

New Horizons Children's Academy

Park Crescent, Chatham, Kent ME4 6NR

Inspection dates

10–11 May 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	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher provides strong and effective leadership to this growing school. She is determined to uphold the vision of 'Child first, aspire, challenge, achieve'.
- Other leaders, including some who are relatively new to their roles, are having an increasing impact on improving teaching and raising standards.
- Teaching is improving and is now good overall. Leaders have high expectations of their staff and are tackling the few remaining weaknesses in teaching effectively.
- Children make good progress and achieve well in the early years due to effective teaching, especially in the Reception classes.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and being with their friends. As a result, the vast majority of pupils attend school regularly.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils get along with each other well.
- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress from their starting points. Pupil premium funding is used well to help them catch up.
- Safeguarding is effective. Work to keep pupils safe and to support families is of a very high quality.
- Provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is effective and helps them to make good progress from their starting points.
- The school provides a wide range of extra-curricular activities which are enjoyed by pupils.
- Some pupils are not achieving as well as they could because less effective teaching is not meeting their needs.
- Children in Nursery do not have the same opportunity as children in Reception to choose to play and learn indoors or outdoors.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. However, directors, trust senior executives, governors and school leaders do not have a consistent view of how the curriculum should be further developed to meet the specific needs of boys and girls in this unique school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Those responsible for governance and leadership should:
 - continue to provide development opportunities for leaders who are new to the role so they can have a greater impact on improving teaching and raising standards
 - develop an agreed vision and strategy to ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of all pupils in the school
 - improve the provision in Nursery so that children can choose when to play and learn indoors or outdoors.
- Continue to improve teaching, learning and assessment so that all groups of pupils make rapid progress, by:
 - tackling the few remaining weaknesses in teaching
 - ensuring that all teachers have high expectations about the quality of learning, how pupils present their work and how pupils behave
 - enabling the strongest teachers to share their expertise with other colleagues more regularly.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since her appointment in January 2016, the headteacher has led the school with integrity through a significant period of rapid growth. As more and more staff and pupils have joined the school she has maintained her primary aim of putting children first.
- Together with her team, the headteacher has worked hard to create a cohesive community within the school. Although pupils join at different times and at different stages in their education, they quickly feel like they belong at New Horizons.
- The recently appointed deputy headteacher, together with the assistant headteachers, has strengthened the overall leadership of the school. Leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and well-thought-out plans to drive further improvement.
- Leaders have been successful at improving teaching so that it is now good overall. Leaders have used performance management and professional development effectively to help teachers, including those who are new to the profession, to improve. Staff told inspectors that they have appreciated the professional development opportunities provided by the school and the academy trust.
- Disadvantaged pupils are making good progress to overcome their barriers to learning because of the carefully planned use of the pupil premium funding. Similarly, additional funding for those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is used effectively to provide appropriate additional support and teaching.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and gives pupils opportunities to develop their skills in different subject areas. The sports premium is used effectively to enhance provision in physical education. Many exciting events, including school trips and residential visits, enhance learning. There are numerous interesting extra-curricular activities that pupils enjoy taking part in. Some activities, such as the healthy eating club, involve families too.
- Some current activities do not engage boys and girls sufficiently well. Leaders are developing teachers' confidence so that they can adapt the curriculum to meet the specific needs of the pupils who attend New Horizons.
- Pupils have strong moral values and know right from wrong. Although pupils do not know the fundamental British values by name, they do, more importantly, demonstrate them through their actions in an age-appropriate way. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well.
- Most parents are very happy with the education and care that the school provide for their children. A few parents expressed concerns about changes in leadership since the school opened. As the school has grown, some parents perceive the headteacher to be less visible and available to them to deal with concerns. A few parents were also concerned about the changes in teaching staff during the year.

