

High Cliff Academy

Southdown Road, Newhaven, East Sussex BN9 9FD

Inspection dates

5–6 June 2018

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Early years provision	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The headteacher is unwavering in her determination to provide the best possible experiences for pupils in the school. She does this extremely well, including recognising the challenge of sustaining this as the school expands.
- Since January 2017, STEP Academy Trust has provided highly effective support to the school. The multi-academy trust (MAT) has worked with urgency and moral purpose to ensure that high-quality learning opportunities are in place for all pupils.
- All staff display a deep commitment to the headteacher's vision. They are expertly encouraged and enabled to contribute to this vision.
- Governors carry out their duties conscientiously and rigorously. They understand the school well, visit regularly and know how effectively pupils learn.
- The curriculum is inspiring and relevant to the pupils of High Cliff Academy. Leaders have given careful consideration to how pupils can successfully develop their skills, understanding and knowledge.
- Teachers plan highly engaging and effective lessons. Teaching is very strong, and standards are rising rapidly.
- Pupils throughout the school make rapid progress from their starting points in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Children get off to a great start in early years. Staff form excellent relationships with parents and children happily settle into routines.
- Exceptionally skilled phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) teaching across early years and key stage 1 ensures that pupils are encouraged and supported to read widely.
- Safeguarding is a strength. Parents have complete confidence that leaders deliver the highest standards of safety and protection for their children. The school is a nurturing and inclusive environment.
- Parents are extremely positive about the school. They say that their children are safe, happy and thriving. They recognise that belonging to the MAT has facilitated improvements to the school.
- Pupils are happy, motivated and excited to come to school. They demonstrate excellent attitudes to their learning and are growing in confidence.
- The school develops pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development particularly skilfully. Pupils are thoughtful, kind and respectful.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that high standards are maintained as the school develops its key stage 2 provision.
- Make sure that the quality of leadership is preserved as the school increases in size.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The headteacher provides exceptional leadership and is unwavering in ensuring that staff and pupils achieve the highest possible standards. STEP Academy Trust (Striving Together for Excellence in Partnership) has transformed the school since they took over in January 2017. Parents are very positive about the improvements made by the MAT. In the words of one: 'Since the school has been taken over by STEP Academy Trust, it has gone from strength to strength.' Together, the headteacher and MAT leaders have ensured that the school has rapidly improved. Consequently, there is a culture of high expectations for all.
- Parents are wholly supportive of the school and the changes introduced by the headteacher. One parent, speaking for many, said: 'The headteacher has a clear ambition to make the school the best learning environment for the children, and we have been really impressed with the rapid changes that have come into place since she took over.'
- The staff work remarkably well as a team and are highly effective. The headteacher supports and encourages staff to think deeply about their practice. Teachers are actively involved with leaders in the co-creation of the school's teaching policies. These policies are deeply rooted in research and evidence. Consequently, teachers' methods and their teaching practice are highly accomplished.
- Staff appreciate the attention that leaders give to their professional development. One teacher commented: 'Our teaching policies place quality-first teaching at the heart of what we do and leaders have provided us with outstanding professional development to support this.' As a result of this work, teachers have strong subject knowledge and are innovative in their approach.
- Self-evaluation is rigorous. The headteacher scrutinises the school's performance from every possible viewpoint. Leaders are quick to initiate support where needed and swiftly address aspects of the school's performance that may occasionally dip. For example, intensive training for staff on phonics teaching has ensured that pupils are making strong progress in their reading. Pupils are also successfully applying their phonics knowledge to spelling and writing.
- The curriculum is highly engaging and creative. It is enriched by trips to interesting places and visitors to the school. Leaders are determined that the curriculum should support pupils 'to look after themselves in the 21st century world'. They have carefully designed a curriculum which skilfully develops pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding across a wide range of different subjects. Leaders are not complacent and have plans to strengthen the curriculum further. For example, ideas are in place to use the sports and science facilities of the neighbouring secondary school and secondary subject specialists to deliver 'taster sessions' on modern foreign languages.
- The curriculum motivates pupils and provides them with a real purpose and focus for learning. For example, in personal, social, health and economic education pupils looked at what makes a community strong. In design and technology, they designed and

made musical instruments for a performance. Pupils are making excellent progress across a wide range of subjects.

