

# Hawkes Farm Academy

Hawks Road, Hailsham, East Sussex BN27 1ND

## Inspection dates

30 April–1 May 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Outstanding</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Outstanding</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Early years provision	<b>Outstanding</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Since joining the school, the headteacher, supported by senior leaders and the multi-academy trust, has brought about substantial and sustained improvements to all aspects of the school's work.
- Senior leaders bring an unswerving commitment to improve the school further. They leave no room for complacency.
- Outcomes across the school have improved. Pupils make good progress, attaining at least in line with the national average.
- Reading plays a central role in the curriculum. Teachers ensure that pupils are skilled in the use of phonics. Pupils become confident, able readers.
- Leaders provide staff with regular, high-quality professional development so that they have good subject knowledge. Teachers share senior leaders' understanding of how pupils learn.
- Teachers use assessment effectively to intervene quickly when a pupil is at risk of falling behind. As soon as a pupil starts to struggle, staff act decisively.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They are polite, confident and well mannered. They have excellent attitudes to learning and work hard to achieve their best.
- Children make an excellent start in early years. Leaders are knowledgeable and ambitious for children to achieve well. Children make strong progress whatever their starting points.
- A broad curriculum interests pupils. It is focused on equipping pupils with knowledge that they will remember and build upon.
- Pupils write well. They learn the skills needed to be successful before writing independently. However, they have few opportunities to apply their skills in writing in curriculum areas other than English.
- The teaching of mathematics equips pupils with the knowledge and skills needed to achieve well. Pupils have a strong recall of number facts. They work quickly and efficiently.
- In some year groups, pupils have too few opportunities to apply their mathematical skills by tackling challenging problems and using mathematical reasoning.
- Most parents and carers are happy with the school and the improvements that have been made. However, some express concerns about the school, including poor communication. Others feel that the school's curriculum is narrow and focused too much on English and mathematics.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching further and thereby outcomes, by ensuring that teachers provide pupils with regular opportunities to apply:
  - their knowledge in mathematics by solving challenging problems and using mathematical reasoning
  - their skills in writing across a wide range of subjects.
- Improve communication with parents, by ensuring that senior leaders:
  - take action to improve the experience of those parents who are not satisfied with aspects of the school's work
  - help parents to fully understand and support the school's ambition to provide the best possible education for pupils.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Outstanding

- The headteacher joined the school in September 2016, when it was at a low ebb. The multi-academy trust had just taken over the school, because the predecessor school had been deemed to provide an inadequate education for its pupils.
- Since that time, together with the trust and a new senior leadership team, the headteacher has brought about substantial and rapid improvements to all aspects of the school. Leaders bring a relentless drive to improve the school for the benefit of pupils and families. There is no room for complacency. Behaviour in the school has been transformed.
- Senior leaders have a detailed knowledge of each teacher's individual strengths and areas for development. They provide teachers and support staff with regular training to strengthen their professional knowledge and skills. As a result of this, and the high expectations of senior leaders, the quality of teaching has improved so that pupils achieve well and make good progress.
- The headteacher, the multi-academy trust and senior leaders all share a comprehensive understanding of how children learn. This informs leaders' evaluations of the quality of teaching in the school.
- Leaders place a high value on academic research. They introduce nothing new into the school before being sure that any new approach is backed up with clear evidence. Several teachers and those in senior and middle leadership are currently undertaking nationally recognised qualifications in leadership. This is enabling these staff to undertake research of their own in school, in a constant drive to improve the school.
- Middle leaders have a good understanding of the quality of teaching in their subject because they use a range of information to reach their view. They provide effective training for staff to ensure that all have the right knowledge to teach each subject well.
- The special educational needs coordinator is knowledgeable. She understands the different needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) within the school and how these are met. Staff delivering interventions are well trained and confident in their role.
- Staff morale is high. All who expressed an opinion felt proud to be part of the school's team and recognised the significant improvements that have occurred. Several staff members reserved particular praise for the way that leaders consider the well-being of staff when making decisions. One said, 'Although the children are at the heart of everything we do, the school leaders always take teacher workload into account.'
- Senior leaders have placed reading squarely at the centre of the curriculum, and of teaching and learning in the school. Leaders are unswerving in ensuring that pupils learn phonics thoroughly and become fluent, confident readers.
- Reading also helps pupils to gain an understanding of historical periods and events. For example, when studying 'The Iliad', pupils study the historical context of the text to enhance their understanding of the writing. This also helps to provide a strong foundation for pupils to acquire memorable knowledge.

