

Stambridge Primary Academy

Stambridge Road, Stambridge, Rochford, Essex SS4 2AP

Inspection dates

16–17 January 2018

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	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- This very small school provides a good quality of education. Overall, pupils experience a range of activities that help them make good progress, personally and academically, in many curriculum subjects.
- Under the strong leadership and governance of the HEARTS Academy Trust, staff receive suitable training and support. Staff are motivated and increasingly confident and effective in their work.
- The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural needs is a strength. Pupils understand and willingly follow the school's values and expectations.
- Pupils' individual needs are known well. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly supportive of the level of individual care and attention their children receive. Pupils' personal development is outstanding.
- The quality of teaching is good and continues to improve. Teachers are adept at planning learning that interests pupils and helps them make good progress.
- Provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is well led. Pupils make strong progress from their individual starting points.
- Leaders ensure that pupils are very safe and well cared for. Policies and procedures to safeguard them fully meet requirements and are well thought through.
- Children start their school life enthusiastically in either Nursery or when they join in the Reception year. They are happy and enjoy their learning in a safe and secure environment.
- Due to small numbers, pupils' achievement overall can appear to vary by the end of key stage 2. Nevertheless, leaders ensure that each pupil's progress is carefully monitored from their individual starting points. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- The outdoor area for children in the early years is not as inviting and stimulating as the internal classroom. Adults do not use this area as well as they could to interest and extend children's learning.
- Although children's achievement in early years is increasing, boys are currently not making as much progress as girls.
- At times, the most able pupils are not provided with sufficient opportunity to achieve even more and excel further. These pupils do not routinely use their skills in different ways, so they can think more deeply and reach the higher standards.
- Leaders are too focused on frequently gathering evidence on a broad range of the school's work. At times, the evaluation of the impact of their work on the most important priorities for improvement is not sufficiently precise.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' achievement further by:
 - ensuring that the most able pupils can practise their skills in a wide range of ways across all curriculum subjects, so more reach the higher standard by the end of key stage 2.
- Improve the quality of provision in the early years even further by:
 - making sure the outdoor area is well planned and used effectively so all children make even better progress and develop their skills further
 - narrowing the gap in girls' and boys' achievement by the end of Reception.
- Improve leadership and management even further by:
 - evaluating and using even more precisely the wealth of evidence gathered, so that areas for change are prioritised and school improvement consolidated and sustained.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Stambridge Primary became an academy in February 2015 as part of the HEARTS Academy Trust (the Trust). The school continues to improve and develop so that the provision for its pupils is consistently good. Pupils are well cared for and looked after in this small school and leaders ensure that pupils' personal development is outstanding.
- The leadership of the school has undergone a number of changes, and very recently a new executive headteacher had been appointed from another Trust school. Nevertheless, leadership and management are good because the head of school, together with the Trust, work effectively and collaboratively. Many of the leadership roles and responsibilities are carried out by the directors for learning who work across all the schools in the Trust. Their contribution, together with the reflective leadership of the head of school, are increasingly effective at raising pupils' achievement.
- The staff who responded to their online questionnaire all agreed that they receive high-quality support and effective training which allows them to increase their professional understanding and build their skills. Staff work with other schools across the Trust to ensure that the curriculum provision is well planned and considered. There is a clear expectation from the directors that individual schools adapt the Trust curriculum plans to suit the needs of the school's own pupils. This collaborative approach is proving successful in increasing the progress that pupils make.
- The curriculum is well planned and pupils have a wide range of experiences that often belies the size of the school. Staff take account of the needs and interests of pupils so that learning activities are purposeful and engaging, helping pupils make good progress in developing their literacy and mathematical skills. Pupils have many opportunities to learn through creative activities, such as their writing project – where pupils effectively use music or art to help them create and extend their writing skills. The planned curriculum contributes well to building pupils' personal development and their enjoyment of school.
- Leadership of the provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is a strength of the school. Individual needs are known well and provision is precise. Recently, leaders have changed their approach to measuring the progress that pupils make, which is proving successful in adapting pupils' targets and plans. Consequently, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress both personally and academically.
- Additional government money such as pupil premium and SEN funding are used increasingly well to ensure that pupils who are eligible receive the provision they require to excel. Part of the pupil premium funding is used to provide the expertise and support from the directors of learning. They monitor and hold teachers to account for the progress that these pupils make.
- All parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, strongly agree that their child is safe, well cared for and taught well at Stambridge Primary Academy. They are fully supportive of the school, its ethos and HEARTS values. One parent commented, 'My children love school and this is entirely to do with the values of both Stambridge and HEARTS Academy.'

