

Holne Chase Primary School

Buckingham Road, Bletchley, Milton Keynes MK3 5HP

Inspection dates 22–23 March 2016

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher has high expectations of staff and a relentless focus on improving teaching and learning. Together with school leaders and governors, she has brought about strong improvements in the quality of teaching and, consequently, more rapid progress for pupils in reading, writing and mathematics.
- School leaders check on teaching and pupils' progress regularly. They provide effective challenge for all teachers and effective support where necessary. Teachers work well as a team and are determined to continue the improvements in the school's performance.
- Governors know the school's strengths and where it needs to improve. They provide a good balance of support and challenge.
- The well-designed curriculum enriches pupils' life experiences through a wide range of engaging activities. It contributes strongly to pupils' understanding of life in modern Britain and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupils make good progress in their learning. Their attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stages 1 and 2 is rising. Pupils who have special educational needs or disability and pupils who speak English as an additional language are helped to make good progress.
- Children get off to a good start in Reception. They quickly learn school routines and how to get on with others. Owing to good teaching, they achieve well.
- Pupils like school and attend regularly. They cooperate well with one another, eagerly taking on extra responsibilities, such as becoming play leaders or helping younger pupils.
- Pupils settle to work easily and conduct themselves well. They develop self-confidence and show consideration for others.
- The school has strong, effective systems for safeguarding. Pupils are happy and feel safe.
- Most parents said that the school has improved and pupils behave well and make good progress.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Sometimes, teachers do not ensure that work for the most-able pupils is demanding enough.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to practise extended pieces of writing.
- Leaders do not ensure that all teachers follow the assessment policy closely.
- Not all adults involved in teaching phonics pronounce the sounds that letters make accurately.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that all teachers consistently follow the school's assessment policy.
- Improve the quality of teaching further by:
 - ensuring that the most-able pupils in all year groups are given work that is suitably demanding
 - making sure that all adults involved in teaching phonics pronounce the sounds that letters make accurately.
- Provide more extended writing opportunities for pupils in order to improve their progress in composition.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher has worked relentlessly to ensure that teaching and learning continue to improve. Her calm, clear and determined approach to leadership has resulted in better teaching and good progress for pupils. She has ensured that the school has successfully addressed the areas for improvement cited at the previous inspection. For example, teachers now focus more effectively in their planning on what needs to be learned, teaching assistants are more skilful, and different groups of pupils are making consistently good progress.
- She has helped subject leaders to be more effective in promoting good teaching and more accountable for their work. Leaders have high expectations of staff and pupils. They check how well pupils are doing and the quality of teaching regularly, and provide effective support for teachers who do not live up to expectations.
- School leaders have developed an appropriate system to measure and record pupils' achievement in the new national curriculum. Together with class teachers, they follow the progress of pupils, providing additional help for any who are not doing as well as they might. Teachers often work together and with colleagues from other local schools to check the accuracy of their assessments of pupils' work.
- There is a strong team spirit in the school. Most of the school's meeting time focuses on developing teaching skills. All teachers are committed to continually improving. For example, a group of teachers are working together to develop their skills further by analysing videos of their lessons. Each teacher has a planned programme of professional development based on their aspirations and specific needs. As a result, pupils have made better progress in their learning each year.
- Senior leaders have an accurate understanding of where the school needs to improve. They are implementing a clear, concise plan, including details of specific actions and dated milestones to check on progress.
- The school is committed to equality of opportunity and ensuring that there is no discrimination. For example, leaders ensure that pupil premium funding is used to benefit eligible pupils and that pupils with special educational needs or disability or who speak English as an additional language have effective support.
- The school has an emphasis on numeracy and literacy and provides a suitably broad range of other subjects combined into topics. Pupils' interests and previous learning are used to plan topic activities that will engage pupils well. Overarching questions and core texts permeate each topic and tie different concepts together. For example, pupils consider 'Is there any justice in the world?' and 'How do you make a difference?' when learning about things such as climate change and the British legal system. Enrichment activities, such as a trip to the Courts of Justice or playing in a gamelan orchestra blessed by Buddhist monks, enhance pupils' learning further.
- The arts are prominent in the school's curriculum. For example, all pupils have the opportunity to play the guitar, Year 1 pupils are currently taking part in a Milton Keynes Gallery project linking art and nature, and Year 6 pupils performed in Macbeth for the Shakespeare Schools Festival. The school has made good use of the sports funding to promote regular physical exercise. Specialist coaches provide a wide range of activities for pupils and help teachers to develop their coaching skills. There are now more sports clubs, competitions and tournaments and all pupils are engaged in regular sport.
- Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. They understand and demonstrate Holne Chase values such as equality and freedom. Through assemblies, lessons, trips and visitors, pupils learn about democracy and the rule of law. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well, as demonstrated by their good behaviour and the way they cooperate with one another. Pupils have opportunities to learn about a range of cultures. For example, on 'China Day', they learned about Chinese art, geography and dancing, and learned some Chinese words and interpreted some simple Chinese scripts. Pupils are regularly involved in charity events, such as making up food hampers for needy families.
- The local authority has supported the school effectively since the previous inspection, through training and challenge. The level of support has decreased recently as the school's performance has improved so much.
- All parents spoken to as they arrived at school said that the school has improved since the previous inspection. They said that behaviour was good and their children made good progress. They described how workshops, showcase assemblies and newsletters kept them well informed, and said that teachers

