

Inspection of Helmdon Primary School

21 Station Road, Helmdon, Brackley, Northamptonshire NN13 5QT

Inspection dates: 19 and 20 March 2024

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 Good

What is it like to attend this school?

The school's core beliefs of 'happiness, perseverance and success' encapsulate the caring, aspirational ethos at Helmdon. Pupils feel safe and secure in this nurturing environment. They say that staff motivate them and encourage them to do their best.

Pupils behave well. They are courteous and considerate. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and they work hard in lessons. They concentrate and listen well most of the time.

Pupils are proud of their school. They attend well. Pupils like spending time with each other. They play together nicely. They make the most of the resources and facilities on offer at break times to be active. Pupils enjoy running the daily mile. They say, 'It's good for your mental health and your physical health.' Pupils also look forward to competing in one of the many sports tournaments that the school takes part in.

The school provides a wide range of enrichment activities. Through its 'contract of cultural entitlement', pupils learn about societies and traditions from around the world, as well as what makes Britain special. This includes a variety of musical, literary, artistic and theatrical experiences. These opportunities have been deliberately chosen to broaden pupils' horizons and prepare them for their futures.

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

Pupils achieve highly in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2. This journey begins in the early years, with so many opportunities for children to consolidate and apply their literacy and numeracy skills. Children in Reception enjoy spending time at the writing table. They think carefully about the letter sounds they will use to spell words. They enjoy showing how they can write in full sentences on their own.

Reading is an integral part of the curriculum at Helmdon. Pupils encounter a rich range of fiction, non-fiction and poetry in each class. This selection includes stories to teach pupils about diversity and equality. The value that the school places on reading is reflected in pupils' attitudes. Pupils enjoy reading. They read often in their own time. Staff implement the school's chosen phonics programme consistently well. The school ensures that anyone who falls behind in phonics is given support straight away to catch up. Pupils read books containing the letter sounds they recognise. This helps to develop their fluency. Younger pupils enjoy sharing stories with Louis, the reading dog who visits the school.

There have been significant improvements to other areas of the curriculum since the last inspection. The school has adopted several new schemes of learning. As a result, there is now a precise order to what pupils will be taught in all subjects. However, the school is in the early stages of delivering some of these changes. The

new approach to helping pupils remember their prior learning has not yet had the impact that the school intends, in some subjects. Some pupils cannot recall the important knowledge that they have been taught in sufficient detail, in those areas of the curriculum.

The school checks on the quality of teaching and learning more effectively in some subjects than others. Where checks have been less frequent, pupils' understanding is less secure.

The school has improved its provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). It has ensured that staff have the expertise they require to meet the needs of pupils with SEND in their lessons. This means that pupils with SEND learn the same curriculum content as their peers.

Staff have good subject knowledge. They explain things clearly. They check pupils' understanding before moving on. Staff ensure that pupils have access to materials and resources to support their thinking. The development of pupils' vocabulary is a consistent feature of lessons in all subjects. Staff encourage pupils to use precise, technical terms. They provide 'sentence stems' to help pupils structure their verbal responses accurately.

There are many opportunities for pupils to learn about their community, their country and the wider world. Pupils have a very good understanding of British values and equality. They know why these values are important. However, pupils' knowledge of world faiths is less secure. There are a wide range of clubs and responsibilities on offer to develop pupils' talents and interests. There is high quality pastoral support available for pupils who need additional support.

Staff like being part of a supportive, committed team. They appreciate the consideration that is given to their workload. They say, 'We wear many hats, but well-being is clearly a priority here.'

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school has developed its approach to the recall of prior learning in some subjects. However, these changes are quite recent. They are yet to have the intended impact on what pupils remember. The school should embed the changes that have been made to its curriculum, ensuring that pupils remember important knowledge securely over the long term.
- The school checks how well the curriculum is being taught and learned in some subjects more effectively than others. Where subject monitoring is less frequent,

pupils do not gain a sufficiently detailed understanding of the curriculum. The school must check closely on the implementation and impact of the curriculum in all subjects, so its ambitious vision is fully realised.

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

Unique reference number	121827
Local authority	West Northamptonshire
Inspection number	10288318
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	110
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Acting chair of governing body	Richard Goodall
Headteacher	Amanda Zdyrko
Website	www.helmdonprimaryschool.com
Date of previous inspection	3 November 2022, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not use any alternative provision.

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.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in reading, science, history and physical education. For the deep dives, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector discussed the curriculums for mathematics and design and technology with subject leaders and visited lessons in these subjects.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, subject leaders, teachers, and support staff. Inspectors met with the leaders with responsibility for pupils with SEND, behaviour, attendance and personal development.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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 examined a range of school documentation, including leaders' self-evaluation, the school development plan, and documentation relating to behaviour, attendance, and governance.
- The lead inspector listened to a sample of pupils in Year 1, Year 2 and Year 3 read to a familiar adult. Inspectors met with groups of pupils from across the school.
- The lead inspector met with governors, including the acting chair of the governing body. He also spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and considered the results of the Ofsted staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Shaun Carter, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Charley Oldham

Ofsted Inspector

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