- The curriculum covers a wide range of subjects. It is broad and provides well for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Teaching provides pupils with the knowledge and experiences to help them understand the diverse cultures, lifestyles and faiths represented in modern Britain. Pupils have a strong understanding of British values. This helps them to be tolerant and respectful individuals.
- The curriculum is further enhanced by visits to interesting places. There is also a range of clubs for pupils outside the school day.
- The additional pupil premium funding is put to good use. Eligible pupils receive effective teaching and support to help them achieve well. They receive a rich cultural diet to help them appreciate books and the arts.
- The physical education (PE) and sport premium is used well to develop teachers' skills, to promote healthy lifestyles and to enable pupils to compete in sports teams both in school and with other schools. The school has become very successful in external competitions.
- Work to engage parents is starting to have a positive impact. Most parents would recommend the school. Areas that receive positive comments from parents include the improvements brought about since academisation, and improved teaching and learning.
- However, a significant minority of parents raised concerns, especially about the inconsistent communication from the school. Among other concerns, some feel that when the school became an academy, it brought about a narrowing of the curriculum and an overly strong focus on reading, writing and mathematics.

### **Governance of the school**

- The multi-academy trust is relentless in its pursuit of the highest possible standards of teaching, academic achievement and behaviour for this school. It has offered effective support and challenge to enable the headteacher and senior leaders to bring about the substantial improvements seen since academisation.
- The local strategic governing body has a good understanding of the school and the factors that have led to improvements in recent years.
- Governors have a good range of skills and experience. They draw their information from a range of sources, including visits to the school to check that what they are told is accurate. They ask searching questions and use these to understand the school better, so that they can offer further support and challenge.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Senior leaders ensure that all staff fully understand that the well-being of pupils is central to the school's work. They recognise the challenges that pupils in this community face and address these proactively.
- All staff have a thorough understanding of safeguarding because they receive up-to-date training and information. They are knowledgeable and vigilant. Staff receive

weekly scenarios with a safeguarding theme to consider and discuss. This ensures that staff are confident in recognising and tackling a wide range of potential risks for pupils.

- Staff are all conversant with the school's procedures for reporting concerns and follow them closely. They understand that they should contact external agencies for themselves if they are ever unhappy with how their concerns are being addressed.
- Policy and practice mirror the school's strong safeguarding culture. For example, the single central record of checks on people who work in the school is kept meticulously and meets statutory requirements.
- Senior leaders are tenacious in working with external agencies when the need arises, ensuring that support for vulnerable families is in place. Leaders follow up their concerns when they feel that too little is being done.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

**Good**

- Teachers share a determination that all pupils will become fluent, confident readers. The teaching of reading permeates every aspect of the school's curriculum.
- Teachers have a consistent approach to the teaching of reading and are skilled in helping pupils to read well and with understanding. Children learn phonics from the moment they start in school. The teaching of phonics continues until pupils have demonstrated complete mastery of this area of reading.
- Pupils read together every day using books that teachers have chosen carefully. They choose texts that are both interesting and challenging. Pupils listen well and enjoy the opportunity to read aloud. Staff deal with mistakes quickly and decisively.
- Teachers set high expectations for pupils' reading and select passages for individual pupils to read so that they can be successful. Where necessary, pupils read the passage to a member of staff before reading it aloud in class. This helps to improve their fluency and confidence.
- Teachers identify the more challenging words that pupils will encounter and use effective strategies to help pupils understand them. For example, in Year 3, the teacher recognised that pupils would be unfamiliar with the word 'anchored' when describing how roots hold a tree in place. She taught the word before pupils read it in the text so that they were well placed to appreciate and explain its meaning.
- Reading also provides the basis for pupils' writing. Pupils learn the different features that make writing engaging and successful by reading and listening to high-quality books and texts in class.
- In writing, teachers have high expectations for pupils. Teachers have a very clear understanding of the knowledge and specific skills that pupils will need to succeed in their writing. They teach these thoroughly before expecting pupils to undertake independent pieces of writing. However, occasionally the most able pupils complete work that is too easy for them, when they have already shown that they have a good understanding of the skill being taught.
- Teachers' secure subject knowledge in mathematics enables them to explain ideas accurately and precisely. Teachers constantly ask questions to draw out pupils' thinking and ensure that they reach a secure understanding. Teachers give precise explanations