were readily approachable and helpful. Most parents who expressed their views on Parent View agreed.

■ The governance of the school

- The governing body has become more effective since the previous inspection. Governors’ skills, including understanding school performance information, have been enhanced through training and support from the local authority. By providing an appropriate balance of challenge and support, governors have ensured that school leaders have improved their practice, for example in recruitment, and that they are strongly held to account.
- The governing body’s main focus is on ensuring that teaching and learning continue to improve. Governors find out how well the school is doing from the headteacher’s reports and from their own focused visits, observing classes and speaking to staff and pupils.
- Governors assess their own training requirements so they can get the best balance of skills in the governing body.
- Governors manage school finances well. They understand how teachers’ performance is managed and ensure that the pupil premium and sports funding have a positive impact on disadvantaged pupils and pupils’ health respectively.
- The governing body fulfils its statutory responsibilities. Governors ensure that all safeguarding requirements, including those for health and safety, are met.

■ The arrangements for safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The headteacher has made sure that all staff have been appropriately trained and have read the latest guidance. Any concerns about pupils’ safety are recorded securely and followed up promptly.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Where necessary, school leaders have worked successfully with teachers to improve their practice. As a consequence, teaching has improved since the previous inspection and is now good across the school.
- Teachers have acted upon the recommendation from the previous inspection, providing more opportunities for pupils to practise their writing and mathematical skills in a wide range of subjects. They plan activities that appeal to pupils, for example, in Year 6, by linking calculations in mathematics to the current story the class is reading.
- Teachers have established good relationships with their pupils and ensured that classrooms are well ordered and calm areas. Classroom display is used well to celebrate pupils’ work and to record key points in pupils’ recent learning. Teachers are consistent in managing pupils’ behaviour. They have embedded class routines so that pupils readily settle to work and move easily between activities. For example, Year 1 pupils responded positively to countdowns for tidying up, storing materials and replacing chairs efficiently.
- Pupils cooperate and collaborate particularly well. During opportunities to share ideas with a group or partner, they listen carefully to one another and discuss each other’s reasoning. Teachers often use questioning to probe pupils’ understanding and to make them think harder, such as when Year 6 pupils had to explain how to spell comparatives and superlatives.
- Homework builds on learning in the classroom well. Regular activities in reading, writing and mathematics extend and consolidate concepts met in the classroom. Activities in topic-based homework challenge pupils to think for themselves, for example, by considering what life would be like without plants or bees.
- There is consistency in the way teachers plan. For example, they include questions to ask, key words to introduce and what they expect pupils to be able to do.
- The role of teaching assistants is often considered in teachers’ plans, including how they can support disadvantaged and less able pupils. In addition, teaching assistants are effective in supporting pupils who have special educational needs or disability. The inclusion manager ensures that teachers identify the necessary next steps in their learning and that they make good progress.
- Teachers record how well pupils are doing and plan suitable activities to build on what they already know. On occasions, activities for the most-able pupils are too easy and, because the progress pupils are making in lessons is not always checked quickly enough, they spend too long on less demanding work.
- Teachers regularly assess pupils’ written work, but do not always follow the school’s assessment policy

about providing advice for improvement to pupils. Where guidance is given, pupils say that they respond positively to it and it helps them to make better progress.

