

Inspection of Hill Top Academy

Edlington Lane, Edlington, Doncaster, South Yorkshire DN12 1PL

Inspection dates: 31 January and 1 February 2024

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Early years provision

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Outstanding

The executive principal of this school is Rachael Macleod. This school is part of the Exceed Learning Partnership, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Beryce Nixon OBE, and overseen by a board of directors, chaired by John Blount.

Ofsted has not previously inspected Hill Top Academy under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. However, Ofsted previously judged Hill Top Primary School to be outstanding in 2011, before it opened as an academy.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school provides exceptional opportunities for pupils. The school leaves no stone unturned to ensure that every pupil learns and achieves well. Pupils enjoy coming to school. They are proud to represent the school within the local community. There are many opportunities for pupils to develop their interests outside of lessons, such as a school choir and a pupil parliament. Pupils can attend a wide range of clubs. These experiences help pupils to develop high levels of confidence.

Pupils behave exceptionally well in class and around school. They know and understand what is expected of them. Pupils have high expectations of themselves and others. This contributes to a calm environment across school. Pupils know that staff will help them if they are concerned about something. Pupils feel safe at school.

Over time, the school has built and maintained positive relationships with families. Staff engage with external agencies to support pupils. The school is well respected in the local community. A parent summarised the opinions of many, saying, 'Hill Top is a fabulous school, serving its community.' Staff care deeply about improving the life chances of pupils.

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

The curriculum that pupils follow is broad and ambitious. Pupils enjoy learning. They achieve well. The curriculum has been broken down into clear steps of learning that build up over time. The school provides excellent training opportunities for teachers to develop their subject knowledge. As a result, teachers design lessons that ensure that pupils build their knowledge. Teachers make sure that lessons are adapted so that all pupils can access learning. Teachers check that pupils can use and apply what they have learned in a range of contexts. Teachers provide regular opportunities for pupils to revisit previous learning. This helps pupils to remember the knowledge and skills that they have learned. Pupils are encouraged to make connections to what they already know. This helps them to develop a deep understanding of the areas they study.

Teachers carefully adapt lessons to ensure that pupils benefit from the curriculum. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are supported to access the same learning as their peers. Teachers are skilled at checking gaps in pupils' knowledge during lessons. They address them immediately, which prevents pupils from falling behind.

Reading is a priority. Staff promote reading opportunities across the school. Older pupils read with younger pupils. Pupils enjoy reading and have opportunities to select from a range of books. Pupils talk about their favourite authors and are proud of the progress they make. They read with increasing accuracy and fluency and know how important reading skills are for their later life. The school has ensured that staff in every year group have been expertly trained to teach phonics. This has

resulted in a consistent approach. Pupils quickly learn to read with fluency and confidence. Where pupils fall behind, staff ensure that they quickly catch up. In the early years, phonics is skilfully embedded throughout the day. Staff provide regular opportunities for children to practise sounds and read them in words. The school ensures that pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Staff in the early years know the children well. They build positive relationships with families. Children settle in quickly. Staff are skilful at fostering children's independence in learning. Adults ask questions that challenge and develop children's thinking. Children develop high levels of concentration. They build excellent relationships with each other. Staff in the setting use a wide range of resources well to enable children to learn the well-considered curriculum. Staff design activities to support children's individual needs. Children are excited and eager to join in. Most children are ready for the challenges of Year 1. For those who are not, additional provision is used to make sure that they catch up quickly.

The school places a strong emphasis on pupils' personal development. It provides a range of opportunities to enable pupils to become leaders. They can become ambassadors, play leaders and mini midday supervisors. Pupils are rewarded with 'pay' for some roles. This teaches pupils about the world of work. The school invites visitors to help raise awareness and aspirations about different types of jobs.

Pupils know they are citizens of the world, as well as the school and the local community. The school provides many trips and experiences. Pupils learn about different faiths and beliefs in an age-appropriate way. People from different faith groups talk to pupils about their real-life experiences. Other visitors to school have included people who have physical disabilities. These experiences develop pupils' awareness of equality and diversity. As a result, pupils are tolerant and respectful of people who are different to themselves. Pupils learn how to stay safe and be healthy and who can help them.

Leaders, including those with responsibility for governance, know the school well. They have a shared vision for the school and understand their roles. They use their experience to challenge and support school leaders well.

Curriculum leaders know their subjects well and share their expertise. This enhances the quality of education on offer. The school has created a safe and supportive environment that allows teachers to develop their skills. Teachers who are early in their careers are well supported through appropriate professional development. Leaders consider staff's well-being and workload. Staff are happy to work at this school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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	144077
Local authority	Doncaster
Inspection number	10290325
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	379
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	John Blount
Executive Principal	Rachael Macleod
Website	www.hilltopacademy.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school became part of the Exceed Learning Partnership Trust in April 2017.
- The school makes use of alternative provision for a small number of pupils.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above the national average.

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.
- This was the first routine inspection of the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors spoke to the chief executive officer (CEO), the executive principal and the head of school, the special educational needs coordinator, the subject leaders and the teachers.
- The lead inspector held meetings with the directors (trustees) and the members of the local governing body, including the chair and the trust's CEO and the trust's deputy CEO.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, art and design, physical education (PE) and geography. 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 also listened to a sample of pupils read to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account 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.
- To gather the views of pupils, inspectors took account of the pupil survey. Inspectors also spoke informally to pupils to gather their views on school life.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents from Ofsted's survey, Ofsted Parent View. They also spoke to parents at the beginning of the school day.
- To gather the views of staff, inspectors took account of the staff survey and met with staff teams.

Inspection team

Helen Haunch, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Matthew Harrington	His Majesty's Inspector
Simon Swift	Ofsted Inspector

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