

Holt Farm Junior School

Ashingdon Road, Hawkwell, Rochford, Essex SS4 1RS

Inspection dates

8–9 March 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
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher's passionate and focused determination to raise standards has led to rapid improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- The school's vision, 'ensuring every child achieves', is central to the work of senior leaders and reflected in their effective monitoring systems that ensure pupils achieve well.
- The trust and the local governing body are effective in supporting and challenging leaders. They know the school well because they visit regularly and focus their work on raising standards.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good and, consequently, pupils now make better progress in writing and mathematics.
- Pupils enjoy school. Their attitudes to learning are good and they show respect and courtesy towards one another in class and around the school. Pupils take great pride in their work and this is reflected in the good-quality presentation in their books.
- The school's core values are well understood, reflected in daily routines and relationships and promoted around the school in the highly effective presentations and displays.
- The majority of parents and carers are supportive and positive about the school. They said that they feel their children are safe, happy and are making good progress. Parents value the opportunities they have to be involved in activities at the school.
- Mathematics teaching has improved significantly. Pupils' progress overall is now well above the national average.
- Disadvantaged pupils' progress in mathematics, writing and reading has improved because the school uses its additional funding effectively to make a difference to these pupils.
- Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are supported well by teaching assistants, who help them make strong progress in lessons.
- The school is focused on continuing to improve the teaching of reading to secure consistently good achievement in all classes.
- Challenging, extending and monitoring most-able pupils, so that they progress as rapidly as others, is a priority for the school.
- Assessment and monitoring systems work well for English and mathematics, but leaders do not have similar information to judge accurately how well pupils are achieving in the wider curriculum.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop leadership and management further by:
 - continuing to implement and develop effective assessment systems for all curriculum subjects so that leaders know precisely how well pupils achieve across the wider curriculum aside from English and mathematics.
- Develop teaching, learning and assessment further by:
 - ensuring improvements in reading continue so that all teachers plan teaching to secure consistently good achievement in reading across the curriculum
 - making sure that teachers deliver teaching that challenges, extends and deepens the learning of the most able so that a greater proportion of these pupils achieve the higher standards from their starting points.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher leads the school with determination, ambition and vision and has created a culture that supports all pupils to achieve their very best. These high aspirations are reflected in pupils' improving achievement.
- The school has developed rigorous improvement plans that are supported by precise success criteria. The focus of the plans is to raise standards and improve provision for pupils and their families. Leaders at all levels have an accurate understanding of the school's overall performance. There are clear systems for reflecting on how well pupils are progressing and how to address any underperformance.
- There is an unrelenting commitment to improve teaching, learning and assessment throughout the school. Leaders have systems and structures in place that put learning and outcomes at the heart of the school's work. Leaders use information about pupil performance to identify specific interventions and areas for improvement. This approach, alongside a clear set of expectations and values, has improved behaviour, teaching and pupils' achievement over time so that they are now good.
- The school welcomes feedback from parents and regularly reports in its newsletters how well the school is doing relative to its improvement priorities. Pupils also have a part to play in school improvement and the school council has its own action plan. This helps leaders reflect upon and understand the views of its pupils.
- The performance management of staff, including that of the headteacher, is robust and managed carefully. There is a clear link between whole-school improvement priorities and professional development. Training for staff is linked to improving teaching and pupil achievement. Training provided by the leaders and the trust is valued and is evaluated to ensure that it is having an impact on meeting school objectives.
- The school prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain. There are a wealth of displays, curriculum and extra-curricular activities that give pupils opportunities to reflect on their local and wider community. A recent action plan has been implemented to focus on further developing pupils' understanding of different faiths and cultures. Displays in the school hall map where pupils have visited or have links to around the world. Additionally, parents support the school by providing expertise and knowledge about different skills needed to be successful in society. During the inspection, the school council led an assembly about democracy and government using artefacts and resources received from the Houses of Parliament, designed to help pupils understand how democracy works in practice.
- The physical education and sport premium helps ensure that all pupils can participate in a wide range of physical activities. The school plans, targets and evaluates activities thoroughly to ensure that it is using the monies wisely. There are a range of sports clubs and activities that run throughout the week, before, during and at the end of the day. The school recently won the district athletics competition for the first time in over 30 years.
- The school uses its pupil premium funding effectively to support disadvantaged pupils. Leaders have successfully identified barriers to learning and plan expenditure to