- The head of school ensures that pupils have many opportunities to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. Through activities such as themed days and assemblies, pupils are encouraged to become more reflective about themselves and others to create a sense of personal responsibility and care. As a result, pupils of all ages play and work well together. One parent commented, 'There is real leadership and a community feel about the school,' while another stated, 'I see it as a family-friendly place, where my child is being challenged in education and learning social skills.'
- The chief executive officer and board of trustees ensure that the HEARTS ethos and vision flows through into everyday practice. They are committed to providing the children in the area with a high-quality education. They have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weakness of the school and a clear rationale for its future. The chief executive officer places a high importance on the development of staff from within the Trust. Consequently, staff are provided with many opportunities to develop their skills and train for nationally recognised qualifications.
- The head of school and the Trust have an accurate view of the school's performance and there is a wealth of information gathered from both internal and external visits to the school. At times, this information is not used as well as it could be, nor the impact of actions analysed against consistent, precise and measurable targets for school improvement. Leaders know that to move the school to outstanding, the focus of school improvement requires sharp analysis and sustained improvements that are rooted in pupils' achievement.

Governance of the school

- The local advisory board (LAB) oversees the work of this school and of the other local Trust school, Waterman Primary School. Board members provide suitable challenge and are able to respond appropriately to the differing needs of both schools and contexts.
- Board members understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school and receive a wealth of information about the achievements of pupils. Minutes of meetings demonstrate that members of the LAB ask suitable questions to hold the head of school to account for the progress pupils make.
- Individuals from the LAB visit the school regularly to check on the well-being of its pupils. They listen to the views of parents and involve parents in the life of the school. They have a detailed understanding of the local community and are dedicated to providing pupils with a continually improving education.
- The LAB members value the support and guidance from the Trust to further develop their skills. They receive additional training with other schools within the Trust, especially regarding safeguarding and statutory information. There are clear roles and responsibilities for the LAB which they understand and adhere to effectively.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. All statutory duties are carried out to ensure that pupils are kept safe.
- All parents who responded to the Ofsted online questionnaire strongly agreed that their children are kept safe at school. All staff and pupils spoken with agree that there is a strong and continuous focus on keeping safe. Pupils confidently explained strategies they would use to keep themselves safe in a range of different ways, especially when using the internet or social media.
- Staff receive appropriate and regular safeguarding training and updates. Adults in school are alert to any signs that indicate a pupil may be at risk or vulnerable. Staff report concerns and follow the school's processes and procedures diligently. Those with leadership responsibility follow through concerns to an outcome that benefits individual pupils. They work in a timely way with other agencies when necessary. All records are kept well and confirm that leaders carry out their work effectively.
- The school carries out the necessary and appropriate employment checks on the suitability of all adults who work at school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is consistently good across the school. Pupils receive well planned learning activities through which they can develop their skills effectively. As a result, evidence from pupils' books and school assessment information shows that pupils currently on roll are making strong progress. This is especially the case in English and mathematics.
- In the mixed-age classes, teachers are adept at using additional adults to support pupils' learning. Support staff are trained well and use questioning skills effectively to develop pupils' understanding. Their contribution to the quality of provision for pupils is strong.
- Pupils' books show that in mathematics they work hard and persevere well with the challenges they receive. They experience a wide range of activities and have the opportunity to apply their skills in different ways. Younger pupils spoken with were able to explain their methods and show confident understanding and application of important mathematical symbols.
- Pupils present their work well. Handwriting is taught effectively across the school and pupils apply their skills consistently and appropriately for their age. The teaching of spelling has recently changed to improve this aspect of literacy. Older pupils told the inspector that they consider they are now applying their knowledge of spelling more consistently in their work. From books seen, pupils use a wide range of vocabulary in their written work and spelling is improving.
- Pupils have the opportunity to write often in subjects other than English, where they can extend their writing skills further. In one lesson seen, pupils were provided with clear direction and expectations of what they were to include in their writing. Their enjoyment and correct use of vocabulary, together with 'trying their best' ensured that all pupils were successful with designing and writing their ideas for their project in

design technology.

