

Inspection of Heronsgate School

Lichfield Down, Walnut Tree, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire MK7 7BW

Inspection dates: 21 and 22 November 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

The headteacher of this school is Jane Edwards. This school is part of Milton Keynes Education Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the interim chief executive officer, Tony Nelson, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Penelope Dent.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school is ambitious for pupils' academic and personal development. Pupils enthusiastically meet these expectations. As a result, they enjoy school and achieve well across the curriculum.

Pupils behave positively and unanimously agree that school is a safe place. They know what to do if they have concerns about bullying and feel reassured that adults will deal with any issues or concerns that they might have quickly and effectively. They also value the care that they receive at school. This includes the actions of 'anti-bullying ambassadors' and their regular use of the 'well-being scale'.

Parents speak highly of the school. As one parent said, 'The focus on well-being is just brilliant, we are forever grateful to them.' Both parents and pupils appreciate the breadth of the curriculum and the various additional activities that the school offers. This includes clubs that are available to all pupils, ranging from sports clubs to arts-based activities. Pupil leadership is also an integral part of pupils' experience at the school. This includes being a reading buddy for younger pupils or an active member of the student council. Through these highly appreciated opportunities, all pupils are supported to understand and demonstrate the school values.

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

All pupils are taught a broad and ambitious curriculum. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported by knowledgeable and caring staff who know the needs of their pupils well.

Most subject planning contains clearly defined knowledge that is well sequenced. Some subjects require further refinement to ensure that all pupils are supported to learn the most important content. The school has increased the training provided to staff to help them to teach the intended curriculum. As a result, staff are equipped with secure subject knowledge, and this helps them to present ideas and key concepts clearly. However, when pupils have misconceptions or gaps in their knowledge, staff do not consistently adapt their teaching to secure pupils' understanding before moving on in the curriculum.

The actions that leaders have taken since the previous inspection to improve the teaching of early reading have been effective. As a result, pupils struggling to read are quickly identified and staff provide high-quality additional support to help them to read confidently and fluently. An improved range of books and a variety of reading initiatives have also helped to increase pupils' confidence and reading enjoyment.

The school has a strong understanding of the reasons for pupil absence. It takes quick and effective action to support pupils to attend well. Pupils are polite and respectful. Staff use consistent strategies to promote positive behaviour, and this ensures that pupils understand how they are expected to behave. As a result, most

pupils are confident that any behaviour that disrupts learning will be dealt with quickly. The school day finishes with a joyful 'story time' session that encapsulates the school's ethos of encouraging positive approaches to learning.

Pupils are taught about their health and well-being and also know of the importance of keeping their minds healthy. They learn how to stay safe online and know what to do if they feel unsafe. Through subjects including personal, social and health education and religious education (RE), pupils are also taught important knowledge about other cultures. As a result, pupils are encouraged to embrace their uniqueness and celebrate diversity in school and the wider community.

Governors are very passionate about their roles, and they demonstrate a secure understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They bring a useful blend of expertise from across the education sector and beyond. As a result, they work well with leaders within the school to provide suitable challenge and support. The school community is acutely aware of the rapid developments since the previous inspection. Leaders are taking action to support all staff, including early careers teachers, to manage their workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Staff do not consistently check how well pupils have understood what they are being taught. This means that some pupils with lower prior attainment are not routinely provided with the support that they need to quickly address misconceptions before moving on. The school must ensure that staff select appropriate methods to routinely check pupils' understanding and use that information to adapt their teaching.
- Some subject curriculums are at an earlier stage of implementation. This means that some pupils are not able to make links between concepts securely that enable them to build and connect their knowledge over time. The school must ensure that it continues to provide staff with the training and support required to securely and consistently implement the intended curriculum.

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	139449
Local authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	10288034
Type of school	Junior
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	385
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Penelope Dent
CEO of trust	Tony Nelson (interim)
Headteacher	Jane Edwards
Website	www.heronsgate.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	4 and 5 October 2022, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school joined Milton Keynes Education Trust in April 2013.
- The school currently uses one registered alternative provider.

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 second routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors held meetings with leaders from across the school. The lead inspector also met with local governors and representatives from the trust, including the interim chief executive officer.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, history and RE. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- 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 also observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school and discussed wider development opportunities with leaders and pupils.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the staff survey, pupil survey and Ofsted Parent View questionnaire and free-text responses. Inspectors also spoke with staff, parents and pupils to gather their views.

Inspection team

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His Majesty's Inspector

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