improve outcomes. Leaders monitor and evaluate the use of the funding closely and especially the difference it is making to pupils' achievement and well-being. For example, breakfast club, additional teaching assistant support and a learning mentor are some of the resources that are used effectively to give additional help to disadvantaged pupils.

- Funding for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is used effectively to provide help and support. The inclusion leader monitors the use of the support closely and tracks the impact it is having on pupils. As a result, the needs of these pupils are met, and they make good progress from their starting points.
- The trust has supported the school with training and support networks. It has high aspirations for the school and knows it well.
- The school's curriculum and the associated extra-curricular activities are broad, balanced and meet the needs of learners. The curriculum helps to prepare pupils for the next stage of their education.
- Leaders identify that there is a need to continue focusing on reading so that all teachers plan teaching well to secure consistently good achievement across the curriculum. They have also identified that there needs to be focus on challenge for the most able pupils in order that a greater proportion achieve higher standards. Their plans are clear and need time to embed and have impact.
- New approaches have been introduced for leaders to make informed judgements about the progress of pupils in subjects other than English and mathematics. The new key performance indicators are intended to support teachers in their planning and assessment so that pupils have a clearer understanding of how well they are achieving.

Governance of the school

- The local governing body shares the vision and high aspirations of the headteacher and understands the school's strengths and areas for development.
- Governors know the school well. They receive regular reports from the headteacher about the school's progress towards the priorities set out in the school development plan. Governors carry out visits to monitor effectively the progress and implementation of action plans for improvement. They check the evidence carefully and provide effective support and challenge to leaders in meetings. As a result, they focus on improving standards and opportunities for all pupils at the school.
- The trustees and chief executive officer of the trust provide effective support. The trust supports the school well through its network of headteacher meetings and focused professional development work.
- The local governing body takes its statutory role with respect to safeguarding very seriously. Governors ensure that policies are regularly reviewed; they make checks on safeguarding processes and systems to ensure that the school is a safe place for children and those who work there.
- Governors ensure that additional funds are used in an appropriate way to support pupils and monitor and review expenditure plans, especially those identified for pupil premium, sport funding and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a very strong culture of promoting pupils' well-being and safety. Leaders ensure that the policies and practices are not only thorough but also detailed. School policies complement those of the trust.
- There are systems in place that ensure that careful checks are made on all adults working in the school; these are also rigorously checked by governors.
- Staff training is carried out regularly. Detailed records are maintained, ensuring that everybody has the most up-to-date knowledge and a thorough understanding of how to keep children safe. This is a high priority for everyone at the school and taken very seriously.
- Staff have clear procedures to follow if they have any concerns about pupils. These are recorded centrally and followed up and monitored closely by leaders. Inspection evidence shows that systems for monitoring and helping children who need interventions and support are rigorous. Furthermore, the school works closely with a wide range of external agencies to help keep children and families safe.
- Most parents and pupils who answered their respective Ofsted online surveys agreed pupils were safe at the school.
- Children said that they feel safe and explained to inspectors how they learned about how to keep safe in school and in the wider community from assemblies and in personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection, as a result of well-targeted policies and effective training to improve planning and assessment. It is now consistently good across the school.
- Teachers have secure subject knowledge and are able to sustain pupils' interest and make lessons exciting. As a result, pupils said they enjoy their work.
- Teachers use a range of strategies to support pupils' learning in lessons. For example, pupils said they value opportunities to discuss their work with each other as this helps improve their understanding of new learning. Pupils respond well to lesson routines and understand the school's vision for 'Holt Farm Learners' who are: 'hardworking, organised, listeners, team players, focused, ambitious, respectful and motivated'.
- Teachers use the information they collect from assessments to plan work that meets the needs of pupils. There are often opportunities for pupils to review their learning in lessons and teachers regularly check their understanding.
- Writing has improved over time and overall progress was above the national average in 2017. This was reflected in pupils' work seen during the inspection. Writing is well developed in subjects across the curriculum.
- Over time, teaching has improved in mathematics; the progress of leavers last year was well above average for the year group as a whole. In lessons there is good use of

