

White Hall Academy

Melbourne Road, Clacton-on-Sea, Essex CO15 3SP

Inspection dates

21–22 March 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher, has ensured that the good standards identified in the previous inspection have been maintained. Leaders work diligently to ensure that pupils aspire to high standards.
- Children make a great start to their education in the school's early years setting. The early years provision is outstanding.
- Pupils behave extremely well at all times. They are polite and courteous and they take a pride in their school. Behaviour is outstanding.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school. Leaders have created an inviting and exciting learning environment. Personal development and welfare are outstanding.
- Current pupils at the school are making good progress across most subjects in the curriculum, especially in writing, where some pupils are making exceptional progress.
- The trust ensures that leaders are well supported to provide high-quality education to pupils at the school.
- Adults are very effective in supporting pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. These pupils make good progress across a range of subjects.
- Teachers use their good subject knowledge well to plan learning that meets the needs of pupils in English and mathematics. Teachers use questioning very well to gauge pupils' understanding and support those who need to catch up.
- Assessment in the wider curriculum beyond English, mathematics and science is not yet fully embedded. Pupils do not yet make consistently rapid progress across these subjects.
- Despite recent improvements in reading, on occasion, teaching does not ensure that all pupils make the rapid progress of which they are capable.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve the progress and attainment in reading across the school.
- Ensure that the assessment system for the wider curriculum enables teachers to plan even more precisely to support pupils to make rapid progress in those subjects.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders, led well by the headteacher and deputy headteacher, have an insightful understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement in the school. They work closely with the trust to get the ongoing support and resources that they need to provide high-quality provision for pupils. Consequently, staff provide exceptional care for pupils, behaviour is excellent and pupils make good progress. In particular, the provision in the early years is outstanding.
- Leaders' work to meet the varied and considerable needs of a number of pupils is remarkable. For example, they have sought creative ways through the use of the school dog, Spot, to encourage pupils to engage more enthusiastically with reading, including those pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. These methods are having a significant impact on the self-esteem and confidence of pupils, as well as on their academic achievement.
- The trust has been central to the ongoing quality of the provision in the school. In particular, it has supported leaders to continue to maintain high standards in the quality of teaching and learning. Leaders work with schools across the trust to train new teachers, provide professional development for more experienced teachers and support new leaders to develop into their roles.
- Leaders spend the extra money they receive for disadvantaged pupils effectively. For example, funding has supported small-group and individual tuition in literacy and numeracy and help targeted at the specific needs of pupils, such as speech and language support. Leaders regularly review the way in which they have allocated this additional funding and check that it is making a difference to pupils. Consequently, disadvantaged pupils are making good progress.
- The sport premium funding is used well. Funding has been used to employ specialist coaches who work with both staff and pupils to improve standards in physical education. A variety of sports clubs and physical activities are available to all pupils and the large majority of pupils participate in these activities.
- Middle leaders are effective at driving progress and improvement. They use their time effectively to check how well teachers are delivering the curriculum and where pupils are not making progress. Where middle leaders identify concerns, they are quick to take actions so that pupils can resume their good progress.
- Leaders understand the needs of those pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Leaders have identified barriers to learning and provide learning activities that these pupils can access and enjoy. Leaders ensure that they use funding appropriately to support pupils. These pupils are making rapid progress in their personal development and behaviour, as well as good progress from their varied academic starting points.
- Parents and carers are very positive about the education that their children receive. A large majority of parents would recommend the school to others. One parent said: 'We're really pleased our son attends White Hall. He's very happy, making great progress and is well supported. The management team have instilled a great top-down ethos to grow and achieve.' This was typical of the comments received.

- Leaders have created an exciting, wide and varied curriculum. Leaders use the curriculum effectively to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. Pupils access creative and inventive opportunities in all subjects through a thematic topic-based curriculum. Assessment is well embedded and used very effectively in English and mathematics. Leaders have identified that formal assessment in the wider curriculum is not yet as fully embedded.
- Following disappointing results in key stages 1 and 2 in reading in 2017, leaders have taken effective steps to bring improvements in the quality of pupils' reading experience. This new whole-school approach is quickly ensuring that pupils are making better progress in reading and developing a greater enjoyment of reading outside of lesson time.

