

# Inspection of a good school: Layer-de-la-Haye Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

High Road, Layer-de-la-Haye, Colchester, Essex CO2 0DS

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Inspection dates:

8 and 9 February 2023

## Outcome

Layer-de-la-Haye Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School continues to be a good school.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils say that everyone is welcome at their school. Pupils speak exuberantly about how much they love their school and their learning. They value how caring and kind the staff and pupils are. They feel that they are part of 'the best community' that looks out for each one of them.

Pupils enjoy their learning. They learn and achieve well. They value the trips and visits that enhance their understanding, such as the trip to The Imperial War Museum when they studied the Second World War last term. Some year groups have had fewer trips and visits and would welcome some more opportunities. Many pupils take part in the extra-curricular clubs on offer.

Pupils get lots of opportunities to take on positions of responsibility. Year 6 'buddies' enjoy their opportunities to read with their 'buddy' from the Reception class. Play and inclusion leaders look out for anyone who has not got someone to play with at breaktimes and lunchtimes.

Pupils behave well. Where a small number of pupils, sometimes with complex needs, need help to regulate their behaviour, they are incredibly well supported by staff and other pupils. Some pupils say there is no bullying at all. Others say there is some, but adults deal with it really well. Pupils are safe and feel safe.

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

Pupils access a broad curriculum which is well planned in most subjects. The headteacher has ensured that curriculum leaders have sufficient time to monitor the quality of provision in their subjects. Since his arrival, the deputy headteacher has started coaching curriculum leaders in how to monitor their subjects effectively. However, there are still

some subjects where curriculum leaders do not know enough about how well pupils are faring.

Staff deliver the school's chosen phonics programme very well. The reading leader ensures that staff are well trained and access appropriate resources to deliver phonics effectively. Staff are adept at identifying and supporting pupils who are struggling. As a result, pupils are very well supported to learn to read quickly and fluently. This starts with the youngest children in Reception.

Since her arrival, the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has worked quickly to identify pupils who may need additional support. She provides staff with a good range of information and strategies about how best to help pupils. Leaders work tenaciously with external agencies to try and get additional support when pupils need it. Pupils access most lessons successfully and learn very well, especially in reading, writing and mathematics.

In some subjects where curriculum plans are newer, staff do not check pupils' understanding well enough. This means that while pupils enjoy and learn many facts, some do not develop a deep understanding of the precise knowledge that staff intend. This is particularly the case for some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Pupils' wider well-being is very well catered for. Leaders have invested heavily in trying to support pupils' wider social, emotional and behavioural needs. For example, pupils appreciate accessing the 'rainbow room' when they need extra help. Staff are very well trained, and pupils access a good range of resources and sessions to support them, such as the sensory play space.

Pupils learn about the importance of respect. This learning plays an integral role in how they treat each other and staff throughout the school day and others in the wider world. Pupils are kind, considerate and vigilant to the needs of others. They apply their learning to the wider issues in the world and grow to be well prepared young citizens in society.

Leaders are committed to high-quality care and support for pupils and their families. Most pupils, parents and staff are effusive in their praise for leaders' work. Most parents feel that leaders and staff go above and beyond to support their children. Staff feel very well supported by leaders to manage their workload and feel that leaders are mindful of their work-life balance.

There has been a high turnover of governors in the last 18 months, and there remain many governor vacancies. Current governors have undertaken high-quality training in recent months and established systematic checks on the school's work. Governors are ensuring that they are overseeing the most vital work, especially in relation to financial propriety and safeguarding. However, governors' capacity is spread thin. In some areas of their work, they rely overly on the information provided by the headteacher.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The curriculum teaches pupils how to keep safe. They are confident to raise concerns with adults if they are worried.

Leaders ensure that staff are well trained to identify any early signs of concern about pupils' safety and well-being. Leaders act quickly and effectively on any concerns raised, including liaising with external agencies. Records are effectively kept, including information about the actions taken by leaders.

The checks made on staff employed to work with pupils are appropriate. There were some administrative gaps in the record of these checks. These were resolved while the inspector was on site.

## What does the school need to do to improve?

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Governance arrangements are not securing consistent high-quality checks on some areas of the school's work. Governors rely on the information provided by the headteacher. The local authority, the diocese and leaders need to work collectively to recruit, train and establish more secure governance arrangements over some areas of the school's work.
- In some subjects, staff do not check well enough to ensure that pupils are learning the specific content and knowledge intended. Leadership monitoring is less well developed in these subjects. Consequently, pupils do not develop the rich understanding that leaders expect. This is especially the case for some pupils with SEND. Subject leaders must ensure that staff check what pupils know and can do, and adapt their teaching as required to ensure that pupils are learning the intended content as well as they should.

## 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 an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in September 2012.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	115080
<b>Local authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	10255218
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	203
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Local authority
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Philip Hurst
<b>Headteacher</b>	Donna Gaffney
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.layer-de-la-haye.essex.sch.uk">www.layer-de-la-haye.essex.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	13 September 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- There has been a change in headteacher since the previous inspection. The SENCo joined the school in September 2021. The deputy headteacher joined the school in September 2022.
- School leaders currently use one unregistered alternate provision.
- The school received a section 48 inspection in June 2018. The school's next section 48 inspection will be within eight school years.

## 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 leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector held meetings with leaders, including the headteacher, senior leaders, governors, and representatives from the diocese and the local authority.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these areas of learning: early reading, geography and computing. The inspector also looked at pupils' work in history and science and leaders' planning in history.

- For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with senior leaders and subject leaders, conducted lesson visits, spoke to pupils, heard pupils read, and scrutinised pupils' work. In Reception, the inspector observed small group focused activities, observed child-initiated play, and spoke to the early years leaders.
- The inspector also reviewed minutes of governor meetings, leaders' plans, school policies and curriculum documentation.
- To inspect safeguarding, the inspector spoke to the designated safeguarding lead and reviewed records. The inspector checked the single central record of recruitment and vetting checks. The inspector also spoke to governors, leaders and staff.
- To gather evidence about pupils' experiences, the inspector observed them at different times during the school day and met with groups of pupils.
- The inspector also took account of the 76 responses, including free-text responses, to the survey, Ofsted Parent View.
- To gather the views of staff and pupils, the inspector took account of 11 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and 68 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.

### **Inspection team**

Kim Pigram, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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