- Parents feel welcomed and embrace the many and varied opportunities to contribute to different aspects of the school's work. Leaders have provided workshops in phonics and mathematics, so parents can support their children's learning. Parents appreciate the school's 'open door' policy and feel that any concerns they may have are dealt with effectively.
- Additional funding is used exceptionally well. Leaders ensure that disadvantaged pupils receive bespoke academic and pastoral support so that they learn successfully and achieve high standards. Provision for these pupils is tracked rigorously to ensure that they receive exactly the support they need.
- Leaders have carefully considered the use of additional sports funding and pupils have contributed their opinions as to how it should be spent. The playground has been transformed with equipment and structures to enable pupils to engage in healthy activities. Plans are in place to further develop the outside space to accommodate key stage 2 as the school grows.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a high priority for leaders and embedded across the school. British values are skilfully woven into the curriculum. Themes, such as: rights and responsibilities; feelings and friendships; money; safety and risk; health; and identity, are explored in depth. Pupils have an excellent understanding of Christianity as well as the other major world religions. Pupils' understanding of different cultures is enhanced by visitors from countries such as Japan.

Governance of the school

- Governors share the headteacher's vision and ethos with equal passion. They work alongside leaders and representatives from the MAT to ensure that pupils in the school receive a first-rate education.
- The strategic governing body has a clear understanding of its role, and how it operates independently within the MAT. It makes decisions with care and a great deal of thought, discussion and consideration.
- Governors draw on their expertise and experience to enhance the school's safeguarding culture and overall effectiveness very well. They are highly proactive in seeking further training and take full advantage of the useful training and sharing of best practice provided by the MAT.
- Governors work closely with the MAT to provide appropriate support and robust challenge to school leaders. They monitor the school's work regularly and use externally validated reports to ensure the reliability of leaders' evaluations of teaching, learning and pupils' outcomes. They scrupulously check that actions have been followed up.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

- Leaders show an impressive knowledge and understanding of the individual needs of all pupils, including vulnerable pupils, and their home circumstances. This means that staff are acutely alert to any changes in pupils that might indicate a concern.
- Record-keeping is highly organised and up to date. Referrals are followed up tenaciously and are extensively documented. Leaders work closely with parents and external agencies to ensure that pupils receive the support they need.
- Staff have received appropriate training for their roles and responsibilities and know exactly what to do if they have a safeguarding concern.
- Leaders ensure that recruitment checks are thorough before adults, including volunteers and any contractors, can start working in the school. These are meticulously recorded.
- Actions from the MAT's recent safeguarding audit have been swiftly implemented. Leaders have taken a sensible approach to the safety of pupils at the beginning and end of the school day by ensuring that no vehicles enter the school's site at these times.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school and have total confidence that adults will always help them if needed. All parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, confirm that their children feel safe. One parent speaking for many, said: 'The safety of my children is paramount and I have no issues with safety at High Cliff.'

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Leaders work tirelessly to ensure that teaching captures the interests of pupils. Pupils are highly motivated, absorbed in their learning and make excellent progress from their starting points.
- Teachers are proactive in ensuring that they have a deep knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach. They engage in professional discussions with colleagues and carefully consider educational research and a range of approaches. As a result, teaching is highly effective and leads to strong progress for all pupils.
- Pupils achieve well as a result of teachers' high expectations of what they can do. Pupils are expected to participate fully in lessons. No pupil is allowed to 'opt out' and, should this happen, teachers pick this up quickly.
- Pupils' work is presented to a very high standard in all subjects. High expectations are developing pupils' resilience and stamina. Pupils and teachers are rightly very proud of the work in books.
- During lessons, teachers are highly alert to pupils' understanding of their learning. Teachers check and respond to pupils' needs, providing additional support or challenge as required. The school's policy of 'real-time' feedback and same-day interventions swiftly pick up pupils' misconceptions. This ensures a rapid rate of progress and enables all pupils to achieve well.
- Teachers are particularly effective in meeting the needs of the most able pupils. They skilfully build in challenge so pupils are able to develop their reasoning, questioning and explanation skills in greater depth across the curriculum. For example, in religious

education most-able pupils were challenged to explore the differences between the Bible and the Koran.