Governance of the school

- There are clear lines of accountability at each of the levels of governance within the trust. Directors challenge executive leaders about the performance of each academy in the trust, including New Horizons. The directors ensure that there is strong strategic and financial planning and that leaders receive helpful development opportunities. They assure themselves that safeguarding and other statutory requirements are met. However, directors do not routinely discuss the curriculum in their primary schools. They have not set clear aims or objectives to ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of all pupils equally well or develops them as 'thinkers'.
- Members of the academy advisory board and regional governing body know the school well. They visit the school regularly to check how well it is performing. Although they know the school's strengths and weaknesses, some of their current evaluations are over-generous.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders who are responsible for safeguarding are diligent and dedicated to keeping the whole school community safe. The home-school support worker provides valuable and timely support to the most vulnerable pupils and their families. Work with other agencies and professionals to keep pupils safe is very effective. Records relating to all aspects of safeguarding, including the recruitment of staff, are detailed and comprehensive.
- Staff are well trained and fully understand their responsibilities towards keeping pupils safe. The trust safeguarding lead provides additional high-quality support, challenge and expertise. Staff appreciate the weekly briefings they receive that inform them about many different safeguarding issues. As a result, staff know how to act appropriately in a wide range of situations, for example when children are missing from education. However, leaders are not complacent and are always looking for ways to strengthen procedures further.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Leaders have an accurate view of the quality of teaching because of the regular checks they make. Teaching has improved this year and is now good overall.
- Teachers plan well together to ensure that a consistent approach to teaching and learning exists in each year group. As a result, pupils have continued to make progress even when staff have been absent or have changed.
- The most effective teachers check how well pupils are doing during lessons. They make tasks harder or give additional support where necessary. Teachers have recognised the need to stretch pupils, including the most able, and have very recently introduced 'wobble challenges' that encourage pupils to try tasks which are more difficult.
- Teachers and teaching assistants provide good support to pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who have fallen behind and need to

catch up. Well-planned individual and small-group support in class and more specific well-led intervention groups are helping pupils to make good progress.

- Pupils are making good progress in mathematics because it is taught well in most classes. Younger pupils use practical equipment to help them understand calculations, while older pupils regularly demonstrate their reasoning skills. In Year 3, pupils were learning to measure accurately in millimetres but while doing so had to deepen their reasoning skills by finding combinations of lengths that met agreed criteria.
- Reading is taught effectively. Younger pupils use phonics to sound out unfamiliar words, while older pupils enjoy completing challenging tasks about their class reading texts.
- There are regular opportunities for pupils to discuss, investigate and think about things for themselves in a range of subjects. For example, in science older pupils use the laboratories at the neighbouring secondary school to enhance their learning.
- The vast majority of parents welcome the detailed information they receive about their child's progress and attitudes to learning. Following the headteacher's review, parents now think the homework that pupils are given is appropriate.
- Leaders are aware that there are a few remaining inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. These are caused by lower expectations, weaker subject knowledge and missed opportunities to apply and develop pupils' skills and knowledge.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils have good values and are tolerant of each other, recognising everyone's personal qualities.
- Adults demonstrate high levels of care towards pupils. As a result, pupils are happy to approach an adult if they have a problem, knowing that they are there to help.
- Pupils feel safe at school; they have no real concerns about bullying of any type. Pupils know how to stay safe when using online technology.
- Reward systems, such as the weekly golden-tie awards and the red ties for members of the school council, promote personal development very well. Pupils take pride in these special items of uniform, and know their efforts to do the right things will be recognised.
- Pupils' physical well-being is promoted well by the provision of healthy meals and snacks and the wide range of extra-curricular sporting activities available. This is also the case at the breakfast club; however, there are missed opportunities for pupils to select and serve their own food independently.
- While some pupils have recently improved the quality of their presentation, there remains a wide variability in the pride pupils take in their work. This is linked to teachers' expectations.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are welcoming and respectful. They move around the school sensibly and take care of their environment, for example by making sure any litter is placed in the bin. Pupils help new classmates to settle in quickly so they soon become part of the New Horizons family.
- Staff have been successful in helping pupils who find it more difficult to manage their behaviour to improve over time.
- Attendance is improving because pupils enjoy coming to school. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent is falling due to effective work by school staff with pupils and their families.
- Where teaching is less engaging, pupils' behaviour sometimes becomes distracting. Some pupils are unable to regulate their own behaviour. Similarly, when supervision is less effective, there is some boisterous play at breaktimes.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils develop their early reading skills well. In 2015 and 2016 more pupils met the phonics screening check standard in Year 1 than found nationally. Last year, disadvantaged pupils did better than other pupils nationally.
- Pupils who did not meet the phonics standard in Year 1 are making rapid progress to help them catch up towards meeting the standard in Year 2.
- Throughout the school, disadvantaged pupils make at least the same progress as their peers in writing and mathematics and often more. This is because pupil premium funding is used appropriately to support them.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points. This is due to the effective support they receive in class and the well-planned interventions put in place to help them catch up.
- The most able pupils are developing a mastery of language, grammar and punctuation. They are successfully using a range of formal and informal styles in their writing. However, there are some weaknesses in their spelling skills. In mathematics, some of the most able pupils in key stage 1 and key stage 2 are demonstrating a greater depth of understanding.
- Where teaching is particularly effective, pupils are making strong progress in developing their skills in science and humanities. They apply their written English skills well.
- There are currently no published outcomes for the end of key stage 2. Leaders recognise that some teaching needs to be further improved to ensure that all groups of pupils make strong progress towards meeting end-of-key-stage expectations.

