

Inspection of an outstanding school: Home Farm Primary School

Shelley Road, Lexden, Colchester, Essex CO3 4JL

Inspection dates:

20 and 21 October 2021

Outcome

Home Farm Primary School continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Home Farm Primary School is a close knit, friendly community. Pupils enjoy their time at school. They attend regularly and behave extremely well. Acts of unkindness are very rare. Bullying hardly ever happens. When it does, pupils are very confident that it is dealt with quickly and well.

Pupils are very eager to learn. They want to do their best, and they participate enthusiastically in their lessons. They respond well to teachers' high expectations of what they can achieve. Pupils produce work of a high quality across the curriculum. They gain an excellent understanding of important ideas in the subjects they study. When they leave in Year 6, pupils are very well prepared for secondary school.

Pupils act as role models for others in how they learn, behave and get along with each other. Pupils new to the school settle in very well. Staff care for pupils exceptionally well.

Pupils' achievements and differences are recognised and celebrated. The school's nurturing ethos contributes to all pupils feeling safe and happy. Pupils epitomise the school's aims to 'believe in yourself, inspire others and grow your mind'. They take part in an extensive range of clubs and activities that broaden their horizons and give them opportunities to be responsible citizens.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

School leaders and governors have remained focused on providing a high-quality education. They have stuck steadfastly to their vision to help pupils be the best that they can be.

Leaders have constructed a curriculum that is highly ambitious for all pupils. Leaders have designed curriculum plans to show how important learning is broken down into smaller and logical parts across the curriculum. Pupils learn about complex ideas step by step.

They have many opportunities to practise and deepen their knowledge and understanding in each subject. Pupils remember and use what they have learned easily and well.

Teachers have strong knowledge of the subjects they teach. They explain things clearly. Teachers routinely plan activities that are highly effective in helping pupils to learn new and more complex ideas. In the Reception classes, adults carefully plan the activities that children choose to complete. These activities are very effective in helping children to learn very well across all areas of learning in the early years.

Teachers quickly pick up and address any misunderstandings pupils may have during lessons. Teachers use their regular checks on pupils' understanding to identify any areas where pupils are less secure in remembering important knowledge. They adapt their teaching plans to revisit this knowledge so that pupils can remember it more easily.

In 2019, Year 6 pupils did not achieve as highly as previous year groups in national curriculum tests. Leaders swiftly reviewed their curriculum design for the teaching of reading. Pupils have more opportunities to practise and use their writing knowledge across the curriculum. This has helped pupils to improve the quality of their written work.

Teaching pupils to read is given a high priority. Children in Reception are introduced to books and learn phonics right from the start. Pupils learn their sounds well. They use this knowledge to help them read and spell unfamiliar words. Pupils who struggle to read get the help that they need to read accurately and with understanding. Pupils genuinely enjoy reading. Leaders ensure that there is a wide range of books available for pupils to read.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) take part in all aspects of school life. Teachers make well-considered adjustments to learning according to pupils' needs. Pupils with SEND have full access to the outstanding curriculum. They make very strong progress in their learning and independence.

Leaders promote pupils' personal development extremely well. The eco council and school council, which are elected by pupils, put forward pupils' views on how to improve the school and its environment. There is a wide range of activities to help pupils be physically active. Pupils can take part in mindfulness sessions and yoga. Pupils understand why they should respect difference, and the views and beliefs of others. Pupils are accepting of others. This contributes to the school having a strong sense of community and belonging.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They feel well-supported by leaders. Staff share leaders' vision and ambition for the school and the community it serves. Leaders are considerate of staff workload and well-being. Staff feel valued. They appreciate opportunities to share and reflect on the latest ideas about what best helps pupils learn. Staff access high-quality training and development opportunities to improve their teaching.

Governors and the Alpha Trust (the multi-academy trust) provide support and challenge to school leaders. They know the school well. They check that priorities for improvement are the right ones. The headteacher, governors and the multi-academy trust are clear about how to make the school even better.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The multi-academy trust and governors ensure that procedures to keep pupils safe from harm are followed rigorously. Leaders ensure that staff are trained and vigilant in spotting the signs that a child is at risk of harm. Staff know how and when to report concerns. Leaders act on concerns promptly. They work with and challenge external agencies to ensure that pupils and the families get the help they need.

Pupils feel safe. They learn about risks and how to stay safe. This information is provided in assemblies and relationships, sex and health education lessons. Pupils know the risks of working online. Older pupils know how to spot online risks and scams.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, also called Home Farm Primary School, to be outstanding in June 2016.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	147713
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10201101
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	364
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Laurence Jones
Headteacher	Richard Potter
Website	www.homefarm.essex.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	14 and 15 June 2016

Information about this school

- Home Farm Primary School is a slightly larger than average-sized primary school. It has expanded in size since the previous inspection. There are currently two classes in each year group from Reception to Year 4.
- The school joined the Alpha Trust, a multi-academy trust, on 1 April 2020. Many responsibilities for oversight of the school are delegated to the local governing body. However, the board of trustees is ultimately responsible for the quality of provision.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND, including those in receipt of an education, health and care plan, is broadly average. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is lower than in most primary schools. The proportions of pupils for whom English is an additional language and who are from different ethnic groups have increased as the school has grown.
- Most staff were not working at the school when it was previously inspected.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in his evaluation.
- The inspector met with the headteacher. The inspector held meetings with members of the local governing body and the chief executive officer of the Alpha Trust.
- To evaluate the quality of education, the inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, history, languages and science. He met with the English subject leader, leaders for early years, key stage 1, key stage 2 and the deputy headteacher. The inspector visited lessons, looked at pupils' work, spoke with pupils and staff, and listened to pupils reading. The inspector also looked at curriculum plans and other documentation, pupils' work and visited lessons in other subjects.
- The inspector reviewed a range of school documentation, which included policies, records of governors' meetings and information relating to pupils' attendance and behaviour.
- To check the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector reviewed child protection policies, procedures and records. The inspector met with the headteacher to discuss his work as the designated safeguarding leader. He reviewed examples of the actions taken to keep pupils safe. The inspector spoke to pupils and checked staff members' understanding of how to keep pupils safe from harm.
- The inspector spoke with pupils to gather their views. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupils' survey.
- The inspector considered the 98 responses, including 77 free-text responses, submitted to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View.
- The 30 responses to Ofsted's survey for staff were considered alongside the views expressed by staff in meetings with the inspector.
- Almost all Year 6 pupils were not in school at the time of the inspection as they were on a residential visit.

Inspection team

Paul Wilson, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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