questioning and a wide range of interventions that help most pupils to learn well. Pupils enjoy mathematics. This subject is developed well across the curriculum. Also, displays around the school support pupils' understanding of mathematical concepts and ideas.

- Teaching assistants' work is a strength of the school. They are adept at supporting the pupils they work with and are able to help them make rapid progress over time. They have a clear understanding of pupils' needs and how to support them effectively.
- Parents and pupils' responses in surveys show they value homework. The lunchtime club gives support to those pupils who need extra help with their homework.
- The school has recognised that the teaching of reading needs to be strengthened further. Although reading progress last year was above average overall, it was not as good as for mathematics or writing and better for some groups than others. Reading is a school priority this year. Training has started for teachers and teaching assistants, so they can identify where pupils need support and how to intervene to ensure that they make more rapid progress. A recent audit identified that new reading materials were needed to meet the needs of boys and weaker readers. Leaders have put in place an online programme to accelerate and promote better progress in reading for these pupils but it is too early to see the impact of this new provision.
- Assessment and target setting in other subjects are not as rigorous as they are for mathematics and English. Current assessment information does not give sufficient detail to measure progress accurately. The school has introduced new systems to address this.
- Leaders' expectations of teachers are that pupils need to be challenged to achieve their best. This 'challenge culture' has been embraced by all in the school. However, it is not yet consistent, especially in stretching the most able.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils enjoy school and they have good relationships with each other in work and play. They are able to explain the school's 'high five golden school rules' and how they help them to develop their own self-awareness in order to be successful learners.
- The parent council actively supports the school. It shares, with leaders, parents' views and ideas to help improve the school and contribute to pupils' welfare and development. Leaders value parents' input. They have used this effectively to broaden pupils' understanding about their local community as well as helping pupils to reflect on how groups in society may have differing beliefs. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding has been enhanced with a wide range of art, music and drama activities. For example, the choir has sung recently at the O2 arena in London.
- In classes, pupils are confident about explaining their work. They are articulate in describing what they are doing and how they approach their work individually and when working with others. For example, one pupil confidently greeted an inspector, explained what he was doing and offered to share what different groups were doing in

the lesson.

