

Hale School

Upper Hale, Farnham, Surrey GU9 0LR

Inspection dates

27–28 June 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher has a compellingly positive vision of an inclusive and successful school. This vision is based on strong values that are shared by governors, staff, parents and pupils.
- Leaders carry out robust checks on the quality of teaching and on pupils' progress.
- Teachers know their pupils' needs well. They plan demanding and interesting activities that pupils complete enthusiastically. Consequently, pupils make strong progress and attain well in their learning.
- Teachers use skilful questioning to probe pupils' understanding, and require them to explain their answers clearly. Teachers use clear explanations to correct any misunderstanding pupils may have.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points.
- Children in the early years make strong progress because teachers plan exciting activities that arouse their curiosity and stimulate their imagination.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They show respect for their teachers and they listen carefully to each other in class discussions.
- Pupils feel safe and know how to stay safe. They say bullying is rare and that teachers deal with it effectively.
- Pupils follow a broad, balanced and varied curriculum that provides a solid grounding for secondary school. Pupils also benefit from a wide range of clubs, trips and visits which extend their knowledge and skills.
- The school's strong focus on values ensures that pupils have a keen understanding of right and wrong. Pupils are taught to reflect on their own learning, behaviour and character in order to make wise choices.
- Leaders prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain. Pupils accept people from other cultures, as well as those who follow different religions or who have different ways of life.
- Governors have acted promptly to secure the long-term future of the school. They have ensured that finances are in order and that there is a robust plan for leadership succession.
- Leaders and governors recognise that attendance is not good enough for a small number of pupils. They also know that some pupils, particularly the most able, are not always challenged enough in their learning.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the attendance of the small number of pupils who are frequently absent improves quickly, so that overall attendance is above the national average for primary schools.
- Ensure that levels of challenge, particularly for the most able pupils, are consistently high in all areas of the curriculum.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher has transformed all aspects of the school since her arrival shortly before the last inspection. She has won the respect of parents and pupils alike. A parent who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, said, 'The changes that have been made under the current headship have had such a positive impact on my children's learning and on our home life.'
- The headteacher has a compellingly positive vision for an inclusive school, shared by all who work in the school. She has high aspirations for pupils' learning and is committed to their emotional well-being. A member of staff who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire wrote, 'The headteacher puts children's education at the forefront, encouraging them to aim high and to achieve anything they want to achieve.'
- The headteacher has been systematic in building an effective team of senior and subject leaders around her. They drive the school's priorities with determination.
- Leaders make rigorous checks on how well pupils are doing, and have taken sensible steps to make sure that teachers assess pupils' work accurately. As a result, teachers are able to identify, and put in place, effective support for pupils who are at risk of falling behind.
- Leaders hold teachers rigorously to account for the progress that pupils make. They give teachers precise and straightforward advice on how to improve their teaching and support them in putting the advice into practice. Teachers say that this bespoke support, as well as the regular training they receive, has helped them to update their skills.
- When she first arrived, the headteacher did not shy away from difficult decisions about staffing. Since then, the retention of teachers and other staff has been good. Staff morale is high. As one staff member wrote, 'This is one of the friendliest and most supportive environments I've ever worked in.'
- Leaders make sure that pupils follow a broad, balanced and challenging curriculum. Leaders base their decisions about the curriculum on the demands of the National Curriculum, on research evidence of effective practice elsewhere and on their own analysis of what pupils in the school need. Consequently, pupils are enthused and excited by their learning. Leaders regularly invite parents in to the school to see presentations of pupils' work. Parents and pupils look forward to these occasions.
- The curriculum is complemented by a range of lunchtime and after-school clubs as well as by carefully planned trips and visits. Pupils enjoy these opportunities to try activities that would not otherwise be available to them, such as learning to play rugby or speak Spanish.
- Leaders make effective use of the pupil premium grant and special educational needs funding to remove barriers to learning for vulnerable pupils and enable them to make rapid progress. Leaders base their decisions about spending this additional funding on robust evidence. Leaders use the sports premium creatively, paying for coaches to

work directly with pupils and funding training for teachers in delivering physical education.

