

Hollybush Primary School

Fordwich Rise, Hertford, Hertfordshire SG14 2DF

Inspection dates

19–20 June 2019

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
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- School leaders have worked effectively to build a team of knowledgeable and skilled teachers who are raising standards across the school.
- The senior leadership team has driven changes which are having a positive impact on outcomes for pupils.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils work well together and respect their teachers and each other. Relationships across the school are very strong.
- Most teaching, learning and assessment are effective. Teachers have high expectations about what pupils can achieve. There is a determination to ensure that pupils make good progress and achieve well.
- Additional support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is very effective in enabling pupils to have access to the whole curriculum, make progress from their starting points and fully engage in school life.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning, they listen to their teachers attentively and most pupils present their work well.
- Children get a very positive start to school life in the nursery and reception classes. Staff are experienced and knowledgeable about how young children learn. They work in partnership with parents to ensure that children achieve their very best across the whole curriculum.
- The proportion of children that meet and/or exceed the early learning goals (the expectations set for children at the end of Reception Year) is higher than the national average. As a result, children are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Leaders work effectively with others, including the local authority, to ensure that their own self-evaluation of the school's effectiveness is accurate. They are quick to address areas for improvement.
- The phonics curriculum is planned and taught well. Pupils make good progress and acquire decoding skills quickly. However, for a few pupils in key stage 2, reading fluency is not as well developed and this hinders their progress. Some do not enjoy enough opportunities to read in their own time.
- Pupils enjoy a rich range of learning experiences in the curriculum. The curriculum in a few subjects is not yet fully developed so pupils can make the best progress in these subjects.
- Leaders are not consistently precise in using assessment information to measure the impact of their actions or to identify where a few pupils may benefit from additional guidance or support.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve curriculum planning, sequencing and assessment for subjects other than English and mathematics by:
 - ensuring that each topic in a subject has sufficient study time so that pupils have a secure knowledge base in the subject overall.
 - being clear and precise about what school leaders want pupils to know and remember in all subjects.
- Refine assessment systems and processes further so that leaders have information that is readily accessible and easily understood which they can act on quickly to continue to raise standards.
- Strengthen pupils' enjoyment and skills in reading for pleasure by developing strategies for the small number of pupils in each year group who do not practise their reading regularly.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders have worked with drive and determination to establish a strong ethos of accountability and shared responsibility among staff. Staff are proud to work at the school and are committed to making continued improvements.
- Senior leaders are good role models for other staff both in their teaching and in the relationships that they establish with pupils. Senior staff model high expectations of pupils and expect pupils' work and behaviour to be of a high standard.
- Leaders' work to improve the quality of teaching has been effective. Teaching is typically good and there are increasing amounts of highly effective teaching. This is because staff work well in their teaching teams to share best practice and to take responsibility for all pupils in their phase.
- Leadership is increasingly distributed across the school. All staff work together as an effective team, understand the school's priorities and support each other in achieving them. The vast majority of staff who responded to the online staff survey during the inspection feel that leaders prioritise their development and that the school is well led and managed.
- The curriculum is planned to ensure that it contributes positively to pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. For example, the fundamental British values of respect and tolerance are included as elements of the study of different religions. This respect is evident in the relationships that pupils have, the way that they work in cooperation with each other and their love of school.
- In some subjects in some year groups the planning and sequencing of topics other than mathematics and English lack coherence and depth. This is because not all subjects have sufficient study time or importance.
- Leaders use assessment information well to identify pupils who may be falling behind in their learning and to give them additional support. However, some of the information collected by leaders is not clear enough to enable them to make strategic decisions about whole-school priorities.
- Leaders use additional funding for disadvantaged pupils effectively to support them and their families when needed. It is also used to improve the attendance of the most vulnerable pupils.
- The sport premium has been used very effectively to ensure that all pupils have access to exercise and movement every playtime as well as during formal PE lessons. The strategy is clear that sport is for everyone and not simply those that excel in this area of the curriculum. Pupils are extremely active during breaktimes and enjoy the variety of options available.

Governance of the school

- Governors are committed to the school and the community ethos. They know the school well, understand the priorities for development and focus their work on those priorities and the areas that need improvement. For example, recent monitoring visits

have focused on pupils' attitudes to learning, behaviour and attendance and persistent absence. As a result, these aspects of the school's work have improved over time.