Early years provision

Good

- Effective leadership of the early years provision ensures that all groups of children make good progress, so they are well prepared for Year 1.
- Children enter Nursery or Reception with skills and knowledge that are below those found typically. From these low starting points, children have made good progress to achieve a good level of development that was above the national average in 2015 and 2016. However, leaders are not complacent. They recognise that within the overall good progress, there are some areas of learning where some groups of children do less well. They have begun to adapt the curriculum to address this.
- In Reception, there is a rich curriculum which builds upon first-hand experiences such as visiting a farm. Once introductory tasks are completed, children are able to choose to learn and play indoors or in the spacious and well-resourced outdoor area.
- Children in the Nursery do not enjoy such freedom. Staffing restrictions mean that children have set times to learn and play indoors and outdoors. This prevents boys and girls from sustaining activities and developing a wider range of interests.
- Although adults help children to develop their language and vocabulary well, a significant number of children have difficulties with their speech articulation.
- Phonics is taught well and meets the needs of children as they develop an interest in reading. Children are encouraged to attempt their own writing in a range of adult-led and independent activities. For example, inspectors observed children applying their phonic skills when writing about their recent visit to the farm. However, opportunities for children to develop their handwriting by forming the letter shapes correctly are quite limited.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively to provide additional teaching for disadvantaged children so they get a good start to their education. Children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified as soon as possible so that suitable support can be planned.
- There are strong links with parents. Staff work hard to involve parents regularly in their child's learning.
- Safeguarding in the early years is effective. Staff are well trained to look after children's welfare. Leaders are currently providing teaching assistants with training to help them develop their skills further when supporting children's learning.
- Some boys have not yet developed positive attitudes to learning. They are occasionally disrespectful. Many boys and girls tend to choose activities that reinforce gender stereotypes. For example, boys enjoy the construction areas and girls enjoy dressing up. Leaders are finding new ways to help children choose a range of activities.

School details

Unique reference number	140215
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	10032498

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	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	413
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	Lee Round (regional governing body)
Headteacher	Jody Murphy
Telephone number	01634 336565
Website	www.newhorizons-ca.org.uk
Email address	office@newhorizons.medway.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school opened in September 2014 with two classes and has grown rapidly. It now has 14 classes and is larger than the average primary school nationally.
- The school currently consists of: a Nursery class with separate morning and afternoon groups; three classes in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2; and two classes in each of Year 3 and Year 4. There are not yet any pupils in Year 5 or Year 6.
- The school is a sponsored academy which is part of The Thinking Schools Trust.
- The headteacher joined the school in January 2016 and the deputy headteacher joined the school in April 2017.
- The school operates a breakfast club which is open every morning before school.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in each class at least once. The majority of these observations took place with the headteacher or another senior leader. Inspectors looked at a wide selection of pupils' workbooks with school leaders.
- Inspectors held two meetings with those responsible for governing the school. These meetings included: directors of the trust; trust executive leaders, including the chief executive officer; the chair and other members of the regional governing body and members of the academy advisory board.
- Inspectors considered a wide range of school documentation, including documents related to safeguarding, attendance, school improvement and governance.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, other school leaders and newly qualified teachers.
- To gain their views of the school, inspectors spoke informally with pupils in lessons and around the school and met the school council more formally. Inspectors considered 47 responses to the online pupil questionnaire. Inspectors also heard some pupils in Year 2 and Year 4 read.
- In addition to speaking to a number of parents at the start of the inspection, inspectors considered 57 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire, including 34 free-text comments.
- Inspectors considered 27 responses to the confidential staff survey.

Inspection team

Lee Selby, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Dan Lambert	Her Majesty's Inspector
Sue Reid	Ofsted Inspector

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