- All aspects of the school's work are underpinned by a set of values that pupils understand and follow consistently. Pupils learn about democracy in school council elections, as well as in mock general elections. They debate moral issues with their teachers, for example discussing questions such as, 'Is it everyone's responsibility to help those in need?' Pupils also learn about diversity and tolerance in their religious education and personal, social and health education lessons. As a result, pupils are accepting of people of all races, religions and backgrounds.
- Strong provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is built into the curriculum. For example, in a lesson on Pompeii, pupils displayed empathy when deciding whether they would have run away or stayed in their house when the volcano erupted. Teachers also ensure that the curriculum promotes deep thinking and that pupils experience a sense of wonder. For example, pupils were inspired by recent topics on space and life in the oceans.
- Leaders have made strong and enduring links with the local community. When she arrived in 2014, the headteacher rightly wanted to remove barriers that prevented parents from playing a full role in their children's education. She set up an innovative partnership between the school and other agencies, which continues to provide a range of services to parents. This partnership is highly valued by parents and social services.
- Leaders acknowledge that attendance for some pupils is still not good enough and that levels of challenge in some areas of the curriculum, in particular for the most able, are variable.

Governance of the school

- Governance is effective. Governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They confirm the accuracy of what leaders tell them when they visit the school to talk to leaders, teachers and pupils. They ask searching questions of leaders, particularly in relation to the pupil premium grant and outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.
- A governor with responsibility for safeguarding checks that all child protection policies and procedures are followed, including for the recruitment of staff. Governors are also diligent in ensuring that arrangements for managing the performance of staff, including the headteacher, are fair and robust.
- Governors have made sensible decisions to secure the long-term future of the school. They have taken effective action to ensure that the school's finances are sustainable and they have made credible plans for continuity in leadership.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders ensure that all required checks on the suitability of staff and volunteers are carried out thoroughly. Staff and governors benefit from annual training on safeguarding which is updated during the year. Consequently, staff are well informed about issues such as child sexual

exploitation, female genital mutilation and radicalisation. All who work in the school know what they should do if they have any concerns about a pupil.

- The designated safeguarding lead is supported by four other leaders, who share responsibility for safeguarding. They have undertaken all relevant training. They ensure that all concerns raised by staff are thoroughly investigated. They keep careful records which are stored securely. They readily seek advice from external agencies when necessary. If they decide to refer a case to social services, they are tenacious in following it up so that there are no delays in vulnerable pupils receiving the support that they need.
- The school's work to promote the pupils' emotional and mental health is particularly strong. Leaders have recruited a dedicated mental health worker who provides expert support to those pupils and their families in need of it.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers are ambitious for their pupils and have high expectations of them. Typically, teaching is lively and interesting. As a result, pupils work hard, try their best and make good progress in their learning.
- Teachers' planning takes very good account of pupils' needs. Most teachers use their strong subject expertise and thorough knowledge of their pupils' prior learning to plan work which captures pupils' interest. Consequently, pupils make good progress as they progress through the school.
- Most teachers make skilful use of explanations and questions to extend and probe pupils' thinking. Teachers rarely accept pupils' first response. Instead, they challenge pupils to explain and expand their answers. Teachers are also alert to misconceptions and intervene quickly to address any misunderstandings that pupils may have.
- Teachers provide feedback to pupils in line with the school's policy. They give their pupils precise advice on how to improve their work, as well as time to put the advice into practice. Pupils make good use of this time to learn from their mistakes and understand what they need to do to meet their targets.
- Teaching assistants make an effective contribution to pupils' learning. They benefit from appropriate training that enables them to provide pupils with skilful support. They work well with classroom teachers to ensure that the right interventions are targeted at the right pupils. As a result, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils make similar rates of progress to their peers.
- The teaching of reading, writing and mathematics is typically strong. In English, teachers' systematic focus on writing has led to raised standards. Pupils in all year groups write at length and in different styles with accurate spelling, grammar and punctuation. In mathematics, high levels of challenge enable pupils to use and apply their mathematical skills well.
- Teaching in other subjects promotes pupils' enjoyment and progress. In history, for example, pupils were excited about a recent day devoted to life in ancient Rome. In science, pupils benefit from opportunities to carry out scientific experiments, sometimes helped by teachers from a local secondary school.