- The teaching of early reading and phonics is secure. Due to the small numbers of pupils in a class, the published results can fluctuate year on year. Adults use their subject knowledge effectively so that pupils blend sounds together to read unfamiliar words with increasing skill. Adults think carefully, adapting lessons to take account of the wide range of abilities within the small classes. Consequently, pupils develop their interest and enjoyment of reading in lessons and at home.
- Adults have positive relationships with pupils and a clear focus on providing an exciting curriculum for pupils. Teachers' strong subject knowledge ensures that the two-year rolling programme for subjects other than English and mathematics is delivered effectively.
- At times, the most able pupils are not provided with sufficient opportunity to practise their skills or demonstrate their capabilities even further. They complete work that is provided, diligently and to the best of their ability. However, some pupils have the ability to work at even greater depth and achieve more in both core and in other subjects, such as science.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Pupils are exceptionally welcoming and they speak about their school and their learning with enthusiasm.
- Pupils contribute their ideas easily in class and also around the school. In an assembly seen, pupils presented their views and opinions maturely about keeping safe when using the internet. One young pupil reminded the whole school that 'it is your responsibility to keep yourself safe'. All pupils were invited to participate in a time to reflect on their own conduct when using online technology, which they did sensitively.
- Pupils are very proud of their school. Those spoken with would recommend the school to others and appreciate the small, family feel to the school. They said they would like more pupils to join and be a part of the many activities that are on offer.
- Pupils of all ages mix very well together. Younger pupils enjoy the buddy scheme that is in place. At playtimes, they all participate exceptionally well in running their laps around the field and have an age-appropriate understanding of keeping healthy. The older pupils support the younger ones and good humour and friendships are very evident.
- School records indicate that incidents of bullying are exceptionally rare. Pupils spoken with were adamant that bullying does not occur at school. Where there are any incidents, school leaders resolve issues thoroughly and swiftly.
- Pupils are provided with regular opportunities to learn about keeping themselves safe, particularly when using online technology on a regular basis. During the inspection, pupils attended workshops at another local Trust school to learn age-appropriate strategies for keeping themselves safe. A young pupil confidently explained, 'You do

not give out personal information because the person may not be who they say they are.'

- Parents are highly supportive of the work of the school to keep their children safe and well cared for. Many attend the additional workshops and events that school leaders provide as part of the school's community approach to educating their children. One parent commented on the Parent View free text service, 'The staff genuinely care about the children and there is a wonderful community feel. Staff are always helpful.'
- Pupils who have medical needs are well cared for and supported. Adults are well trained and ensure that all school procedures and expectations for pupils' welfare are considered. Staff have good relationships with all pupils that allow pupils to grow in confidence and esteem.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The school is an orderly community because pupils understand the school's ethos and appreciate and follow its values. They enjoy the house points, praise and rewards they receive when they work well and this motivates them to try harder.
- Overall, pupils attend school well. Attendance has been in line with national averages for the previous two years. Due to small numbers, the attendance percentage can easily fluctuate. Currently, this term attendance has fallen below the national average. However, there are robust procedures in place to show that the school effectively challenges any poor attendance.
- Discussions with pupils and school records show that disruption in lessons is rare. Where there is fidgeting, or some chatting occurs, the impact of this 'off task' behaviour usually reduces the progress an individual makes, rather than that of the class. Pupils respond quickly to teachers' correction of this behaviour and work hard in lessons.
- Less structured times, such as lunchtimes and breaktimes, are happy, social occasions. Pupils enjoy the after-school clubs that are provided for them. Many mentioned the sewing club, which is highly popular.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils' achievement is good. Due to such small numbers in each cohort, individual starting points can vary widely year on year. This is particularly the case in upper key stage 2, where there are even fewer numbers. Importantly, whatever their starting points, pupils currently on roll are making strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Comparison with national data regarding pupils' attainment is not always as reliable because cohorts of pupils are very small. Leaders recognise that for some individual pupils there has been the need for them to 'catch up' with their national peers. Pupils' progress was average in key stage 2 in both 2017 and 2016, with progress in reading lower than in mathematics and writing.