and expect pupils to be able to repeat these and recall them to strengthen their understanding of mathematics.

- In mathematics, pupils revise and practise prior learning daily so that they can recall information quickly, such as multiplication tables and number facts. Knowledge becomes embedded. This helps them to achieve well in mathematics and tackle age-appropriate work confidently and accurately.
- In some year groups, there is not enough challenge for the most able pupils in mathematics. There are few opportunities for them to reason mathematically and to solve challenging problems.
- Assessment practice throughout the school is detailed and comprehensive. Teachers and support staff in lessons are vigilant for signs that a pupil has not understood. They intervene quickly to help them. If a pupil needs further support then this is provided on the same day. Senior leaders and staff all share the same determination that no pupil will be left behind in their learning.
- Teachers undertake a range of assessments to track pupils' progress. Senior leaders use this information to identify pupils who are not making the progress expected of them and to plan strategies for helping them to catch up.
- Teaching assistants play a valuable role in the school. They check on pupils' understanding throughout the lesson, offering helpful explanations to pupils who struggle to understand something the first time. This enables pupils to concentrate well and to be fully involved in the learning.
- Homework helps pupils to practise the knowledge that they have learned in school, and to extend their fluency and enjoyment in reading.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

## Outstanding

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning. They enjoy coming to school, work hard and concentrate well. Pupils listen carefully and join in enthusiastically. They are always ready to answer any questions that teachers ask.
- Teaching captures pupils' interest. They strive to do their very best. From the moment they enter the class in the morning, they settle quickly to the work that they know will be waiting for them. This impeccable behaviour continues throughout the day.
- Pupils appreciate how teachers check that everyone understands what is being taught. This helps to reinforce pupils' enjoyment of school. One pupil in Year 1 commented that teachers, 'teach you everything that you need to know in your year.' Another observed, 'Teachers are always there to help you, even when you don't understand at first.'
- Staff and pupils enjoy positive, harmonious relationships. Teachers welcome pupils into the class each morning with a smile, a personal greeting and handshake. This sets a happy, purposeful tone for the rest of the day.

- Pupils feel safe in school. They trust staff to look after them and to deal with any concerns that they may have. Pupils learn how to stay safe in a range of situations, including when riding bicycles, on the road and if caught in a fire. E-safety is also taught thoroughly in the school.
- The curriculum helps pupils understand the value of a healthy lifestyle and the importance of making good choices. The daily mile that pupils undertake contributes well to their physical well-being.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of bullying, including cyber bullying. One pupil explained that it was a repeated, deliberate attempt to hurt or upset someone. Pupils understand what to do if they have any concerns about bullying and are clear that on the rare occasions that it happens, staff are quick to nip it in the bud.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- The headteacher wasted no time in tackling the widespread poor behaviour as soon as he arrived in 2016. All staff understand and share the same high expectations for pupils' conduct and behaviour.
- Staff appreciate the improvements in behaviour in the school. All agree that pupils behave well, and that staff and leaders alike manage pupils' behaviour effectively.
- Pupils are polite, confident and articulate. Senior leaders place a high value on equipping pupils with good manners and etiquette. During the inspection, pupils regularly approached inspectors to shake their hand, welcome them to the school and enquire how their day was going. This behaviour is typical of that seen throughout the school, and results from the excellent daily role model that staff provide.
- Clear, consistently applied procedures and policies are in place to reward good behaviour and tackle any incidents of behaviour that fall short of the school's high expectations. The school is strongly inclusive, but leaders take decisive action on the rare occasions when pupils deliberately disrupt the learning of others.
- Standards of behaviour are very high at all times, both in lessons, during playtimes and around the school. An inspector observed a whole-school assembly, where pupils' behaviour was impeccable. They entered and left the hall in complete silence, showed interest and listened respectfully. All pupils, from the youngest to the oldest, were fully included.
- The overwhelming majority of pupils attend school regularly. Rates of attendance are above those seen nationally. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND was previously well below the national average in the last two years. Persistent absence among these pupils was high. This year has seen rapid improvements. The attendance of all groups of pupils is at least in line with the national average.

### Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- Pupils' progress across key stage 2 has been in line with the national average for the past two years, in reading, writing and mathematics. Disadvantaged pupils made

similar progress to other pupils, both in the school and nationally.

- The proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 in 2018 improved and was close to the national average. A greater proportion also achieved the higher standard in these subjects. The number of pupils who achieved the expected standard in mathematics improved strongly, as did the number who achieved the higher standard in writing.
- Outcomes at the end of key stage 1 also improved in 2018. In particular, the proportions of pupils who achieved the greater depth standard in each of reading and writing and mathematics all increased strongly. The few disadvantaged pupils achieved in line with other pupils nationally.
- Pupils achieve well in phonics as a result of systematic, effective teaching. The proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard at the end of Year 1 increased in 2018 and was above the national average. By the end of Year 2, all pupils achieved this standard.
- Attainment at the end of key stage 2 continues to improve. The number of pupils in Year 6 who are on track to achieve and exceed the expected standard in all three subjects is well above that seen nationally in recent years.
- Pupils across the school achieve well and make good progress. In Years 5 and 6, pupils from all starting points, including disadvantaged pupils, make consistently strong progress. In some other year groups, there is less evidence of the most able pupils making the progress in writing and mathematics of which they are capable.
- Disadvantaged pupils achieve well because senior leaders and teachers share a clear understanding of the challenges that they face. Teaching helps these pupils to make good progress from their starting points. However, few disadvantaged pupils make the progress needed for them to achieve the higher standards.
- Pupils with SEND typically make good progress from their starting points. Staff understand their needs and provide the support needed for them to achieve well.
- The wider curriculum helps pupils to acquire knowledge in a range of subjects, including science. Work in pupils' books in subjects across the curriculum is of a variable quality and does not convey a clear picture of progress in a range of subjects. However, pupils have little opportunity to apply the skills and knowledge they have learned in writing in a range of subjects.

## Early years provision

## Outstanding

- Leaders are knowledgeable and passionate about their work with children in early years. They work tirelessly to ensure that children leave their first year in school ready for the greater challenges of learning in key stage 1.
- Leaders have an incisive understanding of the strengths of the provision and have plans to improve it further. The leader of early years has a strong voice within the senior leadership of the school, making a significant contribution to the school's self-evaluation and development plans.
- Children achieve high standards. Most start school with skills typical for their age and make excellent progress. In the last two years, the proportion of children that have

reached a good level of development has been well above the national average. Work in children's 'learning journey' books provides clear evidence of their strong progress, whatever their starting point.

