

Inspection of Knowl Hill Church of England Primary Academy

Bath Road, Knowl Hill, Reading, Berkshire RG10 9UX

Inspection dates: 19 and 20 June 2024

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Early years provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Outstanding

The head of this school is Nichole Bournier. The school is part of Ashley Hill Multi Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Isabel Cooke, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Clive Haines. The CEO, Isabel Cooke, is also the executive principal, who is responsible for this school and the two others in the trust.

This school was last inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 seven years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between graded inspections under section 5 of the Act. The school received an ungraded inspection under section 8 of the Act on 3 February 2023. 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 graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

The parent who described Knowl Hill as 'a wonderful and nurturing school that is creating a fantastic environment for our children to learn and develop' was spot on. Pupils' affection for, and appreciation of, the school is tangible in the eager way they come into school and settle quickly to purposeful early morning activities. The easily remembered school rules of 'be respectful, be responsible, be safe' set the tone for daily life. Behaviour in class and around school is impressive.

The school's ambition that pupils will 'learn to love, achieve and succeed' is realised. Making space for reflection each day helps pupils to manage their feelings about themselves and others. Taking the time to explore, one by one, key values such as perseverance, truthfulness and service encourages pupils' mature self-awareness, compassion and moral purpose. They are adamant, as one put it, that 'no matter how you look or act you will be welcomed kindly and will not have to work hard to fit in'.

Pupils' academic development is equally well thought through. They achieve well. The curriculum has been meticulously reviewed and designed to build learning systematically from Reception upwards. Shrewd use of visits, visitors and themed weeks brings learning to life and broadens pupils' horizons.

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

Parents are rightly fulsome in their praise for Knowl Hill's nurturing family ethos. The commitment to 'encourage one another and build each other up' is part and parcel of pupils' daily diet. Those who have had not had a positive school experience elsewhere or who have additional needs thrive. Pupils learn from an early age to be reassuring and encouraging of each other. A varied range of opportunities that complement learning, develop confidence and mould character are on offer, although not all pupils fully benefit from some of the optional activities. Pupils relish opportunities to play their part in school life and the local community. They are proud to be on the school council or eco-council, part of the collective worship team or well-being champions.

Trust and school leaders know the school inside out. They are proud of its many strengths and honest about what could be even better. Actions and energies are focused on what will most benefit pupils. The school has, for example, nipped minor post-lockdown issues in the bud to maintain excellent behaviour. Good use has been made of additional expertise within the trust and local authority to enhance provision for the growing number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff are well equipped with strategies to adapt teaching and support individual needs in the classroom.

Teaching of early reading is proficient and precise. The focus on fine-tuning how pupils are taught phonics has paid off. It starts promptly in early years. Careful checks pick up those pupils who will benefit from immediate support to reinforce

learning and those who need additional teaching. Extra support is delivered sensitively and skilfully, building pupils' early reading skills incrementally so that they develop confidence in themselves as readers.

The clarity of thinking underpinning the curriculum is remarkable. The trust has invested, to good effect, a great deal of time and energy in recent years in designing how pupils' learning should build in each subject from Reception upwards. Guidance for staff is helpful and reduces workload. It breaks down learning into small steps, identifying important vocabulary and setting out what pupils should know and be able to do at key points.

Mostly, teaching is clear and accurate. Cross-trust working groups enable teachers in the same key stages to look ahead, ensuring that they are familiar with the content, can pool ideas and can anticipate what pupils may find tricky. Sometimes, though, teaching is not quite pitched at the right level. This happens when teachers feel they must stick rigidly to the planned content, despite what pupils do or do not already know.

Overall, pupils learn well, although small class sizes and pupils moving in and out of the school can skew end of key stage outcomes. Pupils remember in some detail what they are currently learning or have very recently covered in different subjects. They do not, however, recall or make links with previous learning quite as easily. This is a consequence of the curriculum being relatively new and because activities intended to help pupils retrieve information from their long-term memory are not focused enough on what is important.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The ambitious curriculum thinking is not fully realised in practice because sometimes teaching does not take sufficient account of pupils' prior learning. Pupils do not, therefore, learn as well as they might at times. The school should ensure that staff have the knowledge, confidence and support to adapt intended sequences of teaching as needed.
- Activities designed to help pupils revisit and remember past learning are still developing. Pupils cannot always bring important content to mind easily. The school should review how it can better support pupils to retain and recall key knowledge.

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	141295
Local authority	Windsor and Maidenhead
Inspection number	10296409
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	119
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Clive Haines
Principal	Isabel Cooke (Executive Principal) Nichole Bournier (Head of School)
Website	www.knowlhillschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	3 February 2023, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is one of three primary schools in the trust. Oversight of the curriculum sits at trust level and leadership of individual subjects is shared across the schools.
- A higher proportion of pupils leave or join Knowl Hill over the course of the year than is seen nationally. One in eight pupils across the school have joined this academic year.
- The school has a higher-than-average proportion of pupils with SEND.
- The religious character of Knowl Hill is inspected separately. The last section 48 inspection took place in January 2024.
- Breakfast and after-school clubs are managed and run by the school, as are Friday afternoon enrichment activities. Other clubs are run by external providers.
- The school does not currently 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.
- Meetings were held with the executive principal and the head of school, who is also the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator and the trust's curriculum leader. Inspectors also had discussions with the early years lead, members of the board of trustees and the local governing body, and a representative from the diocese.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and music. For each deep dive, the inspectors discussed the curriculum with the trust lead for the subject, visited lessons across the three key stages, spoke to teachers, talked to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector listened to some pupils read to a familiar adult. The team considered the school's curriculum in some other subjects through discussions with leaders and pupils, and sampling teaching and pupils' work.
- Staff's, parents' and pupils' views were gathered using Ofsted's surveys and letters from parents. Inspectors also met with pupils and staff during the inspection. They talked to pupils around school and outside at breaktime and with staff as they went about their work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the team: 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.

Inspection team

Alison Bradley, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Mineza Maher	Ofsted Inspector

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