

Holmwood School

Kensington Drive, Great Holm, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire MK8 9AB

Inspection dates

26–27 June 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The strong and inspirational leadership of the headteacher has led to significant improvements since the last inspection. She has made this a special place to learn and to work. Everyone is valued, respected and works as a team.
- The headteacher has developed a strong management team. They have high expectations of everyone in order to secure high-quality provision and care for pupils.
- Teaching is effective as a result of strong leadership. Leaders monitor and evaluate teaching and its impact on learning on a regular basis.
- As a result of good teaching, pupils are making good, and sometimes rapid, progress to prepare them well for the next stage in their education. However, not all pupils are achieving the standards of which they are capable.
- Most disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are catching up to make similar progress to other pupils nationally. Leaders have correctly identified this as an area for further improvement and are taking decisive action to help these pupils make faster progress in their learning.
- As a result of high-quality, targeted support for their learning, pupils who speak English as an additional language are making at least good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Children in the Nursery and Reception class benefit from a very high level of care and support and make good progress.
- The large majority of parents and carers are very supportive of the school. They believe that their children are very well cared for and progress well in their learning.
- Pupils feel very safe at school and show a high level of care and respect for each other. A number of pupils have leadership responsibilities that enable them to make very positive contributions to school life.
- Pupils' behaviour is impeccable. The school's effective strategies to promote good behaviour encourage pupils to be self-reflective and to think about the results of their actions on others.
- Governors take their responsibilities seriously and keep the best interests of the pupils at the heart of what they do. They are meticulous in checking that leaders are doing their jobs well.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teachers' expectations enable a larger proportion of pupils to achieve the higher standards, particularly in mathematics.
- Maintain the focus on improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils or those who have SEN and/or disabilities, so that they make even faster progress.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher and her deputy have worked tirelessly to create a culture of high achievement set against a background of high-quality care, guidance and making learning fun.
- After the last inspection, leaders wasted no time in tackling the areas of concern and were absolutely determined to make the school the best it could be. They clearly understand the school's strengths and areas for improvement.
- An outward-looking leadership team successfully draws on a range of external support and advice to develop teaching and learning. Staff benefit from a range of professional development opportunities, which allow them to advance their knowledge and skills. For example, following the last inspection, staff worked together to review how reading and phonics are taught in school. The outcomes of this work are evident, as all staff teach reading and phonics with absolute precision and consistency. Consequently, pupils really enjoy their learning and make at least good progress in reading and phonics. The school's practice in this area is recognised by the local authority, and the senior manager responsible is working to support other schools to improve their practice.
- Senior leaders have developed a strong sense of purpose among staff and morale is high. Staff enjoy working at the school and display an absolute commitment to the well-being of pupils in their care.
- Leaders make good use of all the information they have about each pupil to ensure that pupils' needs are thoroughly met and that pupils achieve well. Assessments are rigorous and carefully planned in line with the school's curriculum. This means that pupils' current learning is effectively checked and any gaps quickly filled.
- The leader of mathematics has undertaken extensive research to ensure that staff are well supported to deliver a mathematics curriculum that is fit for purpose. Her work in embedding this across the school has a positive impact on pupils' outcomes, but further work is required to extend the number of pupils working at the higher levels.
- The curriculum is broad, balanced and well planned to motivate pupils. It is supported well by a range of visits and other activities. For example, a recent visit to Warwick Castle had inspired pupils to write about their favourite memories. One boy wrote that his 'favourite bit was the knights in shining armour'. The school makes very good use of its extensive grounds, and 'forest fun' features regularly for all pupils, whether they use the forest area to develop the language of direction and location or they are inspired to create bug and hedgehog hotels.
- Leaders and governors have effectively spent additional government funds. They publish full reports on each area of spending on the school's website. The physical education and sports premium funding is used across The Bridge Partnership to improve skills and offer a greater range of resources and sporting activities. This contributes towards improving pupils' physical and emotional health and well-being.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a significant strength of the school. Pupils clearly understand the importance of respecting other cultures and

clearly value the diversity of the school community. They are captivated by the world map in the entrance hall that shows the richness of their community and helps them to understand the world outside of Milton Keynes.

- Leaders ensure that they prepare pupils for life in modern Britain well by linking the school's values to everyday experiences.
- The school is strongly committed to equality of opportunity, fostering good relationships and discouraging discrimination.
- The local authority provides effective support and challenge for leaders. Regular visits and precise monitoring by local authority staff ensure that leaders remain focused on the key areas of school improvement. The decision to reduce the level of support is the right one, as school leaders are now in a strong position to continue their school improvement journey.