- Governors confidently challenge school leaders on the issues that they face and commission external reviews where they feel this is appropriate. For example, a recent safeguarding review has resulted in increasing pedestrian safety around the school and the raising of fence heights. Governors are aware of systems and processes to safeguard pupils and receive regular training to ensure that their skills and knowledge are relevant.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- School leaders have established a positive safeguarding ethos. Staff and governors are clear about their roles in helping to keep everyone safe. Leaders work effectively with external agencies and parents to ensure that they do all that they can to safeguard pupils' well-being and welfare.
- The school has clear safeguarding arrangements and key documents are read and adopted by staff. All staff have had relevant and up-to-date training to help them in the work of keeping pupils safe. Staff are very clear about the processes for referring concerns and to whom they should make the referral.
- Records of incidents and concerns are rigorous and ensure that work with other agencies is effective. School leaders are persistent in following up referrals and worries about their pupils.
- The work of the learning mentor has had a very positive impact on the school's ability to provide effective early support and intervention to keep pupils safe and emotionally well.
- Leaders carry out the necessary recruitment checks on staff before they begin working in the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching and learning are good because teachers work in teams and share successful teaching strategies. They support each other and take responsibility for all pupils in their team. Teachers learn from each other by observing others teach and sharing the best practice that they see. This has improved the quality of teaching over time.
- Behaviour management is typically good and pupils are engaged in their learning and listen carefully to what is taught.
- There are effective systems for teaching phonics. Leaders support teaching staff by providing carefully chosen resources to help pupils in their progress towards reading fluently. Small-group work allows pupils high levels of support and feedback in this area of learning. As a result, pupils make good progress and the vast majority of pupils reach the expected standard in the phonics screening check by the end of Year 1. In key stage 2 there are still a small number of pupils who have not met the phonics standard, which has a negative impact on their enjoyment of reading and access to literature.

- Teachers prioritise the teaching of vocabulary. Pupils can use subject-specific language well because teachers encourage them to do so. For example, pupils are encouraged to learn and use the correct names of vegetables in the early years. They go on to learn correct terms for parts of speech and grammar such as 'proper noun' and 'exclamation mark' and the bones in the body in older year groups. This supports pupils in building consistently on their learning over time.
- Teachers expect pupils to work hard in their lessons and encourage positive attitudes to learning. In response, pupils concentrate on their work, work effectively with each other and engage positively in what they are taught. Pupils talk confidently about what they are learning during lessons using the vocabulary that they have been taught.
- Most pupils follow up on feedback from their teachers well. Examples include pupils correcting their own spelling mistakes and practicing the word several times so that they can remember it correctly next time and/or correcting letter formation or size. This has a positive impact on future learning and helps to support pupils to prioritise their basic skills. As a result, by the end of Year 2 pupils are writing accurately and confidently.
- When pupils are falling behind they are supported to improve their learning by receiving additional support. This is particularly effective for pupils with SEND. These pupils make effective progress because the adults supporting them are aware of their specific needs and abilities. Plans for improvement for these pupils are precise and time limited so staff are clear what needs to be achieved and by when.
- A small minority of pupils do not read regularly enough with skilled adults. Their books are not consistently well matched to their phonics knowledge as they move up the school. This results in a growing disinterest in reading because they gradually lose confidence and belief in their own abilities.
- Parents have confidence in the school's teaching and feel that pupils learn well and make good progress. One parent commented: 'I am extremely happy with my daughter's progress and her teachers throughout her time at Hollybush.' Many parents made similar comments.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils enjoy school and like their teachers and each other. They listen to each other with respect and kindness. Pupils work well together in pairs and groups throughout their time at school. They demonstrate tolerance and acceptance of each other's views.
- Playtimes and lunchtimes are calm and enjoyable for pupils. Pupils look forward to this time to play. Leaders, including the leader responsible for the sport premium strategy, have planned effectively to ensure that there is a wide variety of activities to keep pupils active and busy. Pupils' good conduct at these times is a result of careful planning and determination to improve pupils' physical well-being as well as emotional well-being.
- The pastoral team, made up of the SENCo, learning mentor and senior leaders, works effectively to support pupils when they may be distressed or facing challenges. This

includes a range of strategies which give pupils, who may be showing signs of being troubled, opportunities to talk and discuss issues. This structured support enables staff to plan and intervene early so that problems do not escalate.

- Pupils feel safe and older pupils are clear about how to keep safe when working online, including ensuring that their personal details are not shared. They understand the games that they play may sometimes include people who are not children. However, they are clear that if they have concerns they would talk to a teacher or parent.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The vast majority of pupils have positive attitudes to their learning and to their relationships in school. This is because expectations have risen over time and most lessons are uninterrupted by poor behaviour. Pupils' books demonstrate an increasing expectation of presentation and pride in their work.
- Of the parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, 85% felt that behaviour was good and 99% said their children were happy in school.
- Pupils also say that while there are examples of poor behaviour, these are dealt with quickly and effectively. Although no pupils completed the online survey during the inspection, pupils are very clear that they are happy in school. In discussions, pupils felt that the changes that had occurred since the new leadership team has been in post have been for the better. Year 6 pupils say that they will miss their school when they transfer to secondary school in September.
- Attendance remains below national figures and has been for over three years. This year it has risen and while it still remains a little below national levels, the rates of persistent absence have reduced significantly. This is as a result of targeted support and challenge for key pupils and families. The more inclusive policy, which rewards good attendance while challenging unnecessary absence, has had a positive impact on reducing rates of poor attendance.
- Exclusion rates have been historically high, but the behaviour strategy has been effective in reducing the number of incidents of poor behaviour. As a result, the need for excluding pupils has been reduced.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- In 2018 the proportion of children who met and/or exceeded the early learning goals (the expectations set for children at the end of the Reception Year) exceeds the national average. Boys and girls achieve in line with each other when previously boys lagged behind. These outcomes were better than in the previous two years.
- Pupils are now making good progress as a result of improved teaching. This is particularly evident across the younger years. In 2018, attainment at the end of key stage 1 was below national averages. However, from their starting points children made good progress. Fewer than half of this cohort reached a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year.

