teaching. In a few subjects, the systems that leaders use to check how well pupils learn are still being developed.

Staff adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders ensure that they are fully included in the life of the school. They work well with external agencies. However, some pupils' individual targets are not precise. Leaders know that there is further work to do to ensure targets are reviewed and set with more precision.

Leaders have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. As a result, the school is a calm and purposeful place to learn. Pupils enjoy the positive approach to behaviour, including earning merits and kindness awards. They engage and play well together during social times. Pupils' manners are beautiful. They hold doors open for others and greet visitors with a cheery smile.

Children in the Nursery and Reception classes receive high-quality provision. Adults know the importance of helping children to learn and use many new words. The children know and follow the daily routines. They are independent, happy and curious learners.

Pupils access a wide personal development programme. They understand difference and that it is alright to be different. Pupils welcome new starters to the school. They told inspectors that newcomers would 'enjoy it here, there would be nothing to worry about as they would soon make lots of friends'. Leaders enable pupils to reflect on their own beliefs and on the beliefs of others in assemblies and during lesson time.

Leaders work hard to improve pupils' attendance. However, some pupils do not attend school often enough. These pupils are missing out on valuable learning.

The trust has played an integral part in school improvements. They care about the staff and know the school well. Governors share the determined vision of leaders for all pupils to succeed. Staff are proud to work at the school. There is a real 'family feel' to this school. All staff are mindful of each other's well-being and workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders provide relevant and regular training so that staff know how to spot if a pupil may be at risk of harm. Everyone is vigilant. Leaders act quickly if a pupil needs additional help or support. Systems for recording concerns are effective. Leaders complete the necessary checks to ensure that staff are safe to work with children.

Governors visit the school often. They have a detailed overview of safeguarding systems.

Staff support pupils well in school. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet. They learn about risks and how to report any concerns they may have.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, leaders have not broken knowledge down into precise components. This makes it harder for pupils to learn new concepts. Pupils' knowledge is not as well developed as it could be in these subjects. Teachers are not always able to check how well pupils are learning new knowledge. Leaders should identify the precise knowledge that teachers need to teach in all subjects, so that pupils learn and remember more, and teachers have a clear understanding of what knowledge pupils have secured.
- Individual targets for some pupils with SEND are not precisely matched to their needs. Pupils' work shows that they have met their targets, but leaders do not identify exactly what pupils need to do to further progress with their learning. Leaders must ensure that pupils with SEND have targets that are matched more precisely to their needs, and regularly reviewed and checked.
- Despite leaders' best efforts, the proportion of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, who are regularly absent from school is too high. As a result, they are missing out on vital learning. Leaders and staff should continue to work with pupils and their families to reinforce attendance expectations and to make sure that pupils attend school regularly, so they can achieve as well as they could.

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	146454
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	10268261
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy Converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	346
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Sarah Armitage
Headteacher	Lynn Pilling
Website	www.howittprimary.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Embark Multi Academy Trust.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- The school has nursery provision for two-year-olds.

Information about this inspection

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

- 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, the deputy headteacher, the SEND coordinator and a range of other staff. The inspector met with representatives of the local governing board and spoke with trust leaders.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of the school's arrangements for safeguarding, the inspector reviewed school policies, procedures and records. The inspectors met

with the designated safeguarding lead and spoke with staff, governors, trust leaders and pupils about the school's approach to keeping pupils safe.

- The inspectors carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics, science and geography. For each deep dive, the inspectors met with subject leaders to discuss the curriculum, spoke with teachers, and spoke with pupils about their learning. The inspectors visited lessons and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school. They considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments. The inspector met with groups of staff and pupils, and considered responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

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