- The school council has its own development plan and works closely with school leaders in determining priorities for improvement. Members regularly lead assemblies and act as ambassadors for the school. Digital leaders and eco-warriors make a contribution to their peers' personal development and show responsibility around the school.
- Pupils' physical and emotional well-being is supported through the wide-ranging PSHE programme and the pastoral interventions work. The school ethos is about supporting one another to achieve well. The newly appointed learning mentor has placed developing self-esteem at the heart of the school's pastoral intervention work.
- Good attitudes to learning are seen in the ways pupils work together in lessons to help and support each other. In paired and small-group work pupils show compassion, respect and support for each other and their teachers. Pupils' presentation in books is very good and shows they are proud of their work.
- Pupils' knowledge about staying safe is a high priority for the school. Through PSHE lessons and assemblies the pupils learn about a wide range of potential dangers that they may experience in or out of school.
- School leaders have responded to a small minority of parents' concerns about bullying by addressing what bullying is, raising it as a focus for debate and clarifying the school's stance. Anti-bullying week has helped to raise the profile of this. Pupils told inspectors that bullying was rare but that when it did occur it was dealt with very effectively. They understood what to do and how to report any concerns.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' movement around the school is well supervised, orderly and safe. They are courteous to visitors. The colourful displays that celebrate their work are well cared for. The school environment reflects the school's vision of achieving high standards.
- Pupils are polite and well mannered. In lessons they are able to work together with their peers and teachers respectfully and thoughtfully.
- Attendance is consistently above the national average. The school monitors attendance well and supports those who need to improve. Persistent absence has declined and levels are now lower than the national average. This is because the school has clear routines and systems in place and high expectations and aspirations of all pupils.
- Exclusions are very low and the levels of exclusions are much lower than those of other schools nationally. The school monitors and logs behaviour incidents and regularly reviews the impact of its work.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and most have positive attitudes to learning. Some concerns were raised by a very small minority of staff and parents about the behaviour of pupils. However, typically, behaviour is good.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Over time, pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics has improved. It is now above the national average. This is as a result of a determination by leaders to raise standards and represents significant improvement since the previous inspection.
- Mathematics progress was well above the national average in 2017. Disadvantaged pupils' progress in mathematics was above that of others nationally. Disadvantaged pupils' progress is positive and has improved over time in mathematics, reading and writing. The school has successfully used its additional funding to support pupils with appropriate interventions to raise standards.
- In writing, progress has been above average for all pupils over the past two years, especially for pupils who join the school with low and middle prior attainment. The focus on writing has been successful in raising standards since the previous inspection.
- The progress of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is monitored and tracked closely. They make good progress from their starting points across a wide range of subjects and especially in English and mathematics.
- The most able pupils attain well. However, this masks the fact that their progress is not as rapid as that of other groups in the school. Their progress in reading, writing and mathematics is a focus for leaders as they strive to ensure that greater proportions of most-able pupils achieve the higher standards from their starting points.
- In reading, pupils' progress has been improving and is now above the national average. This is because pupils read more widely and often. Nonetheless, there is work to do to secure consistently good achievement in reading across the whole school. Leaders are aware of this and it continues to be a high priority for development.
- Current pupils' progress in subjects other than English and mathematics is not tracked and monitored as closely as for the core subjects. While there is some good progress across a range of subjects and classes, monitoring and assessment lack rigour. Leaders have recognised this weakness as a priority and have recently introduced new systems to address it.

School details

Unique reference number	141170
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10044974

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	297
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of Local Governing Body	Paul Taylor
Headteacher	Lucy Wass
Telephone number	01702 545 131
Website	www.hfjs.co.uk
Email address	head@hfjs.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	1–2 November 2016

Information about this school

- Holt Farm is an average-sized junior school.
- The school is part of the South East Essex Academy Trust.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils from ethnic minorities is below average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is above average.
- The school meets current floor standards in 2017, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' achievement.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 24 lessons, or part-lessons, including learning walks, covering all classes. Some of these visits were conducted jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors also visited assemblies, registrations and observed pupils at break and lunch times.
- Inspectors observed a 'Girls' Active' parent and child physical education event which was part of the school's celebration of International Women's Day. Inspectors also observed the World Book Day celebration assembly.
- Discussions took place with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, inclusion leader, other senior and middle leaders, staff and pupils.
- The lead inspector spoke with a representative from the local authority by telephone.
- The lead inspector met with the chief executive officer from the South East Essex Academy Trust and two members of the local governing body.
- Pupils' work was examined in lessons and a more detailed scrutiny was made of samples of written work jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors listened to pupils read and spoke with them throughout the inspection in order to gather their views.
- A range of school documentation was examined, and this included the website, policies, records about how the school keeps children safe and information about behaviour, pupils' learning, progress and achievement. Inspectors looked at governors' meeting minutes, and the school's own evaluation of its strengths and areas for improvement, including action plans and monitoring records.
- Inspectors spoke with parents who visited the school site before, after and during the days of the inspection and also considered 110 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. In addition, responses to 29 staff and 47 pupil questionnaires were considered.

Inspection team

Russell Ayling, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Michael Jude	Ofsted Inspector
Mark Jones	Ofsted Inspector

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