- Historic teaching in the school has not always resulted in best outcomes for all pupils and this legacy of underachievement is most evident in older pupils.
- In 2018, Year 6 pupils made weaker progress in mathematics, and this had a negative impact on the proportion who left school ready for secondary school. However, leaders' actions to address this weakness means that now pupils are making effective progress despite lower starting points.
- Pupils make progress in a wide range of subjects across the curriculum. In some year groups and subjects pupils achieve well, and outcomes are good. For example, artwork in Years 2 and 6 is of a high quality and progress in the development of skills and knowledge through the year is clear. However, not all subjects in all year groups are carefully planned, sequenced and assessed. Currently lessons are often short and not well sequenced, particularly as pupils move year groups. This is particularly true in subjects other than English and mathematics. As a result, key concepts are not always developed over time.
- Pupils who are disadvantaged and those with SEND make effective progress. They receive appropriate support and make progress in line with their peers. Some catch up and exceed their peers. However, the small number of disadvantaged pupils in each cohort makes national comparisons difficult.

Early years provision

Good

- The early years is a strength of the school. Outcomes for children have improved year on year for the last three years and are now above national averages. This is because the teaching staff have significant experience and knowledge of the early years curriculum and prioritise children's basic skills, language and personal development. Children are well prepared for Year 1.
- Staff in the Nursery and Reception class work effectively together to plan learning across both classes. This ensures that no ceiling is put on children's learning and all have access to provision at their level of achievement.
- The learning environment is effective and enabling. All areas of the curriculum are planned for inside and out. As a result, pupils are constantly practising and mastering new knowledge and skills. Children use high-quality resources to write, read, count, build and develop the skills to learn. Staff set up sessions to motivate and inspire children to develop their language and vocabulary skills. Children are excited and motivated to learn.
- Staff work effectively with parents and respect the role that parents have in educating their children. Staff encourage parents to contribute to children's learning journeys and share news and successes from home. Parents are offered support and education in developing their children's learning and well-being at home so that all opportunities to learn and progress are maximised. Parents appreciate the support that they receive and the progress that their children make.
- Children are developing the characteristics of effective learning quickly and well because expectations of children in the early years are high. Children persist at a variety of learning opportunities even when they find it difficult. For example, a group of children were developing the appropriate strength in their lungs to blow the biggest

of bubbles. With support, one child tried over and over again to achieve this. He didn't give up until he achieved what he had aimed for. This is typical of the resilience being developed in the youngest children in the school.

- Children are taught basic skills well and then given the opportunity to continue to practise these in the provision throughout the day. Because adults know the children well, they can intervene and support them to consolidate the skills being learned.
- The well-planned and well-resourced learning environment contributes significantly to children's progress. This is because there is an effective balance of new learning and planned practice and mastery of previous learning. As a result, pupils make effective progress.
- Leadership of the early years is a strength of the school. Leaders are rightly proud of the continued improvement in children's learning and outcomes. They prioritise the professional development of all staff, including support staff. This is evident in the high-quality interactions and feedback that all pupils receive during their learning.

School details

Unique reference number	117263
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10087443

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	218
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Amy Smith
Headteacher	Valerie Noon
Telephone number	01992 581454
Website	www.hollybush.herts.sch.uk
Email address	admin@hollybush.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	3–4 June 2015

Information about this school

- A new headteacher and leadership team has been established since the previous inspection in 2015.
- The vast majority of pupils in the school are white British.
- The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is in line with national averages.
- The percentage of pupils with SEND is below national averages.
- The percentage of pupils with an education, health and care plan is below the national average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed lessons in a wide variety of subjects across all year groups.
- Inspectors met with parents and pupils to discuss their views of the school.
- Inspectors discussed aspects of the school with a range of school leaders including the senior leadership team, and leaders for mathematics, English, phonics, pupil premium, sport premium and SEND.
- Inspectors took account of 60 responses from parents to the online questionnaire, including written comments provided in the free-text boxes.
- No pupils responded to the questionnaire provided for them, but inspectors spoke to pupils throughout the day including at playtime, during lessons and in small groups.
- Inspectors took account of 18 responses to the staff survey provided during the inspection and views when meeting with a small group of staff.
- Inspectors spoke to three governors and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors examined a range of school documentation including self-evaluation documents, the school improvement plan, governor minutes and outcomes of external reviews of the school.
- Inspectors talked to pupils about reading and read with pupils from a range of year groups.
- Inspectors examined pupils' work from a range of subjects and year groups.

Inspection team

Debbie Rogan, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Sean Tobin

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