

# Inspection of White Hall Academy and Nursery

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

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Inspection dates: 6 and 7 February 2024

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Early years provision **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

The headteacher of this school is Ellie Eames. The school is part of the Learning Pathways Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Andrew Smith, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Darren Cross.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils here are well cared for. They have positive relationships with staff. Pupils know that their teachers will help and listen to them. They are confident to share any concerns they may have.

The school sets high expectations for pupils' behaviour. Pupils reflect these in their positive and respectful behaviour, both in and out of lessons. Pupils demonstrate the school's values of 'be kind, be safe, be responsible' throughout the school day.

Pupils enjoy learning new knowledge in their lessons. Staff have high ambitions for pupils. This motivates them to concentrate and try their best. Pupils listen well to their teachers. They value education and know why it is important. This helps them to develop their confidence across the curriculum.

Pupils benefit from a range of carefully designed activities. They enjoy the different clubs on offer, such as science, art or 'Shakespeare Club'. These help pupils to learn new skills and develop their interests. This wider offer helps pupils to think about their next stages of learning. For example, older pupils benefit from visiting local universities and businesses as part of the 'IntoUniversity' scheme. This helps to broaden pupils' experiences outside of their local area.

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

The school has set out the important knowledge and skills that pupils need to learn. In most subjects, this knowledge has been broken down into small steps. This helps teachers know what to teach and when to teach it. It also helps teachers to check whether pupils have any gaps in their knowledge. However, in a few subjects, the school has not broken down this important content into small enough steps. In these instances, pupils find it hard to make connections between what they have already learned and what they are learning now. This means they do not secure their understanding of important content as well as the school would like.

Pupils start to read as soon as they join the school. Reading lessons help pupils to learn the sounds that letters make. They ensure that pupils can blend these sounds together to read words and sentences. Teachers make daily checks on how well pupils are learning to read. They match reading books well to the sounds pupils know. This helps the school to provide swift and effective additional support for pupils who need to catch up. There are, however, occasions when conflicting approaches to learning to read are taught to pupils. This leads to inconsistencies in how well pupils learn to read unfamiliar words. Despite this, overall, pupils achieve well with their reading. Reading lessons continue into key stage 2. Older pupils enjoy the wide selection of books that teachers introduce them to.

The school has trained staff effectively to identify and support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Where appropriate, staff make subtle adaptations to the curriculum, such as providing additional resources in

mathematics. This helps pupils with SEND to access their learning. The school works closely with external experts to make sure that pupils with SEND receive the right kind of support. This is a key strength.

In the early years, staff have prioritised children's language and vocabulary development. This helps children begin to understand and use key words, such as 'polar' and 'winter', when talking about their topic work. Children quickly learn and understand the consistent routines and expectations for behaviour. This prepares them well for learning in Year 1.

The curriculum teaches pupils about healthy living. This helps to prepare pupils to make positive choices as they move to their next stages of learning. Pupils celebrate diversity and equality through experiencing a wide range of culturally diverse texts and events. For example, learning about dance, food, music and art during a Mayan workshop deepened older pupils' learning about this civilisation. Pupils are given opportunities to be leaders and are given a voice. For example, they worked with the local governing body to improve play equipment in the playground.

Governors and trustees support leaders to prioritise education and well-being. Trust leaders are instrumental in providing support and professional development for staff. Staff share best practice with one another. This helps to create consistency and grows expertise within the school and trust. It also helps staff to feel well supported. Parents greatly appreciate the work of the school. As one parent said, 'Staff at White Hall go above and beyond.'

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- In a few subjects, the school has not broken down the broad knowledge and skills pupils need to learn into smaller steps. As a result, lessons in these subjects do not routinely build on pupils' prior learning. This makes it hard for pupils to make links between what they already know and what they are currently learning. The school should ensure that it breaks this important content down into the building blocks of knowledge pupils need to know and remember so that pupils are better able to secure their understanding of important content.
- The school is in the process of changing its approaches to the teaching of phonics. There are occasions when staff do not teach pupils consistent strategies for reading new and unfamiliar words. This means there are times when pupils do not become as fluent as quickly as they might. The school should ensure that it continues to provide the ongoing training and support staff need in how to teach consistent strategies for reading.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	138575
<b>Local authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	10287119
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	736
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Darren Cross
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ellie Eames
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.whitehallacademy.co.uk">www.whitehallacademy.co.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	21 and 22 March 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- White Hall Academy and Nursery is part of the Learning Pathways Trust.
- The school runs 'The Grow' alternative provision on the school site.
- The school currently uses one registered alternative provider.
- The school has a nursery that admits 90 pupils, for morning or afternoon sessions, from the age of two years.
- The school provides a breakfast and after-school club on site.

## 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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, subject leaders and a variety of staff.
- The lead inspector met with trustees, the chief executive officer and members of the local governing body from the Learning Pathways Trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives into the following subjects: early reading, mathematics, art and design and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, looked at curriculum planning, visited lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector listened to pupils read with a familiar member of staff.
- Inspectors also looked at the curriculum and sampled pupils' work in history, geography and computing.
- 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 scrutinised a range of school documentation, including local governing body meeting minutes, the school's self-evaluation document, the school's development plan, records relating to behaviour and attendance and the school's equalities action plan.
- Inspectors spoke with parents about their children's experiences of the school. They considered the 28 responses to Ofsted Parent View, including 29 free-text responses, as well as 52 responses to Ofsted's staff survey. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil survey. To gather pupils' views, inspectors spoke to a range of pupils during the inspection.

## Inspection team

Stephen Cloke, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Danny Wagstaff	Ofsted Inspector
Ceri Jones	Ofsted Inspector
Sue Cox	Ofsted Inspector

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