- As well as regular homework in English and mathematics, pupils are encouraged to carry out interesting, project-based activities linked to their other curriculum subjects. Pupils say they enjoy these activities.
- Parents receive accurate reports and have regular opportunities to talk to teachers about their children's progress. In addition, each half term, parents are invited to the school to see an exhibition of their children's work. The majority of parents agree that the school gives them valuable information about their child's progress. Nearly all parents that inspectors spoke to informally were happy with the quality of communication between home and school.
- Occasionally, teachers give pupils activities to do that are not challenging enough. As a result, pupils, in particular the most able, do not always make the progress of which they are capable in all areas of the curriculum.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Leaders have placed the school's values at the heart of its work. Pupils know and understand these values. They talk with insight about how they demonstrate these values in their learning and in their behaviour.
- Leaders have a strong commitment to the well-being of all pupils in the school. Leaders are proactive in seeking support from a range of agencies, including social services and the National Health Service, to ensure that pupils who have social and emotional difficulties receive the support they need.
- The school also makes good use of the sports premium to promote pupils' physical health. As well as regular physical education lessons and a range of lunchtime and after-school clubs, all pupils walk a 'daily mile' each day.
- Pupils display positive attitudes to their learning and they are respectful to their teachers. They take pride in their work and are ambitious for their own futures. They wear their uniforms smartly, and ensure that their work books are neat and tidy. Pupils are unfailingly polite and welcoming to visitors.
- Pupils are kind and considerate to each other. They understand that they live in a multicultural society. They are keen to learn about, and are accepting of, different religious and cultural practices.
- The school takes its obligations to promote equality of opportunity seriously. Teachers talk to pupils about different forms of bullying, including those of a racist or homophobic nature. Pupils understand why bullying is wrong. They work with their teachers to make sure that any bullying that takes place in school is dealt with quickly and effectively. As a result, pupils say that theirs is a friendly, welcoming school in which bullying or teasing of any kind is rare.
- Pupils have many opportunities to develop their leadership skills. For example, members of the school council organise games and activities for their fellow pupils at lunchtimes, while another group of pupils have set up a lunchtime reading group.

- Pupils say that they feel safe and that they feel confident about talking to their teachers if they are worried about anything. They know how to keep themselves safe from a variety of risks, including when on school trips and when using the internet.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils conduct themselves well in lessons and around the school. They respond quickly to teachers' instructions and cooperate well with each other. At break and lunchtimes, they play together harmoniously.
- Leaders go the extra mile to address the challenging behaviour of a small number of pupils. Working with partners from social services and the local authority, leaders have put in place tailored and effective support for these pupils.
- Most parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and all staff who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire, agree that the school ensures that pupils are well behaved.
- Attendance overall is close to the national average for primary schools. Since the previous inspection, leaders have been tireless in their efforts to build relationships with the families of the small number of pupils who are frequently absent. Leaders acknowledge that absence rates for pupils in receipt of free school meals, and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, remain too high. However, the actions that leaders are taking are beginning to bring about the necessary improvements.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- In 2016, pupils' progress at the end of Year 6 in reading and mathematics was in line with that made by pupils nationally. The most able pupils made particularly strong progress in mathematics. The proportion of pupils attaining scores at the expected standard and at greater depth in reading and mathematics was above the national average.
- Disadvantaged pupils, who accounted for about one third of the year group, made broadly similar rates of progress to other pupils nationally in reading and mathematics. Most-able disadvantaged pupils make particularly good progress in mathematics.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, who accounted for around one quarter of the year group, made strong progress in reading and broadly average progress in mathematics.
- For current pupils, the most dramatic improvement has been in writing. Outcomes in writing in 2016 were below the national average. Leaders and teachers grasped the nettle and have focused relentlessly on the teaching of writing. Work in books shows that pupils write fluently in a variety of styles and in all subjects. Pupils use an increasingly wide vocabulary in their writing and their command of spelling, grammar and punctuation is in line with expectations for their age. As a result, current pupils in most year groups, including in Year 6, make strong progress in writing.

