

# Inspection of a good school: Downham Market, Hillcrest Primary School

Hillcrest, Bexwell Road, Downham Market, Norfolk PE38 9ND

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Inspection dates:

27 and 28 June 2023

## **Outcome**

Downham Market, Hillcrest Primary School continues to be a good school.

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

Hillcrest Primary School is a happy, nurturing and welcoming school. Pupils learn effectively and make good progress. They learn how to be creative, curious, confident, coordinated and communicative. Pupils remember these skills as 'The 5C's of Independent Learning'. They are enthusiastic about these skills and sing about them in assemblies.

Pupils learn from staff to be well-mannered and kind. They do not tolerate unkindness and will politely remind their peers if their behaviour is not considered 'the Hillcrest way'. There is very little disruption to learning, which helps pupils to learn well. Pupils are thoughtful, and express their views with maturity and respect.

Pupils learn about different faiths. They understand that there are various kinds of relationships and they respect differences. Pupils learn to remember the five fundamental British values with a 'Hillcrest Hand'. They understand how these values affect their own lives.

Pupils helped to design the new anti-bullying policy. They are knowledgeable about bullying and are clear that it is not tolerated at their school. Pupils trust staff to help the pupils involved when bullying does occur. Being able to share their concerns, and knowing these are acted on, ensures that pupils feel happy and safe.

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

Leaders and teachers have designed a bespoke curriculum with reading at its heart. This curriculum covers a broad range of subjects. In many subjects, the curriculum is carefully organised so that the content pupils learn grows in depth and complexity over time. Teachers use well-chosen learning activities based on high-quality texts to support their teaching. There are a few exceptions where leaders' subject plans are less developed and there are inconsistencies in teachers' subject knowledge. For example, some teachers are less confident teaching languages or music. They are not as well equipped to identify and address subtle pupil misconceptions as they are in other subjects. This can affect

opportunities for pupils to deepen their knowledge in those subject areas. In many subjects, however, teachers use assessment skilfully to check what pupils know and can do. When pupils misunderstand or forget something they have studied, teachers quickly provide effective support so that pupils do not fall behind.

A strong reading culture exists in the school. Leaders have ensured that there is a sharp focus on teaching pupils to read, from Reception Year onwards. Pupils receive the support they need to develop their reading fluency. They practise this by reading books that match their phonic knowledge. Most pupils develop a love of reading as they move through the school. Older pupils use texts to make connections between knowledge they have learned in different subjects. Books are chosen carefully to link to other areas of the curriculum.

The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) provides clear guidance and support for all staff. This helps staff support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) so that they can learn the same ambitious curriculum as their peers. Teachers' careful adaptations to the curriculum and consistent use of language and resources help pupils with SEND to achieve well.

Leaders prioritise pupils' wider development. Pupils enjoy the well-structured personal, social, health and economic education programme named 'Life Skills'. This helps pupils to develop their identity and self-esteem as active, confident members of their community. Pupils enjoy attending clubs and representing the school in the local community. For example, during the inspection a group of pupils visited a local care home to sing to its residents.

Pupils enjoy the many opportunities available to take on responsibilities. For example, older pupils propose lunchtime clubs they wish to lead. They present their ideas to leaders, explaining how they will ensure the club runs well. Leaders also support a pupil-led news show. 'Informative, Mind-blowing, Positive (IMP) News' was initiated and is managed entirely by pupils who have a passion for sharing current affairs with the school community.

Positive behaviour is learned and practised from Reception onwards. Lessons are purposeful and focused on learning. Leaders have created an ethos where pupils study hard and approach learning with determination and concentration. Pupils like their teachers and respond well to high expectations of behaviour and learning.

Leaders ensure that pupils' best interests are at the centre of their decisions. Governors play a keen role in supporting leaders to fulfil their roles. All staff are proud to work at the school. Parents are very positive about the provision for their children.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are well trained and know the signs of when a pupil is at risk of harm. They respond quickly when concerns arise. Leaders act on concerns appropriately and record them

accurately. Leaders work with external agencies to secure the support needed to keep pupils safe.

Leaders complete, and accurately record, the checks required to ensure that adults are suitable to work with pupils.

Staff teach pupils about the risks they could face in their lives. Pupils know how to stay safe. They are confident that they can speak with adults at school when concerned about their safety and well-being.

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

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

- Teachers' subject knowledge in some areas of the curriculum is not as secure as in others, for example languages. This impacts on how pupils deepen their knowledge in those areas of the curriculum. Leaders should provide support and guidance to help teachers develop their knowledge so that pupils are able to achieve consistently well in all areas of the curriculum.

## **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 an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in September 2013.

## **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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	121013
<b>Local authority</b>	Norfolk
<b>Inspection number</b>	10288471
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	469
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Paul Critchley
<b>Headteacher</b>	Matthew Try
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.hillcrest.norfolk.sch.uk">www.hillcrest.norfolk.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	12 November 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- There is a breakfast club for pupils on site run by an external provider.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.
- The school also runs a specialist provision for pupils, the Learning & Cognition Specialist Resource Base. Currently, no pupils on roll at Hillcrest attend this learning base.

## Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, science and music. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector also listened to a sample of pupils read to a familiar adult.

- The inspector held meetings with leaders, including the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, assistant headteachers, the SENCo, governors and a representative working on behalf of the local authority.
- The inspector took account of the responses and 73 free-text comments relating to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View. The 49 responses to Ofsted's staff survey were also considered. The inspector spoke to groups of pupils about their experiences of school life and their learning in lessons to understand what it is like to be a pupil in their school.
- The inspector reviewed a wide range of school documentation, including policies and development plans.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector conducted meetings with leaders to discuss policy and procedure and to review records, including the school's single central record of recruitment and vetting checks. The inspector also held discussions with governors, staff and pupils to gather further insights into the culture of safeguarding.

### **Inspection team**

Bridget Harrison, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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