- Overall, phonics teaching is effective. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are taught in ability groups, with challenging activities matched to their skill level. However, not all adults teaching phonics pronounce the sounds of letters accurately.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are self-confident, for example welcoming visitors and asking questions in class. They are polite and speak warmly about their school and how well pupils get on with each other.
- Pupils have learned about healthy eating and the value of exercise. As part of the school's initiative to improve pupils' health, pupils enjoy a daily walk around the school with their class. They speak enthusiastically about the range of sports and sports clubs available to them. All pupils have the opportunity to learn how to swim.
- Staff keep pupils safe at school. The site is secure and they are well supervised. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe, for example when using the internet or crossing the road, and learn basic skills in first aid and life-saving.
- Pupils know the different forms that bullying can take and what to do if they see or experience bullying. They say there have been few incidents of bullying in the past and that they are confident that teachers would quickly sort it out fairly.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are proud of their school. They say they like their teachers, enjoy learning and that lessons are fun. Pupils come to school regularly and attendance has been at or above the national average for the last few years. Current attendance is above the national average apart from one month when there was a bout of sickness throughout the school.
- Pupils are considerate of others. They conduct themselves well as they move around the school. Play leaders help younger pupils organise games at playtimes and pupils raise money for a variety of charities. Pupils enjoy a range of responsibilities, such as in a librarian role, helping younger pupils, assisting in assemblies or acting as junior road safety officers.
- Pupils know the school's rules about taking care of themselves, their schoolmates and their school, and how they are expected to behave. They try to live up to the school's values and are regularly recognised for doing so. Their good behaviour contributes strongly to the school's welcoming, calm and purposeful atmosphere. School records show that there have been few incidents of misbehaviour and they were handled effectively. Occasionally, when activities become a little dull, a few pupils can lose concentration and fidget.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils' progress in all years in reading, writing and mathematics has improved. In 2015, attainment by the end of key stage 1 had risen to around average in reading, writing and mathematics. Year 6 pupils made good progress in writing and mathematics and very good progress in reading. They attained well above the national average in reading and around the national average in writing. In mathematics, a smaller proportion than nationally attained the higher Level 5 standard. Current school information about pupils' performance and the work seen in pupils' books show that pupils in all years are continuing to make the progress that is at least expected or better.
- In 2015, disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 made similar progress to that of others in the school and nationally in writing and mathematics, but they made better progress in reading. Since the previous inspection, the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and others in the school has narrowed significantly in all three subjects. When compared with others nationally, it was a similar picture: the gap in reading had closed, although it still remained, at around two terms, in writing and mathematics.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability are making good progress. The inclusion manager

has worked closely with specialist support from the local authority to make sure that pupils are identified accurately and that well-targeted and effective help is planned and delivered. Regular reviews of the progress these pupils are making ensure that the extra help has a strong impact. Pupils who speak English as an additional language also get effective, targeted support, including from skilful teaching assistants; they are making similar or better progress compared with their peers.