- Across the school, current pupils in most year groups make good progress in English, mathematics and a range of subjects. Leaders have ensured that pupils follow a broad and balanced curriculum that pupils find highly motivating.
- In English, pupils make strong progress because they read demanding texts, and they learn how to evaluate the impact of language on the reader. In mathematics, pupils develop their skills and understanding well because teachers give them regular practice in basic skills and problem solving. In science, a well-designed curriculum enables pupils to understand scientific principles and to develop their practical skills, for example in designing fair tests.
- Scrutiny of pupils' work shows that disadvantaged pupils currently in the school make strong progress. Leaders make astute use of the pupil premium grant in order to remove barriers to learning for these pupils. For example, leaders purchased practical equipment to enable disadvantaged pupils who had fallen behind to catch up and keep up with their peers in mathematics. As a result, there is no discernible difference in current rates of progress made by disadvantaged pupils compared to other pupils in the school.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because teachers' planning takes account of their needs. In addition, teaching assistants are skilled in tailoring work to the needs of individuals or groups of pupils so that they are able to learn the same topics as their peers.
- The most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, thrive because of the rich and varied curriculum. These pupils make very strong progress overall, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics. Occasionally, activities in other curriculum subjects do not provide enough challenge for the most able pupils, and so their progress is not always as rapid as it could be.
- The teaching of phonics is effective. Over the last three years, the proportion of pupils in Year 1 meeting the expected standard in the phonics screening check has risen steadily, so that it is now very close to the national average. In 2016, all disadvantaged pupils in Year 1 met the standard. By the time pupils reach the end of key stage 1, nearly all have met the standard.
- The school makes effective provision for reading. Leaders have extended the school day so that teachers can devote 15 minutes to reading and listening to stories. The majority of pupils read fluently, while those who are less confident use their phonics skills effectively to sound out unfamiliar words. Recently, a group of volunteer parents have held weekly reading sessions with selected pupils. Early signs are that this intervention is increasing the target pupils' confidence in reading.
- Leaders are aware that pupils in Year 1 are currently not making rapid enough progress towards their end-of-year targets. Leaders are taking effective action to address this.
- Pupils are prepared well for their next steps. Strong outcomes in English and mathematics, combined with the broad and balanced curriculum, mean that, by the time they reach Year 6, pupils are ready to commence and succeed in their secondary education.

Early years provision

Good

- Children arrive in Reception with starting points that are broadly typical overall. By the time they leave, children's overall attainment, including that of disadvantaged children, is broadly in line with that found nationally. Pupils make particularly rapid progress in their speaking, reading and writing during the early years.
- Leaders have an accurate understanding of the progress that children make. Local authority moderation confirms that teachers' judgements are accurate. Teachers and other adults track children's progress carefully and keep clear records.
- Leaders and teachers provide a wide range of exciting activities that stimulate children's imagination and develop their skills. For example, in Reception, children were engrossed in studying snails' movements, making houses and playgrounds for them, as well as painting pictures of the snails. Adults enabled children to practise their reading, writing and mathematical skills as well as encouraging in them a sense of awe and wonder.
- Teachers and other adults provide good support for children's learning. For example, in the Nursery, the teacher excited children's curiosity with well-judged questions about what might be in the mystery bag. Later on, adults further extended children's language and learning as they explored the size, taste and texture of a watermelon.
- Disadvantaged children and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because adults in the early years have a detailed knowledge of their needs and tailor activities accordingly. Leaders acknowledge that the most able do not always make the progress of which they are capable because activities do not always have sufficient stretch and challenge.
- Children are confident and talk willingly to adults and visitors about their work. Children behave well in both the Nursery and Reception. Adults promote safety and well-being consistently. Consequently, children feel safe, are kind to each other and learn together well. For example, a child in Reception complimented a friend on a snail's house, saying, 'Yours is really great!'

School details

Unique reference number	125133
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	10032865

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	385
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Richard Peppin
Headteacher	Serena Hemmings
Telephone number	01252 716729
Website	www.hale.surrey.sch.uk/
Email address	admin@hale.surrey.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	20–21 May 2015

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The Hale School is larger than the average primary school.
- There is a children's centre attached to the school.
- The majority of pupils in the school are of White British heritage.
- A breakfast club, run by an external provider, takes place on the school premises every day.
- In the early years, children in the Nursery attend for part of the week, while children in Reception attend full time.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is broadly average overall, though it differs sharply between year groups. In some year groups, over one third of pupils are from disadvantaged households.

- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is much higher than that found nationally.
- The school meets the floor standards which set out the government's minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited all classrooms during the course of the inspection, in many cases accompanied by a member of the senior leadership team.
- Meetings were held with school leaders, subject leaders, the coordinator of the reading volunteers scheme, governors, and with two representatives from the local authority.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and school improvement plan. The lead inspector also reviewed minutes of governing body meetings and checked policies, including those for safeguarding and child protection.
- Inspectors evaluated the quality of pupils' learning over time by reviewing work in their books.
- The views of parents were taken into account by evaluating 103 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, which included 95 free-text responses. Inspectors also held informal conversations with parents on both mornings of the inspection.
- Inspectors took the views of staff into account by reviewing 46 responses to the Ofsted questionnaire, and by talking to a group of staff.
- Pupils' views were considered by reviewing 20 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire and by talking to pupils in lessons and in the playground. Inspectors also interviewed two groups of pupils.

Inspection team

Gary Holden, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Clementina Aina	Ofsted Inspector
Justin Bartlett	Ofsted Inspector

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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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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