

Inspection of Cherry Tree Academy

Holt Drive, Mersea Road, Colchester, Essex CO2 0BG

Inspection dates: 2 and 3 February 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a warm and welcoming school. Pupils and families are known very well by staff. Pupils' relationships with each other are positive. They play well together in the playground and no child is left without a playmate. Pupils are treated as individuals. This creates mutual respect between adults and children. This, in turn, helps to create a calm school environment.

Pupils are courteous and polite. They are interested in sharing their learning experiences with visitors and are keen to chat. Pupils behave well in class and around the school. Disruption to learning is rare because staff are quick to intervene and redirect pupils back to their learning. Pupils know about differences among people. Pupils talk knowledgeably about bullying. They say it rarely happens in school. Pupils are confident that adults will always help them quickly if they have a problem.

Pupils follow a broad and interesting curriculum. They are enthusiastic learners. Pupils who are supported by the speech and language base participate fully in all aspects of school life. As a result, they thrive.

The school is a central part of the community. Pastoral care for pupils and their families is effective. Most parents are very positive about the school.

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

Leaders are ambitious for all pupils to be confident readers. They have prioritised reading and make sure there is a consistent approach to teaching phonics. Expectations are high. A well-structured programme of phonics quickly develops pupils' phonics knowledge. Staff are quick to correct any mistakes pupils make with their letter sounds. Pupils enjoy reading a range of books and have plenty of opportunities to read during the day. Pupils who need extra help with their reading are supported by skilled staff. Pupils are helped effectively to improve both their reading fluency and their self-confidence to read.

In most other subjects, leaders have made sure that their curriculum thinking clearly details the key knowledge and skills pupils need to learn and the order in which the knowledge should be taught. Pupils are given the opportunity to apply their learning. For example, teachers revisit mathematics subject content in order to secure pupils' knowledge and understanding before moving on to problem-solving activities. However, in a few subjects, learning is not of the same high standard. Where this is the case, it is not as clear what pupils need to learn.

Teachers plan lessons that interest pupils. As a result, pupils enjoy learning. Teachers routinely check learning in lessons in order to give help to those who are struggling. Weekly assessment checks are used to identify pupils whose knowledge

and skills are still not secure. Effective strategies are then put in place to help pupils catch up.

Support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), including those with speech and language needs, is a strength. Adults are trained well. They consistently and successfully use approaches that support effective learning. There is an emphasis on vocabulary and the spoken word to support pupils' speech and language development. Pupils with SEND are able to successfully take an active part in all class activities.

Leaders provide ongoing training for staff. This has had a positive impact on the quality of education in subjects such as mathematics and English. However, teachers have not had the same high-quality training for a few other subjects. As a result, teachers do not always have the depth of knowledge required to extend pupils' learning well.

Children in the early years quickly settle into school life. The calm learning environment and positive relationships develop children's confidence. The curriculum is well considered and designed to prepare children for Year 1 in mathematics and English. However, it is not clear how curriculum thinking for early years links to some subjects in key stage 1.

Leaders place great value on pupils' personal development. Pupils learn about issues such as county lines, mental health and keeping safe. They benefit from visiting speakers and workshops on a wide range of topics. Pupils know about the differences among people and appreciate that being different is a positive thing. Pupils are given the opportunity to take on posts of responsibility. They take these seriously. The visits and trips cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic are being reinstated.

Members of the board of trustees are committed to ensuring pupils have a good quality of education. They are able to talk knowledgeably about the impact of the actions taken by leaders to improve standards within the school. This is because they check and ask questions effectively about the work leaders carry out.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Leaders go out of their way to keep pupils safe. Staff understand the issues within the community and the possible impact on pupils. Staff are well trained to identify pupils who may be at risk. They understand the processes for reporting concerns. They do not hesitate to use them. When issues are identified, support is timely and, if necessary, involves appropriate agencies.

The processes for recruiting staff are secure.

Pupils feel safe in school. They know there are adults whom they can go to for help. They are able to give examples about how the school teaches them to stay safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders' curriculum thinking is not as strong as it could be in some areas of the curriculum. This is because leaders have not been specific in the precise knowledge pupils need to learn. Leaders have not ensured that teachers have received the high-quality training throughout the curriculum that they have received for some subjects. Leaders need to ensure that teachers are clear and have had the appropriate training so they know what they need to teach and when in all curriculum areas.
- The early years curriculum is well matched to the needs of the children. In a few subjects, it is not clear to staff how the children's learning will form the building blocks for key stage 1. As a result, staff are not always clear on what key knowledge and skills children need to learn before moving on. Curriculum thinking for the early years needs to make clear how the curriculum links with the key stage 1 curriculum.

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	142002
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10207076
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	137
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	JoAnn Williams
Headteacher	Charlotte Newley
Website	www.cherrytree.essex.sch.uk/
Dates of previous inspection	1 and 2 May 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Cherry Tree Academy is sponsored by the Connected Learning Multi-Academy Trust. It is one of five primary schools in the trust.
- The school is governed by the board of trustees. The board has a chief executive officer (CEO) and an executive school improvement lead (SIL).
- The current headteacher took up post as substantive headteacher in September 2021. Prior to this she was head of school, supported by an executive headteacher.
- The number of pupils with SEND and who have an education, health and care plan is above average.
- The school runs a specialist resourced provision for pupils with speech, language and communication needs. It has places for up to 10 pupils. Pupils are typically integrated into mainstream classes and are taken out of lessons for one-to-one or group activities.
- Leaders use a registered alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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

- Inspectors did deep dives in the following subjects: reading, mathematics, history, music and French. They met with curriculum leaders and visited lessons. They reviewed pupils' work in these subjects, as well as speaking with teachers and pupils.
- Inspectors spoke with the CEO and SIL of the trust and with trustees. They spoke with the headteacher and other senior leaders.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including safeguarding records, behaviour records, attendance records and reports from trustees. They spoke with staff and pupils about safeguarding arrangements and held a meeting to discuss the leadership of safeguarding.
- Inspectors spoke on the phone with leaders from the alternative provision providers.
- Inspectors considered the 37 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and the views of 17 members of staff and 37 pupils in Ofsted's online surveys. Inspectors spoke with parents as they arrived at the school in the morning.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils informally during breaktimes and observed pupils playing.

Inspection team

Caroline Pardy, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Jo Nutbeam

Ofsted Inspector

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