Governance of the school

- Governance is good and challenges leaders to constantly improve. Governors are dedicated to making the school as good as it can be. They make full use of the headteacher's reports to probe deeply into the progress that all pupils make, keeping a particular eye on specific groups.
- Governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the school. Following the previous inspection, the newly appointed chair was very proactive in ensuring that the governance review took place quickly and that an action plan for improvement was put in place. Governors were very focused on tackling the improvements they needed to make and worked effectively to improve their practice and ensure that all their responsibilities were met.
- The current governing body is contributing well to school improvement and keenly checks that all pupils are achieving the best that they can.
- Governors understand and fulfil their statutory duties well, particularly those relating to safeguarding and welfare. They have undertaken rigorous training and carry out a very detailed audit every year to be absolutely certain that all pupils are safe and well cared for.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a strong culture of safeguarding, which places pupils at the heart of the school's work. During the inspection, several members of school staff were checked for their knowledge and understanding of signs and symptoms of pupils being at risk. Staff and governors are clear about what to look out for, because of the induction and ongoing training they receive.
- Staff are clear about the procedures to follow if they have any concerns about a pupil's safety. They follow these precisely. Leaders maintain safeguarding records that show a clear chronology of actions and outcomes. All records are securely stored.
- All safeguarding concerns are acted on quickly, and further referrals are made

promptly. Leaders and staff work collaboratively and effectively with external agencies. They are not afraid to escalate a concern if they feel that they have not received an adequate response.

- Relationships are strong in school; people care about one another. As a result, the pupils feel safe and know who to turn to if they need help.
- All staff, governors and visitors are subject to appropriate recruitment checks so that the school is a secure and safe place. All required details are included on a well-maintained single central record.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good across the school.
- The high expectations of senior leaders, supported by high-quality training for staff and rigorous and effective monitoring, have resulted in teaching, learning and assessment improving significantly since the previous inspection. They are now good. The headteacher knows that in order to achieve the best outcomes, pupils need to receive high-quality teaching from teachers and teaching assistants. She has worked hard to achieve this.
- Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning and are very proud of what they achieve. They regularly refer to the 'Learning Zones' statements where pupils self-evaluate on a five-point scale, assessing their own level of engagement and attitude towards learning. They are thrilled when they achieve a high learning zone and celebrate their success.
- Teachers and teaching assistants have a very positive attitude towards learning. Lessons proceed purposefully and are fun. Pupils thoroughly enjoy their learning and make good progress because of the high-quality support they receive from adults.
- The vast majority of teachers and their assistants have high expectations of pupils and they model good learning behaviours. However, some learning activities do not always support pupils well to extend their learning, and consequently too few pupils achieve the higher standards of which they are capable, particularly in mathematics.
- Teachers use their subject knowledge well and tackle misconceptions effectively, to challenge pupils' thinking and understanding. However, in mathematics there are too few opportunities for pupils to develop their thinking skills and challenge each other to tackle mathematical problems that have more than one response.
- Teaching assistants value the professional development and support they have from leaders. Consequently, their input is very effective and they add a great deal of value to pupils' learning and well-being.
- Teachers plan lessons for all abilities based on assessments of pupils' learning and progress. Teachers often reshape tasks in the light of progress made during lessons. This ensures that learning is consolidated and there is appropriate challenge. For example, in a Year 2 mathematics lesson, the teacher checked on the previous day's learning with her group. Within 10 minutes of the lesson starting, a pupil moved on to a different activity in a different group as the teacher's assessment had confirmed the pupil's understanding. This practice is not as rigorous in all classes and so some pupils,

particularly those who are disadvantaged and those who have SEN and/or disabilities, do not make progress as quickly as they could.

