

Inspection of High Coniscliffe CofE Primary School

Ulnaby Lane, High Coniscliffe, Darlington, County Durham DL2 2LL

Inspection dates: 5 and 6 July 2022

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	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Ofsted has not previously inspected High Coniscliffe CofE Primary School as an academy school under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 as, until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections.

Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last inspection of the predecessor school.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a caring, nurturing school. Pupils and parents describe it as being part of a family. Pupils are happy. They feel safe and are well looked after by staff.

Leaders and staff aim for all pupils to achieve well. From starting in Reception, teachers ensure that the fundamentals in reading, writing and mathematics are well taught. They check carefully that pupils are progressing in these subjects. In other subjects, leaders have planned for pupils to gain key knowledge and skills in interesting ways. Leaders have not yet finished revisions to planning for some subjects. They have clear plans to introduce further improvements.

Pupils behave very well. They are kind to one another. Playtimes and lunchtimes are friendly and sociable. Pupils say that bullying is rare. If it does happen, they are confident that staff will resolve it quickly. Leaders and staff do not tolerate any bullying.

Parents hold incredibly positive views of the school. They find leaders and staff to be approachable and supportive. Parents appreciate the activities the school provides beyond the school day. This includes a range of sports and drama clubs. Parents believe that their children grow in confidence from starting in Reception through to Year 6.

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

Leaders have planned a sequenced curriculum which takes account of the mixed-age classes. They have devised and implemented this effectively in reading, writing and mathematics. Leaders have started to revise the planning and approaches to teaching other subjects. Their work has been slightly delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Where leaders have completed these developments, pupils are building secure knowledge. This builds on what they have learned earlier in school. Leaders have clear plans on how they are going to use this approach to further strengthen the curriculum.

Leaders have prioritised reading. From starting in Reception, children are taught phonics in a structured way. Teachers accurately match the books pupils read to their phonics knowledge. This helps pupils to learn to read successfully at an early stage. Staff provide additional support to help pupils catch up where they have any gaps in phonics knowledge. Older pupils continue to have a range of opportunities to improve their reading. These pupils can talk articulately about their book choices, authors and different genres. Leaders have established and begun to implement a programme of staff training to further develop staff expertise in teaching phonics and early reading. This training programme includes support from the trust.

Teachers check pupils' learning effectively in reading, writing and mathematics. They use this information well to identify what they need to teach pupils next. This has

helped teachers to address any gaps in pupils' learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In some subjects, leaders have not yet fully developed assessment approaches, but they have clear plans to do so. As leaders revise the planning and approaches to teaching subjects, they are reviewing the school's assessment methods.

From starting Reception, staff teach children the routines and expectations for behaviour. Reception children are attentive in adult-led group work. When selecting learning activities, they cooperate with other children and interact well with adults. Older pupils are respectful and listen carefully to staff in lessons.

Pupils' personal development is a strength of the school. The school's pledge, 'This is how we do it here', is well understood by staff, pupils and parents. The school provides a wide range of clubs for sport and guidance on healthy food choices. This provides pupils with guidance on physical health. The executive principal and the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) have expertise in supporting pupils' mental health. They use this to advise staff when pupils need extra help. The school is a Royal Shakespeare Company associate school. Staff, pupils and parents enjoy the opportunities this brings to enrich their cultural experiences.

This is an inclusive school. Leaders and staff plan carefully to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The SENCo seeks additional external expertise where pupils need more specific support.

Staff are confident that leaders consider their workload and well-being. They receive suitable professional development. Senior leaders provide leadership for most subjects. Development of subject leaders has started with other staff, for example in modern foreign languages. There are plans in place to further develop subject leaders.

The school has very recently joined Melrose Learning Trust. Trustees and the chief executive officer have already gained a secure understanding of the school's strengths and priorities for improvement. They have established clear lines of accountability for leaders. Trustees have put procedures in place to assure that leaders fulfil statutory responsibilities, including for safeguarding.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are clear about the procedures to identify pupils who are vulnerable to safeguarding risks. They act promptly if they have any concerns about a pupil's welfare or safety. Leaders ensure pupils and parents receive help and support where required. Secure procedures are in place to manage safe recruitment. The executive principal knows how to manage allegations or safeguarding concerns about staff should these occur. Staff teach pupils how to stay safe, including online. The school's relationship and sex education curriculum helps pupils to understand what constitutes healthy relationships.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school's curriculum is not yet sufficiently well planned and sequenced in some subjects. However, it is clear from leaders' actions that they are in the process of bringing this about. Leaders need to complete the process of reviewing the curriculum in all subjects within their identified timescale. For this reason, the transitional arrangements have been applied.
- Leaders have not fully developed assessment approaches in some subjects. This makes it difficult for staff to identify if pupils have a secure understanding of the knowledge and skills taught. Leaders need to continue with their planned development of suitable and manageable assessments.
- Senior leaders have not completed their plans for developing subject leadership. At present, senior leaders provide subject leadership in most curriculum areas. This constrains the opportunity for improving subjects. Leaders should continue to implement their plans to train and develop subject leaders.

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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

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

Unique reference number	142961
Local authority	Darlington
Inspection number	10229034
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	110
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Paul Mackings
Principal	Wendy Aitken
Website	www.highconiscliffe.darlington.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- High Coniscliffe CofE Primary School converted to become an academy school in October 2016. When its predecessor school, High Coniscliffe CofE Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding overall.
- The school joined Melrose Learning Trust on 1 May 2022.
- The executive principal, vice principal and SENCo work across this school and St Mary's Cockerton Church of England Primary School.
- The school is a Church of England Academy and is part of the Diocese of Durham. The school's last section 48 inspection was in November 2017. The next section 48 inspection will take place within the prescribed period.
- The school uses no alternative education provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspector(s) carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- 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.
- The lead inspector met with the executive principal, vice principal and the SENCo. He met with a member of the local academy council, a director, and the CEO of Melrose Learning Trust. He held a telephone discussion with a representative from the Diocese of Durham.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, modern foreign languages and history. For each deep dive, inspectors 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 lead inspector met with the leader for pupils' personal development.
- The lead inspector met with the executive principal to discuss the school's approach to behaviour management.
- Inspectors discussed the school's safeguarding procedures with a range of staff. They reviewed the school's documentation regarding safeguarding. Inspectors discussed how safe pupils feel safe in school and how staff teach them to stay safe, including online.
- The lead inspector analysed the responses to Ofsted's pupil, staff and parent surveys.

Inspection team

Michael Reeves, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
David Hodgkiss	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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