Governance of the school

- Governors ensure that they undertake all of their statutory obligations effectively. This includes routine and effective checks that all reasonable actions are being taken to ensure that pupils are being kept safe.
- Governors know the school well. They make regular visits to the school to confirm the accuracy of the information that they receive from leaders. Governors are effective at challenging leaders to raise standards.
- Governors ensure that leaders use the additional funding that they receive effectively. Most notably, they ensure that the funding that they receive to support disadvantaged pupils is making a meaningful difference to those pupils. Governors also ensure that the additional funding for physical education and sports participation is used effectively.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have created a culture in which everyone takes full responsibility for keeping pupils safe.
- All adults in school understand their roles and what they need to do if they have any concerns.
- Leaders responsible for safeguarding keep detailed and accurate records of any concerns raised and they work closely with other agencies to ensure that actions are taken swiftly when needed.
- Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe online and in the wider community through a well-thought-out curriculum provision. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and know that adults in school will help them when needed.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers use a thorough subject knowledge and understanding of the national curriculum to plan work that matches the needs of pupils. Teachers use ongoing

assessment information, most notably in English and mathematics, to ensure that the most able are giving work that challenges them to work at a greater depth, while those who need to catch up are well supported.

- Teachers use effective questioning in lessons to help pupils develop their answers. Teachers refuse to accept pupils' initial simple responses to questions. Instead, teachers encourage pupils to develop more detailed and analytical responses. This supports pupils to prepare their answers before they write.
- Teachers encourage pupils to reflect on their learning and pick out successes and difficulties they have encountered. They then use these experiences to help them tackle new topics.
- Teaching assistants support pupils very effectively to make good progress. All adults know pupils well and work closely together to plan learning that meets the specific needs of pupils. This includes meeting the social, emotional and mental health needs of individual pupils.
- Teaching and learning in writing are a strength in the school's provision. Pupils' work in their English books shows that teaching is good over time for all groups of pupils. Pupils react well to challenging targets set by teachers and, as a result, they make good progress. As they get older, pupils show increasing confidence and skill in using more complex grammatical skills.
- Pupils' understanding of mathematical concepts can be seen clearly in their books. Their progress over time shows that teachers are setting very high expectations for all groups of pupils across all year groups.
- The school's thematic curriculum engages and enthuses pupils with a variety of subjects in the wider curriculum. Pupils show a good depth of understanding across these subjects. However, teachers are not yet confident in formally assessing pupils in these subjects and planning accordingly to challenge pupils to make better progress when they are ready to do so.
- The teaching of reading has been a particular focus in the school this year. Leaders have introduced new ways of teaching reading to improve pupils' fluency and accuracy. This is supporting teachers to provide more appropriate intervention for pupils who need additional help. However, there are still occasions where pupils are not being well enough supported to make the rapid progress of which they are capable, especially, but not exclusively, the most able pupils.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils' well-being is central to the work of leaders and staff in the school. The most vulnerable pupils are very well supported by the school's strong pastoral system. Staff and leaders work closely with families to build positive relationships. This is creating a highly positive environment for pupils to arrive at school, ready to learn.
- The school's curriculum and leaders' work with individual pupils ensure that pupils develop an insightful appreciation of different cultures, religions and lifestyles. As one

pupil stated to inspectors, 'Nobody judges anyone in this school.'

- Pupils talk confidently about democracy, liberty and freedom of speech. They could also explain how these values work at White Hall. Pupils appreciate the importance of equality for everyone, and exemplify this throughout the school day.
- The school curriculum, including a wealth of extra-curricular opportunities, ensures that pupils get lots of opportunities to stay healthy and enjoy exercise. In particular, pupils are very positive about the school skipping challenge. Pupils understand and can explain the importance of a healthy lifestyle and how this impacts on the choices that they make about what they eat and how they exercise.
- Bullying incidents are rare in the school. This is because pupils treat one another with respect and uphold the school's values. Pupils say that, if it does occur, it is dealt with very effectively and very quickly by adults.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils take a real pride in their appearance, their work and their school. They are very enthusiastic when talking about the progress they have made in their learning. Pupils of all ages show a thirst for knowledge. They are keen to answer questions and they thrive on new challenges provided by their teachers.
- Pupils behave extremely well at all times. They are polite, courteous and very mature when welcoming visitors to the school. Pupils' behaviour in the playground is exemplary. They play well together and show a good caring attitude for each other.
- Pupils have been involved in creating the rules for the school and there is a strong sense of everyone sticking to them.
- Leaders are working effectively to improve attendance. Attendance has improved for all groups of pupils from spring 2017 to spring 2018. It is now likely to be in line with national averages for almost all pupils.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils make good progress across the school in each key stage. From low starting points when they arrive at the school, children get off to an excellent start in the early years, with many catching up with other pupils nationally by the end of the Reception Year.
- Pupils generally continue to make good progress in key stages 1 and 2. In particular, published information in 2017 shows that pupils made exceptional progress in writing by the end of Year 6. Pupils also achieve well in mathematics from their varied starting points.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are well supported in lessons and, as a result, they make good progress in the full range of subjects and some exceptional progress in their personal development.
- Pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds make good progress across subjects. Leaders' actions and the effective use of the additional funding ensure that the attainment of

these pupils is increasing to match that of other pupils nationally.