- Pupils develop a love of reading. Younger pupils read regularly to an adult at home and in school and enjoy reading. There is guidance for parents on supporting their children at home, for example, on 'How to help a reluctant reader'. Pupils regularly borrow books from the attractive, well-organised library. There is a consistent approach to reading sessions in each class. Teachers prompt pupils to tackle high-quality texts and improve their reading fluency and comprehension skills. There are regular reading competitions, such as designing a bookmark. Pupils who have read a certain number of books gain a certificate and recognition in assembly and the school newsletter.
- Pupils say that mathematics lessons are usually fun. Activities help them develop a sound knowledge of mathematical terms and associated vocabulary. They have good opportunities to apply their learning to solve real-life problems. Teachers often try to make ideas explicit and concrete. For example, Year 1 pupils were developing a secure understanding of subtraction using beads on a string.
- The school's focus on improving pupils' grammar, punctuation and spelling in regular lesson activities, tests and homework has been effective in raising pupils' standards in these areas. For example, teachers regularly challenge misspellings in pupils' writing and provide regular, short sessions on the rules of spelling as well as short spelling tests. As a result, pupils spell accurately and can explain the spelling rules they have learned, for example, when pluralising words.
- Pupils practise writing short pieces in a number of genres, applying the skills they are learning, such as using the passive voice. They also have opportunities to write on a range of subjects, for example, in geography, they wrote a message encouraging others to respond to the dangers of climate change. However, they have fewer opportunities to write extended pieces in order to develop their skills in composition.
- The most-able pupils are making similar progress to others. Teachers often plan harder work for them, but pupils say that on occasions, the work set is too easy.

Early years provision

is good

- The early years provision is well led and managed. The early years leader has worked with a group of local schools to improve the provision for children in Reception. The environment, both inside and outside, is bright and engaging, offering children a good range of exciting experiences in all areas of learning.
- Children start Reception with skills and abilities typical for their age. They make good progress and are well prepared for Year 1. Although the proportion reaching a good level of development rose in 2015, it was below the national average. Information from the school and evidence of children's progress in their learning records indicate that the proportion reaching a good level of development would be higher in 2016 at around the national average.
- Children enjoy the activities in Reception and behave well. Classroom routines are quickly learned and children cooperate well with one another, for example, in learning how to take turns. Adults ensure children are safe and that safeguarding arrangements are secure. Children settle in quickly and are happy.
- Trips out of school extend children's experiences further. For example, children visited a local supermarket to collect and purchase ingredients for a pizza they were going to make. On the way, they learned how to cross the road safely.
- Teachers ensure that there is a good balance of adult-led activities and tasks that children can choose for themselves. Adults model skills clearly and interact well with children. They encourage conversation and ask questions that make children think hard and explain more. Children grow in self-confidence and develop their communication skills well.
- Teaching and assessment are good. Holne Chase works with other schools to agree the accuracy of the school's assessments. Adults follow children's learning and development closely and plan suitable activities, based on children's interests, for their next steps in learning. For example, children explored how to build a rocket, discovered ways to sort out coins to pay for items at the supermarket, and found examples of three-dimensional shapes for their homework. Sometimes, adults do not ensure that activities for the most-able children are challenging enough, and so their progress is not as rapid as it might be.

School details

Unique reference number	110290
Local authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	10002336

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	290
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Skingley
Headteacher	Jo Klimek
Telephone number	01908 373640
Website	www.holnechase.com
Email address	office@holnechase.milton-keynes.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	12–13 December 2013

Information about this school

- The school is similar in size to an average primary school. It has two full-time Reception classes. There are nine further classes for Years 1 to 6; some of them are for mixed-age groups.
- Most pupils are of White British background and the remainder come from a wide range of ethnic groups.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium (extra government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or children who are looked after by the local authority) is around average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is around average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors, occasionally accompanied by the headteacher, observed pupils in all year groups engaged in a range of activities in different subjects. They looked at pupils' written work in all years and spoke to pupils about their learning.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and other school leaders, the chair of the governing body and three other governors. An inspector spoke to a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke to groups of pupils and, informally, with other pupils in lessons and around the school. An inspector listened to pupils in Year 2 reading aloud and spoke to them about their reading habits.
- Inspectors examined several school documents. These included the school's evaluation of its performance, its development plan, notes of governors' meetings, information about pupils' progress and attainment, evidence about the quality of teaching, and records relating to behaviour, safeguarding and attendance.
- Inspectors took account of the 54 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, the views expressed informally by parents as they arrived at school, 25 responses to the online questionnaire for staff and 32 responses to the online questionnaire for pupils.

Inspection team

Jim McVeigh, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Gillian Peck	Ofsted Inspector
Clare Morgan	Ofsted Inspector

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