- All adults ask questions of pupils that deepen their understanding and ensure that they make good progress. For example, in Reception, a group of children were making bread in the mud kitchen. The teaching assistant asked them what ingredients they were using and how they might make their loaves even better. One little girl said her loaf was 'made of chocolate and is very tasty'. The teaching assistant used this opportunity to ask other children what word they might use in place of 'tasty'. The children came up with some very creative examples, which they were proud to share.
- The teaching of phonics is highly effective thanks to the structured approach implemented by the leader of English. Teachers and teaching assistants have secure subject knowledge and accurately model letter sounds that effectively develop pupils' phonic understanding.
- Pupils enjoy reading and were enthusiastic about reading to the inspector. Most pupils made good use of their phonics skills to decode and gain meaning from the texts. The school is working hard to ensure that pupils have a very good understanding of what they are reading and are able to discuss it.
- Pupils have a range of opportunities to extend their writing across the curriculum. For example, candidates for the school council created posters setting out why they were suitable for election.
- Responses to pupils' work evidenced within book scrutiny are consistently implemented by pupils in line with the school's own feedback and marking policy. Teachers use a judicious approach to marking that provides appropriate feedback. Pupils say that they value this.
- Home learning is valued by pupils and their parents. The school supports learning at home in practical ways. For example, on the school's website there is help on how pupils should pronounce words when tackling them phonetically. Parents reported positively about opportunities to work with their child on practical tasks such as designing and building models.
- Pupils have access to a variety of lessons and extra-curricular activities in which they can apply the knowledge, skills and understanding developed throughout their curriculum experiences.
- The large majority of parents think their child is taught well and agree that they receive valuable information about the progress their child is making. The school regularly holds events for parents, and staff are always available should a parent want to make an appointment to speak more formally to the teacher. A particularly positive feature has been workshops for parents on the school's approach to teaching early reading.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils speak with great pride about their school and have very positive attitudes to

learning.

- Adults have created a very safe and nurturing environment where pupils learn to respect each other and get along together. Pupils have forged friendship groups across ethnic, religious, social and cultural boundaries, and show a remarkable level of respect and tolerance towards each other.
- Staff help pupils as young as three years old to think about how they are feeling. Each morning, pupils place their name on the well-being chart and can move it up and down to reflect any changes. Pupils talk openly about 'feeling a 5', and what has happened to move them to 'feeling a 2'. This system helps all pupils to reflect on their own feelings as well as those of others. Pupils are very kind when somebody is 'feeling a 1' and think about how they might help them.
- Adults make very effective use of the well-being scales and intervene appropriately and effectively to support pupils.
- Leaders' systems are extremely effective in keeping children safe. Leaders monitor and track progress effectively and keep thorough records. Leaders work effectively with outside agencies and are tenacious in keeping children safe.
- The school ensures that pupils are aware of how to stay safe and behave responsibly with technology. Information pupils learned during an e-safety day was shared with parents.
- Pupils have regular opportunities to develop their understanding of healthy lifestyles. They know how to keep themselves healthy and enjoy activities and sports outside.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- A determined effort to raise the quality of teaching has had a significant impact on improving behaviour in lessons. As a result, inattentiveness is very rare and very good behaviour supports learning. Pupils take great pride in their work and strive to do well.
- Both in and around school, pupils' behaviour is consistently exceptional. There are high levels of respect between staff and pupils.
- The school's welfare officer is very tenacious in checking that pupils are in school regularly and on time. Leaders work in partnership with families and do not tolerate any unnecessary absence. Any medical absence has to be explained by the parent with a doctor's note.
- Attendance has risen significantly since the last inspection and is now in line with the national average. Persistent absenteeism is always challenged, and leaders have no hesitation in following formal routes when appropriate. Because of this, throughout this academic year, persistent absenteeism has reduced very considerably.
- Leaders recently established a 'chatter club' first thing in the morning to help pupils to get to school on time and to be ready to learn. It gives pupils a very positive start to the day.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Phonics is taught exceptionally well. Year-on-year outcomes have improved, and this year almost every pupil in Year 1 achieved the expected standard in the phonics screening check. By the end of Year 2, almost all pupils achieve the expected standard.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities have made significant improvements in phonics since the last inspection, and this year almost every pupil achieved the expected standards in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1.
- In 2017, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 was at the national average.
- While pupils' outcomes in reading and writing at greater depth were in line with national figures, the proportion in mathematics was below national figures. There is work to be done to ensure that more pupils achieve the higher standards in all subjects, but particularly in mathematics.
- Outcomes for current pupils are improving from previous years, and most pupils are making stronger progress, particularly in reading. Current Year 2 pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities, have made much faster progress in reading, writing and mathematics than in previous years. This prepares them very well for junior school.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language receive very well-targeted support and consequently are making good progress in all areas of the curriculum.
- Staff have improved the progress in reading, writing and mathematics of disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities. This group now makes progress that is closer to that of other pupils nationally.
- The work in current pupils' books, in a range of subjects, shows that a greater proportion of pupils are making the progress of which they are capable. However, leaders and teachers do not ensure that pupils are challenged to reach the high standards in every subject.