- Teachers expect all pupils to answer questions fully, using correct grammar and complete sentences. This is highly consistent across the school. As a result, pupils can articulate their learning fully, develop their ideas and apply these in their writing.
- Leaders continually seek to improve the quality of teaching. In 2017, standards in the Year 1 phonics screening check were broadly average. However, all staff share the ambition to do better. To this end, staff have received helpful phonics training. The teaching of phonics is consistently of a high standard across the school, leading to pupils' strong progress in reading.
- Pupils read well and widely. Teachers model how to read with expression. Pupils are developing their fluency in reading and have the skills needed to self-correct when necessary. Teachers' skilled questioning, during daily comprehension work, develops pupils' deeper understanding of different types of writing.
- Teachers apply the school's feedback policy meticulously across a range of subjects. They pay great attention to pupils' spelling. Pupils are encouraged to apply their phonics knowledge to their writing, which they do with increasing accuracy.
- Mathematics is taught effectively. Recent changes to the way that mathematics is taught have strengthened how pupils learn the basic skills of mathematics. This new way of working gives pupils opportunities to practise their skills in a variety of different contexts. Mathematical resources are used well in lessons and are carefully matched to pupils' needs.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Leaders have created a happy and secure environment, and pupils love coming to school. Every parent spoken to commented on how happy their children are at school.
- The school is an exceptionally nurturing environment in which every pupil is valued. Staff have extremely positive relationships with pupils and know them very well. As a result, pupils are growing in confidence.
- Pupils are friendly and respectful of adults and each other. They demonstrate this by listening well in lessons and showing good manners at all times.
- Staff have established strong relationships with pupils and families. This helps pupils to feel safe and trust staff. Pupils are confident to confide in adults in school if they have any problems. They say that bullying is rare but that teachers are good at resolving any issues should they arise.
- Leaders are relentless in their determination to 'remove all barriers to learning'. They make sure that all pupils, including the most vulnerable, receive the right emotional guidance and practical support, for example by providing places at breakfast club and

Nursery, and getting external support for some pupils to develop their speech and language skills further.

- Leaders actively seek the views of pupils and, as a result, pupils feel highly valued. For example, the school council met with different contractors, bidding to install new playground equipment, to explain what pupils wanted. One parent commented: 'High Cliff is a great school which our child loves and feels like a valued member of the school community.'
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe online and are able to explain this clearly. This is because e-safety is an integral part of the school's curriculum. Leaders' work with parents to help their children stay safe online further enhances the work done in school.
- Discriminatory behaviour is extremely rare. Pupils are very accepting and understanding of each other's differences.
- The highly positive ethos of the school enables pupils to thrive. Pupils show mature attitudes to learning. Teachers encourage pupils to develop their own ideas and regularly provide pupils with opportunities to articulate their thinking.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils are exceptionally motivated and keen to learn. They display exemplary behaviour in lessons and around the school. In lessons, they move from one activity to the next swiftly, and settle to learn eagerly.
- Incidents of poor behaviour are very rare. Leaders ensure that there are plenty of activities and high supervision at playtimes and lunchtimes. Staff eat with the pupils at lunchtime and engage them in stimulating conversations about their learning and interests.
- Pupils are courteous and polite. They enjoy being with each other and encourage each other in learning and play, confidently telling the inspector, 'We are not allowed to be unkind in this school.'
- Pupils want to be in school. Overall attendance is above national figures and is continuing to improve when compared to the same period last year. Attendance for groups of pupils, such as those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils, also shows a marked improvement.
- Leaders provide highly individualised and intensive support for the few pupils whose attendance is low, and take firm action where necessary. Pupils are actively encouraged to be in school on time and are very proud when their class wins the weekly attendance cup.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Children in early years make rapid progress from their starting points. In 2017, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development was broadly average. Recent moderation by the local authority endorses the accuracy of the school's

judgements and confirms the significant rise in the proportion of Reception children set to achieve a good level of development this year.