- Currently, in Years 5 and 6 pupils receive their lessons in very small classes to enable more to reach the national standard by the time they leave the school. Evidence from pupils' books demonstrates that individuals are currently making accelerated and better progress.
- Over the previous two years, pupils have not achieved as well in grammar and spelling by the end of key stage 2. Adults have changed the way that spelling is being taught at school and the new approach is proving more successful. In their books, pupils are using and applying spelling rules more frequently and their progress is good. This is particularly evident in lower key stage 2, where pupils are making good progress in writing.
- When they move to Year 1, pupils continue to build on their knowledge of phonics that was already well established in Reception. Pupils use their sounds quickly and their books demonstrate that these younger pupils use their knowledge well when spelling unfamiliar words. As a result, the number that reach the requirements in the phonic screening check has been strong for the previous two years and pupils' achievement continues to improve.
- Pupils achieve well and enjoy their mathematics lessons, particularly at key stage 1. Although the published information demonstrates that pupils' achievement is broadly in line with the national average at the required standard, the number that reach the higher standard has not been as strong. This year, there is a greater emphasis on providing opportunities for pupils to demonstrate their skills at a higher level. Evidence in pupils' books demonstrates that some pupils in key stage 1 are starting to work at greater depth in mathematics.
- Across the school, the small numbers of pupils who are disadvantaged or who have SEN and/or disabilities are making increasingly good progress. This is because they have their needs considered carefully and their progress monitored effectively.

Early years provision

Good

- Children start well at school. This is because adults quickly develop positive relationships and consider children's interests when planning learning activities.
- The early years leader works well with the Trust staff to help plan learning and provide additional support for any child who requires it. Children are well prepared for Year 1.
- Adults use their questioning skills effectively to help children explain their reasoning and build their vocabulary. Consequently, children are happy, confident and enjoy learning in their early years environment. For example, when involved in cooking and making porridge during a lesson in the inspection, children not only explained their own likes and dislikes but also communicated the preferences of others. One child said, 'I like honey with my porridge but my friend does not. He doesn't like honey or sugar.'
- Record-keeping of children's achievement over time is robust and adults use the information well to plan learning across the areas of the early years curriculum. This academic year, boys are not making progress at the same rate as girls. Adults are aware of this issue and encourage and support boys even more so they can achieve well.
- Much has been recently done to improve the provision for children inside the classroom

and leaders' monitoring records confirm this to be the case. Children have the opportunity to write, count and play imaginary games in a well-ordered classroom.

- Children behave well and demonstrate an enjoyment in learning. They are inquisitive and enjoy good relationships with each other. Where there are issues of 'falling out', these are dealt with swiftly and kindly. Learning proceeds without the need for interruption.
- In 2016, the school expanded to take younger children as part of a Nursery provision. Those who join the school at Nursery age are well looked after. School records show that these children were well prepared for Reception and are making good progress from their starting points.
- Children's books show they experience a wide range of learning activities where they practise their knowledge and understanding. Additional adult support is provided in class for those who require it. Children read regularly to adults in school and home and acquire their early reading skills quickly.
- In class, children participate keenly in their phonics lessons. Where children show an aptitude, then the teacher uses their expertise carefully so that each child can excel. Children are taught their sounds effectively and have a firm foundation to build upon during Year 1.
- The outdoor area is not as well equipped as the inside classroom. Children are not as able to develop their physical skills, or practise their skills further, in a simulating environment. Leaders are aware and have plans for renovating the outdoor space. Children develop some of their physical skills through enthusiastically participating in running around the field with the older pupils during breaktimes.

School details

Unique reference number	141656
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10041746

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	57
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of Trustees	Vaughan Collier
Head of School	Hannah James
Telephone number	01702 544 369
Website	www.hearts-stambridge.uk
Email address	stambridge.admin@heartsacademy.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is a much smaller than average primary school which became a sponsored academy in February 2015 as part of the HEARTS Academy Trust. Since 2015, the number of pupils on roll has increased considerably.
- The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of children and pupils whose first language is believed not to be English is well below that found nationally.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school is in receipt of pupil premium funding is above that found nationally.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above the national average. The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is in line with national average.
- Children attend the Nursery class on a part-time basis.

- The school is too small to report on whether it meets the government's floor standards which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching in all classes, some of which were observed jointly with the head of school to determine the quality of teaching over time. Pupils' workbooks were evaluated and the inspector heard pupils reading aloud in class.
- The inspector held informal discussions with pupils at break and lunch times and during visits to each classroom.
- Meetings were held with a wide range of leaders including the head of school, the executive headteacher, directors of learning from the Trust, members of the local advisory board, the chief executive officer and members from the board of Trustees, including the chair of the Trustees.
- The quality of provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities was evaluated.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documentation, which included: information about pupils' attendance, achievement and behaviour; school self-evaluation and improvement planning; safeguarding; the curriculum; LAB meetings and the monitoring of teaching, learning and assessment.
- The views of 11 parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, together with their comments on the free text service were taken into account. The inspector also took account of the views of pupils and staff who responded to their online surveys.

Inspection team

Kim Hall, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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