

Inspection of a good school: Holmer Green Senior School

Parish Piece, Holmer Green, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire HP15 6SP

Inspection dates:

30 November and 1 December 2021

Outcome

Holmer Green Senior School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud ambassadors of their school. There is a strong sense of community. Everyone helps and looks out for each other. Pupils feel safe, well cared for and valued. They are confident to report any concerns they may have. Pupils do not think bullying happens very often and, if it does, it is dealt with quickly. Parents particularly appreciate how well staff support their children. One parent said, 'The school nurtures a feeling of well-being amongst its pupils. Staff genuinely care about how our children are doing'.

Leaders and staff are ambitious for all pupils. The school's values of 'work hard, be kind, have passion, pursue excellence and be curious' are well understood. They are evident across all aspects of school life. Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to their learning. Classrooms are calm and purposeful. Pupils focus on their work and routinely ask for help when they need it.

Extra-curricular clubs and trips foster pupils' many talents and interests. These include sporting activities, taking part in the drama production, visits to the theatre and wider achievements through the Duke of Edinburgh's award scheme.

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

Leaders and staff nurture pupils' love of learning. They are united in their vision to provide a curriculum that successfully prepares pupils for life in modern Britain. The sixth-form curriculum provides progression routes for all students who continue studying at the school. This includes bespoke careers advice to ensure that students are well informed about the different career pathways and study options available. They achieve well and go on to their choice of either apprenticeships, work or study at a range of universities.

Leaders have developed a well-balanced and interesting curriculum. In most subjects, leaders have precisely identified the important knowledge pupils should learn, and the order in which they should learn it. This helps teachers know exactly what all pupils need to learn and remember well. Consequently, pupils learn effectively. However, in a small

number of subjects, the curriculum is not as well defined across all year groups. Leaders are taking action to address this.

Teachers have good knowledge of the subjects they teach. There is a consistent focus on developing pupils' subject-specific vocabulary. Teachers explain new subject content clearly, building on what pupils already know. They provide opportunities for pupils to recall and revisit previous learning at the start of the lesson through 'do now' tasks. This helps pupils to embed their knowledge. Leaders ensure that staff are well trained to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff know these pupils' pastoral and wider needs well. This enables staff to identify what pupils will need to help them achieve well.

Leaders make reading a top priority. They fully recognise the importance of reading for pupils' learning and future achievements. Weaker readers' needs are identified accurately and thoroughly. Highly trained staff use their expertise and appropriate resources to provide effective support. This has a positive impact on these pupils' reading. Leaders are determined to foster a love of reading so that pupils regularly enjoy reading for pleasure. They have introduced several strategies to develop this. However, some of these are not yet consistently embedded.

Staff have high expectations. There is a coherent approach to promoting good behaviour that all staff know and apply. As a result, pupils behave well in lessons and are fully engaged with their learning. They regularly discuss and debate new ideas. Pupils speak with pride about their work and what they achieve.

Leaders give careful consideration to pupils' broader development. Owing to COVID-19, a number of trips took place virtually. These included visiting the Imperial War Museum, New York and the Eiffel Tower. Pupils enjoy taking on roles of responsibility such as being a sports leader or being a member of the proactive school council. Sixth-form students also play an important role. For example, they hold a number of leadership responsibilities, such as well-being 'mind mentors', and support younger pupils in lessons as part of their 'community service'.

Leaders, including governors, are considerate of staff workload and well-being. They seek and respond to feedback and make changes as a result. This is highly appreciated by staff.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a culture of care and vigilance in the school. The training staff receive helps them spot if a pupil may be at risk of harm. They are quick to report any concerns they might have. Leaders act swiftly on concerns raised. They work closely with pupils and their families to make sure they get the help and support they need. Referrals to external agencies are made in a timely manner.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including when online. They value the advice they receive from staff and know that they are mindful of their mental and physical health.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils' love of reading is not yet fully developed in the school. Leaders have identified this issue. They should continue with their strategies that they have begun to introduce and ensure these are implemented consistently across the school.
- Leaders are aware that in a very small number of subjects the curriculum does not sufficiently identify the essential knowledge pupils should learn and remember in every year group. It is clear from leaders' actions that they are already taking steps to bring this about. This will improve pupils' achievement even more.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. 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 school to be good in May 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	138058
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10203119
Type of school	Secondary Modern (non-selective)
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1096
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	138
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Tony Green
Headteacher	Edward Hillyard
Website	www.hgss.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	24 and 25 May 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed in September 2018.
- The school has a resource-based unit for pupils with speech, language and communication needs. It is funded by the local authority.
- The school is currently using one alternative provider.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders, staff and pupils. The lead inspector met virtually with five governors, including the chair of the governing body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, art and modern foreign languages. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at a sample of pupils' work.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors checked the single central record of recruitment checks and talked to leaders responsible for safeguarding. Inspectors also talked to a range of staff and pupils informally.
- Inspectors considered the 85 responses to the confidential staff survey and spoke to a range of staff about their views of the school.
- Inspectors took account of the 139 responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire and the 93 additional free-text responses.
- Inspectors met with a range of pupils to discuss their views about the school and talked to pupils informally during social times and in lessons. Inspectors also considered the 163 responses to Ofsted's online pupils' survey.

Inspection team

Louise Walker, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Alison Robb-Webb

Ofsted Inspector

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