- Staff are well trained. All have a clear understanding of how to help young children get off to an excellent start in their schooling.
- Teaching within the Reception classes is meticulously planned. Leaders understand the importance of equipping children with the early skills of reading, writing and mathematics. Lessons provide children with the knowledge that they need to become successful learners. An inspector saw a lesson where a teacher explained and showed children how to halve a number of objects. Teaching was precise, and engaged children's interest. Staff checked that all had understood, watching carefully as children practised halving collections of counters with a partner. Any children who had not fully grasped the learning were quickly spotted and helped there and then.
- The learning environment is well resourced and focused clearly on helping children to achieve in all areas of learning. Children practise the skills taught in lessons. They also follow their own interests. Staff are skilled at observing children, taking every opportunity to help them to take the next step in their learning.
- Children have excellent attitudes to learning. Their behaviour is exemplary. They get on well together and share in each other's successes, cooperating and taking turns. Children sustain concentration for quite long periods when learning independently. Well-established routines set clear expectations for behaviour and ensure that no time is wasted.
- Staff constantly model accurate spoken English and, in turn, expect children to use this when speaking. This leads to children becoming capable, confident speakers.
- All parents of children in early years who expressed a view spoke highly of the provision. They were particularly pleased with the progress that their children were making. One parent spoke for many when she said, 'What a difference they have made. My child is ready for Year 1 already.'
- Parents appreciate being able to contribute to the record of their child's learning with their successes at home. One parent described the online tool that the school uses as 'a window on your child's learning'.
- The induction arrangements for children starting school help them to settle quickly. Similarly, children make several visits to their Year 1 class to meet their next teacher to help prepare them well for a seamless move into key stage 1.
- All safeguarding arrangements within early years are fit for purpose and effective. In common with the rest of the school, staff receive regular training and guidance in all aspects of safeguarding and child protection. All understand what to do if a child presents as a concern. Staff follow school procedures rigorously.

## School details

Unique reference number	143119
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	10088110

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	413
Appropriate authority	The board of trustees
Chair	Isabelle Dennigan
Headteacher	Jeremy Meek
Telephone number	01323 841466
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Email address	<a href="mailto:office@hawkesfarmacademy.org">office@hawkesfarmacademy.org</a>
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- Hawkes Farm Academy joined the Striving Together for Excellence in Partnership (STEP) multi-academy trust in September 2016. The headteacher joined the school at the same time. The deputy headteacher joined the school in September 2017.
- This school is larger than the average-sized primary school. There are two classes in all year groups.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is well below the national average. Levels of deprivation are also below those seen nationally.
- The overwhelming majority of pupils are White British. There are several groups of pupils from different ethnic minorities. There are very few pupils for whom English is an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is well below that seen in other schools across the country. The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is greater than the national average for primary schools.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors held several meetings with the headteacher and senior leaders about various aspects of the school's performance. These included one on leaders' self-evaluation and another on pupils' current achievement.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of the governing body and another governor. He also spoke with three representatives of the multi-academy trust and had a telephone conversation with the chair of the board of trustees.
- Inspectors met with several senior and middle leaders to discuss their areas of responsibility. Meetings were held with those responsible for English, early years, subjects in the wider curriculum, and provision for pupils with SEND. The lead inspector also had an informal discussion with the leaders of mathematics to discuss aspects of the school's provision and leaders' plans for further improvement.
- An inspector held a meeting with a group of staff, including teachers, teaching assistants and other support staff.
- Inspectors observed learning in all year groups. All these observations were undertaken jointly with the headteacher or a senior leader. An inspector observed an assembly.
- Together with class teachers and senior leaders, inspectors looked at pupils' work across all subjects and in all year groups. The work of disadvantaged pupils, and pupils from all ability groups, was included in this scrutiny.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and talked to a group of pupils about their experience of school. Inspectors also talked to pupils on the playground and observed their behaviour at breaktime and lunchtime, and as they moved around the school.
- Inspectors took account of 130 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including 21 free-text comments. The lead inspector also considered a letter from a parent. The 39 responses to Ofsted's confidential staff questionnaire were also considered. There were no responses to the pupil survey. Inspectors met with parents at the start of the day.
- An inspector visited the breakfast club run by the school.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of documents, including those recording the work of the governing body and the single central record of recruitment checks on adults who work in the school. They examined information on the progress of current pupils and scrutinised the school's safeguarding procedures.

## Inspection team

Bruce Waelend, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Kevin Parfoot	Ofsted Inspector
Stephanie Scutter	Ofsted Inspector

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