- The most able pupils achieve well in their time in the school. In particular, pupils are supported well to achieve the higher standards by the end of key stage 2, and rates of progress are increasing, particularly in writing and mathematics.
- Pupils are very well supported, both academically and personally, to make sure that they are ready to move onto the next key stage. Most notably, pupils are very well supported and ready to move onto secondary school at the end of key stage 2.
- While pupils achieve well in writing and mathematics, they did not make the progress of which they were capable in reading in both key stages 1 and 2 in 2017. Leaders have responded to this quickly. They have implemented teaching strategies that focus on pupils' fluency and accuracy in reading. This is improving pupils' confidence and skill in tackling new words and texts more adeptly.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- Children make remarkable progress during their time in the early years setting. Children typically arrive at the school with skills and knowledge that are well below those expected for their age. From this low starting point, adults work diligently with children to ensure that they catch up with other children nationally by the end of Reception.
- Leaders are passionate about giving children the best possible start to their education. Leaders have created an environment that is welcoming and vibrant, which allows children to develop a love of learning.
- Leaders and other adults know the children extremely well and they set up the learning to match their individual needs. Children benefit from one-to-one and small-group interactions when they need it. This helps many children to develop the vocabulary and skills that they do not have when they first arrive at the school.
- The most able children are given lots of opportunities to develop their understanding at a faster rate. Adults plan very precisely to support children to be independent in their learning through high-quality and well-thought-out activities.
- Skilled teaching assistants provide effective support and tailor activities for children who have SEN and/or disabilities. This helps meet the needs of these children and contributes to their learning and progress.
- Adults are very effective at planning and engaging children in their learning with early reading and writing. They successfully introduce phonics and initial letter sounds in early years through play, and further develop this in Reception in a more formal way.
- Leaders have been very successful in engaging parents. They have held coffee mornings, drop-in sessions and themed events to bring the parents into school and involve them in their children's learning. This is impacting positively on children's progress. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the early years environment. One parent said, 'It's so great here I wish I could come back to school.'
- Leaders put a high priority on keeping children safe and meeting their social and emotional needs. Leaders achieve this with a great deal of sensitivity and care.
- Leaders prepare the children well for key stage 1. They make sure that they are not

only ready for the learning, but they are also emotionally and socially prepared.

School details

Unique reference number	138575
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10043881

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	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	815
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Anthony Davenport
Headteacher	Gavin Bradley
Telephone number	01255 422 825
Website	www.whitehallacademy.co.uk/
Email address	admin@whitehallacademy.essex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	14–15 May 2014

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school. It opened as an academy in September 2012 under the sponsorship of The Learning Pathways Trust.
- The pupils are predominantly of White British heritage.
- A few pupils from the school are educated at a provision operated by the local authority on the school site. This setting provides an excellent, nurturing environment in which the pupils feel safe. Their attendance and progress in this setting are good.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is in line with the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities or an education, health and care plan is well above average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is more than double the national average.
- The school met the government's floor standards for pupils in Year 6 in 2017.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in every class and were joined by the senior leaders for many of these observations. Pupils' learning was also evaluated through inspectors' scrutiny of a range of pupils' books across most year groups and all subjects.
- Inspectors met with six pupils from key stage 2 and four pupils from key stage 1.
- A range of school documentation, including the self-evaluation summary, the school's improvement plan, minutes of meetings of the governing body and a variety of school policies and procedures, was reviewed by inspectors.
- Inspectors took account of the 50 parent responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as 29 written responses through the linked free-text messaging service.
- There were no responses to Ofsted's online staff survey.
- Meetings were held with governors, parents and members of the trust.
- Inspectors observed pupils at playtimes and lunchtimes and spoke to them informally about their experiences of school. Inspectors listened to some pupils read.

Inspection team

Nick Templeton, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Michael Jude	Ofsted Inspector
Lindsay Hanger	Ofsted Inspector
Kay Tims	Ofsted Inspector

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