Early years provision

Good

- Early years provision is well led. School leaders have worked hard to address the issues raised at the last inspection. They appointed an experienced leader of early years, who has been in post since September 2017. She has an accurate understanding of the strengths in the early years, but also where further development is required. She is passionate about ensuring that young children get the very best opportunities the school can provide and is working very hard across the early years to achieve this.
- The early years leader has developed a dedicated team which understands and shares what effective early years practice looks like. Staff are now given clear direction, and relationships across the team are strong.
- Leaders established a Nursery on the school site, which opened this year. Children learn in a bright and motivating environment. The well-qualified staff plan interesting and imaginative activities to engage children and promote their curiosity. There is a high level of challenge for all children, as adults have high expectations of what children can achieve. For example, in the Nursery, children were challenged to win green tickets for their phonics knowledge. The teacher asked how many they could

win, and when 'five' was agreed upon, a discussion followed about odd and even numbers, which a three-year-old girl explained very precisely and accurately.

- Children achieve well during their time in the Nursery. They acquire the knowledge, skills and understanding they need to succeed in their future learning. On entry to Reception, those children currently attending the school's Nursery are on track to achieve in line with age-related expectations. The wider intake is more variable. Historically, children are often achieving below the expectations for their age when they join Reception.
- Children make good progress in the early years and the large majority of them are ready for learning in Year 1.
- The indoor and outdoor environments in Nursery and Reception are rich with resources that have been carefully selected to promote learning and extend children's horizons. Children confidently self-select resources to support their learning and enjoy talking to adults about what they are doing and why.
- Children are motivated by the activities on offer and benefit from well-targeted questions and helpful interventions from adults. The same adults also know when to step back from an activity and allow the children to investigate independently or in small groups. This provides detailed evidence of children's learning and is used well by adults to plan the next steps.
- Children behave very well. Staff help them to develop good personal and social skills. Children grow in self-confidence and become increasingly self-aware and aware of those around them.
- Staff establish good relationships with parents. They keep them well informed about their children's progress. Parents appreciate the warm and welcoming environment the staff provide.

School details

Unique reference number	110392
Local authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	10046305

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	173
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Nick Jeffrey
Headteacher	Mrs Claire Sharples
Telephone number	01908 260596
Website	www.holmwoodschool.com
Email address	office@holmwoodschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	26–27 April 2016

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized infant school. It is part of a 'hard' federation with a local infant school, Ashbrook School. The federation is called 'The Bridge Partnership'.
- The two schools share a governing body, executive headteacher and a school business manager. Some leaders, including subject leaders, fulfil their roles across both schools.
- The school opened a Nursery in September 2017 and a leader of early years was appointed to lead the Nursery and Reception classes.
- About half the pupils in school are White British, with the rest coming from a wide range of ethnic heritages. For over one third of pupils, English is not their first language, with around 25 different languages being spoken by Holmwood pupils.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is in line with national figures.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is below average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed lessons across the school and in a range of subjects. Some were joint observations with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and the key stage 1 manager.
- An inspector spent time in the school's new Nursery.
- Inspectors considered a range of information about the school, including pupils' outcomes, the school's evaluation of its own performance, the development plan, the school's targeted improvement plan, governors' minutes and records, the governors' action plan following the review of governance in 2016, the school's pupil premium strategy, the school's website and senior leaders' monitoring and evaluation records. They also examined behaviour and attendance records and information relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors viewed pupils' work from displays and in the curriculum enrichment books.
- Inspectors spent time on the playground, listened to pupils read and looked at work in pupils' books, with senior leaders.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders and managers who have responsibility for subject leadership, the special educational needs coordinator and the early years manager.
- An inspector met with eight support staff.
- An inspector spoke with the school's welfare officer and visited the 'chatter club'.
- The lead inspector met with four members of the governing body, and with a representative from the local authority.
- A group of pupils discussed their views of school and learning with an inspector, and both inspectors spoke informally with pupils around the school.
- Inspectors took account of 25 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire, 37 responses to the pupil survey and considered 21 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, along with free-text comments. Inspectors also had informal discussions with 21 parents before school.

Inspection team

Sarah Varnom, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Graham Marshall

Ofsted Inspector

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