- In 2017, outcomes in the Year 1 phonics screening check were broadly average. Leaders' firm and highly effective actions have led to improvements in the teaching of phonics. Pupils are proficient in their use of their phonics knowledge to help them read. The school's performance information indicates that pupils are making strong progress, with a higher proportion on course to achieve the expected standard this year.
- Pupils in Year 2 are on track to achieve well by the end of key stage 1. Work seen in books supports the school's accurate assessment information. Pupils in Year 2 achieve well in mathematics, writing and reading and are on course to make good progress from their starting points.
- Work in the books of current pupils, across all year groups, supports leaders' views that pupils are making rapid and sustained progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils' work shows consistently well-developed knowledge, skills and understanding across a range of subjects. The progression of pupils' learning across the curriculum is particularly strong between Year 1 and Year 2.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is rapidly improving towards that of other pupils with the same starting points. This is because of the support they receive, underpinned by leaders' deeply held belief that all pupils should have an equal chance of success.
- Parents overwhelmingly feel their children are making progress. The following comments from parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire are representative of the views of many: 'Our daughter is making rapid progress and has developed a love of learning, especially writing, which she constantly demonstrates at home' and 'My son has made amazing progress in the past academic year, he surprises us daily with the things he learns.'

Early years provision

Outstanding

- Children get off to a very strong start in early years and make rapid progress. The number of children attending the Nursery has grown significantly over the year.
- Children love learning and happily choose appropriate activities. Adults skilfully guide children towards tasks that closely match their interests and abilities. As a result, children swiftly become absorbed in their learning. For example, children were observed painting the school's shed, making kites and playing imaginary games 'under the sea'.
- Adults have high expectations for children's behaviour and give close attention to their well-being. Safeguarding procedures are robust. Staff keep a watchful eye on children to ensure that they are kept safe.
- Leaders thoughtfully manage transition into Nursery and routines are quickly established. Children understand the school's rules. They know how to keep themselves safe, even when taking risks. They play well together, successfully learning how to share and take turns.

- Leaders work hard to involve parents and carers in their children’s learning. Parents are encouraged to build on learning at school through home-learning projects. As one parent commented: ‘The home-learning is engaging and gives us, as parents, clear opportunities to engage in the learning process with our child.’
- Parents are enthused about the provision in early years. Parents and teachers work closely together and children’s learning, emotional and medical needs are understood very well as a result.
- The teaching of reading is highly effective. In Nursery, children have many opportunities to chorus the sounds for letters as well as write and play. In Reception, teachers deliver daily structured and well-modelled phonics lessons. Children are given many opportunities to write and happily have a go at writing words and sentences in their writing books. This builds children’s confidence and enables them to think of themselves as writers.
- The assessment of what children know and can do in the early years is accurate and used well. The children’s learning journals reflect the high quality of the provision and show that children have made strong progress across the early years foundation stage.

School details

Unique reference number	140385
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	10046582

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	117
Appropriate authority	Strategic governing body
Chair	Helen Hewitt
Headteacher	Miss Abby Kilgarriff
Telephone number	01273 041471
Website	www.highcliffacademy.org
Email address	office@highcliffacademy.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- High Cliff Academy is a smaller-than-average-sized primary school.
- High Cliff Academy opened in September 2015.
- From January 2017 the school has been sponsored by STEP Academy Trust. An interim head of school was in post between January 2017 and April 2017.
- The current headteacher was appointed in April 2017.
- The school has a strategic governing body that works across two schools within the multi-academy trust.
- The school currently has a Nursery, one Reception class, two classes in Year 1 and one Year 2 class.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well below the national average.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning in all classes throughout the school. All observations were conducted jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspector held meetings with senior leaders and teachers.
- A meeting took place with representatives from the multi-academy trust.
- The inspector met with two governors, including the chair of governors.
- The inspector had a formal meeting with a group of pupils to discuss their views about the school, in addition to informal discussions with pupils during the inspection. The inspector heard some pupils read.
- The views of parents were taken into account by analysing 32 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including 31 free-text comments. The inspector also spoke informally with parents at the start of both inspection days.
- The inspector considered responses to the school's own pupil survey.
- The views of staff were considered by analysing 13 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.
- The inspector evaluated pupils' learning over time by examining a sample of their workbooks.
- The inspector scrutinised the school's documentation, including leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness and the multi-academy trust's teaching and learning review.
- The inspector examined the school's records of current pupil's progress and attendance. Safeguarding procedures were also reviewed, including the arrangements for keeping pupils safe and recruiting staff.

Inspection team

Frances Nation, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2018