

Inspection of Holwell Primary School

Holwell Road, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire AL7 3RP

Inspection dates: 25 and 26 January 2023

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 Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Holwell Primary is an inclusive, warm, caring school. Pupils' welfare and education are at its heart. Each morning, leaders welcome pupils with a warm bagel and a smile.

Leaders are determined for all pupils to be the best they can be. Pupils are encouraged to flourish and achieve as a result of a culture where expectations are high. There are harmonious relationships between all pupils and staff. These are seen during the 'chatty reader' sessions and at breaks and lunchtimes.

The school is calm and orderly. Pupils show good conduct and respectful attitudes. They talk about their learning with pride. Support for pupils' well-being through a range of enrichment opportunities helps them to thrive. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school.

The RICRAC values (respect, independence, cooperation, resilience, aspiration, courage) underpin the curriculum. These help pupils develop positive attitudes towards their learning. RICRAC tokens are a strong motivation for pupils. They strive to show these values at all times.

Bullying is rare and, if needed, leaders take robust and sensitive action. Pupils and parents trust staff to deal with any worries quickly.

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

Leaders have designed a clear, sequenced, ambitious curriculum. Teachers use the curriculum to ensure that pupils' learning progresses year on year. There are systems in place which check effectively on what pupils know and remember. Pupils learn well across the range of subjects. They are well prepared for their transition to secondary school. Some curriculum leaders are new to their roles. Senior leaders support them to ensure their subjects are of equally high quality to others.

Reading is a high priority. Well-trained staff teach phonics using an effective systematic programme. Teaching begins as soon as children start in Reception. Books are carefully matched to the sounds pupils know. This helps them to practise their reading and develop confidence. Pupils in the early stages of reading who are at risk of falling behind are identified quickly. They receive additional support provided by skilled adults. Some older pupils do not have their reading checked as closely. This means they sometimes choose books that do not match their reading ability, which hinders their reading progress.

Children in the early years are very happy. They are busy, independent and confident. They know the class routines and cooperate well, especially at 'tidy up' time. The environment supports children building on their learning. A child was

eager to share how they had written their name outside by 'sounding out'. The leader collaborates closely with others on curriculum design. This ensures children are well prepared for their transition into Year 1.

Staff are well trained to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. These pupils benefit from the same ambitious curriculum as their peers. Leaders give teachers precise information about the support pupils' need, which enables pupils to learn effectively. Leaders' close liaison with outside agencies and parents ensures pupils receive the personalised support they need to achieve well. Initiatives such as morning basketball sessions help children to settle and be ready for learning.

The personal, social and health curriculum is well planned and supports pupils' personal development. Every pupil has a passport of experiences which sets out a range of different experiences they will all take part in, for example visiting a theatre to see a live performance. These experiences help to develop their character and understanding of the wider world. Pupils understand about fundamental British values and the need to be tolerant and respectful of difference.

Pupils behave well in lessons. They engage positively with their learning and are able to work alone or with others. The behaviour policy sets out expectations clearly and is well understood by pupils. It is consistently applied by staff. There are effective systems in place to liaise with parents, ensuring early support is put in place for pupils when needed.

Governors and leaders work well together. Governors visit the school regularly. They have the expertise to check on procedures and challenge leaders. Senior leaders are highly regarded by staff, parents and pupils. Parents praise leaders for going 'above and beyond' to support their children. Staff feel valued. They appreciate the many opportunities leaders provide for their professional development. Staff say leaders consider their well-being and workload. They are very proud to work at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

A strong culture of safeguarding is well embedded across the school. Well trained staff are aware of the potential dangers pupils may face. Staff know their pupils and families well. They place a high priority on supporting them to stay safe. Skilled and knowledgeable leaders work proactively with other agencies. They are relentless in securing support for pupils who need it.

Pupils say school is a very safe place. The curriculum teaches them how to keep themselves safe when not in school. Pupils know how to report concerns and are confident there is a trusted adult they can talk to.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Older pupils, and those who are no longer at the early stages of reading, do not have their reading fluency checked as frequently and rigorously as those at the early stages of reading. This means they sometimes choose books that do not closely match their ability. This affects their understanding. Leaders should ensure that there are systems in place to check that the books pupils are choosing are closely matched to their reading ability.

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.

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	117175
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10226962
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	398
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	James Dunsmore
Headteacher	Sarah French
Website	www.holwell.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	22 November 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- There is a new headteacher since the previous inspection.
- The school operates its own breakfast and after-school clubs.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

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

- This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, other senior leaders, subject leaders, teachers, teaching assistants and learning support assistants.
- The lead inspector also met with governors, including the chair of governors and the school improvement partner.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics, religious education, physical education and history. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, outside during social times and at the breakfast and after-school clubs.
- As part of the evaluation of the school's safeguarding processes, inspectors reviewed the school's single central record and met with the designated safeguarding leads.
- Inspectors reviewed the 89 responses that were submitted by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, and considered the 59 free-text responses from parents. Inspectors also considered 52 responses to the Ofsted staff survey and 124 responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Karen Stanton, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Richard Fordham	Ofsted Inspector
Cathy Barr	Ofsted Inspector

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