

Inspection of a good school: Holt Voluntary Controlled Primary School

The Gravel, Holt, Trowbridge, Wiltshire BA14 6RA

Inspection dates:

8 and 9 February 2023

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and like attending. There is a strong 'family' atmosphere. Pupils say that everyone gets along. They are polite and show good manners. Pupils are confident that if bullying happens, staff will deal with it properly. Pupils learn important leadership skills. For example, pupils in Year 6 take on their responsibilities as 'buddies' for Reception children with pride.

Pupils have lots of experiences that broaden their horizons. Sport is for all. This inclusive approach means that everyone can represent the school during their schooling. Cross-country and badminton are a highlight for many. For others, taking part in the West Wiltshire Dance Festival, attending art workshops or visiting museums are favourites. There are lots of opportunities to learn outside, including orienteering.

Pupils study a broad range of subjects. However, there are weaknesses in some aspects of the curriculum that pupils receive. Some teaching does not enable pupils to learn all the subject content they need over time, including in the early years. At times, younger pupils do not maintain concentration in lessons because teaching does not match their needs precisely enough. Staff do not notice this swiftly. This slows down pupils' learning.

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

The school is improving again after a considerable dip in its performance. Leaders' actions to ensure pupils' well-being and safety are effective. Staff provide strong nurturing support for pupils. Parents and carers are positive about their children's schooling. Governors make sound strategic decisions. For example, they have appointed leaders who know what an effective curriculum is. Governors check the impact of leaders' actions objectively.

Leaders are using the external advice they receive from Wiltshire local authority and the Diocese of Salisbury effectively. As a result, the quality of education pupils receive is improving steadily. Nonetheless, leaders know that they are only part way through this work. For example, teaching and interactions between children and adults in the early years are not fully effective. Staff do not deal with children's misconceptions swiftly. Staff do not develop children's early language, vocabulary and reading ability well enough. Conversely, older pupils develop strong speaking skills and enjoy presenting their views to their classmates.

Leaders check how well pupils are progressing through the mathematics and English curriculums. The mathematics curriculum is well sequenced. Current teaching is ensuring that pupils can use what they know about numbers to solve problems increasingly well. Leaders have ensured that there is a whole-school approach to teaching reading. Pupils read books that include the sounds they are learning. This helps pupils gain fluency in their reading. The oldest pupils have a strong understanding of what they read. However, some teaching for pupils who struggle with reading and mathematics is much less effective, including in the early years. In such cases, staff do not have secure enough subject knowledge to identify the small chunks of knowledge pupils need to learn to catch up. As a result, these pupils do not progress through parts of the curriculum sufficiently well.

In other subjects, leaders have set out the exact knowledge that pupils should know and remember in every subject. They have considered the order in which pupils should learn it, including across mixed-age classes. However, staff's expectations of what pupils can achieve in some subjects, including English, are not uniformly high. At times, staff do not give sufficient priority to teaching the most important knowledge that pupils need to know next.

In the past, leaders have been slow to identify pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). More recently, leaders are identifying pupils' individual needs and any gaps in their knowledge accurately. Leaders are prioritising additional staff training to provide teachers and other staff with the essential skills and knowledge they require. However, it is early days. As a result, some teaching is not tailored sufficiently well for pupils with SEND. This slows pupils' learning down.

Recently, leaders' work to slim down the school's values to 'respect, kindness and resilience' means that everyone understands them. Staff teach pupils about distinct cultures and fundamental British values. There is a sharp focus on teaching pupils to show tolerance and understand difference.

Leaders and governors consider staff's workload when they are making decisions. Generally, staff morale is high.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All the required checks are in place to ensure staff are suitable to work with children. The single central record is up to date. Staff receive ongoing safeguarding training. They apply this well and are quick to raise any concerns about pupils' well-being or safety. Leaders act on any concerns promptly. They work closely with external agencies to ensure that they are doing everything they can if they suspect that a pupil may be at risk of harm.

Pupils feel safe in school. The curriculum teaches them how to keep safe online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There are weaknesses in the implementation of the early years curriculum. Staff's interactions with children do not deepen children's understanding of some essential curriculum content. Children do not learn as well as they could. Leaders must ensure that staff implement the early years curriculum consistently well so that all children, including children with SEND, are well prepared for their onward education.
- Staff's expectations of what pupils should know and can do in some subject curriculums, including English, are not high enough. Pupils do not learn all the knowledge that leaders intend them to across the curriculum. Leaders must ensure that the sequences of work staff deliver include the necessary content pupils need to learn well across the curriculum.
- Staff do not adapt teaching to meet pupils' needs sufficiently well. This can impede pupils' learning, especially pupils with SEND. Leaders must ensure that all staff have strong subject knowledge in the subjects they teach and that they adapt teaching well to meet the needs of pupils, including pupils with SEND.

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 October 2017.

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	126329
Local authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	10268588
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	150
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Steve Wisher-Davies
Headteacher	Jo Hodge
Website	www.holtprimaryschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	12 October 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- There have been considerable staff changes, including in leadership.
- After a period of acting headship, the current headteacher became substantive headteacher in September 2021.
- There is an after-school club run by the school.
- The pre-school is registered with Ofsted and was not part of this inspection.
- The school uses two unregistered alternative providers.

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 discussions with the headteacher and other school staff, and examined a range of documents, including the school's action plans and curriculum.
- The inspector met with representatives of the governing body. She also held a meeting with two representatives of the school effectiveness team of Wiltshire local authority.

- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and considered samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector listened to pupils from Years 1,2 and 3 read to an adult. The inspector also discussed the English curriculum with a school leader and reviewed pupils' work.
- The inspector considered how well the school protects pupils and keeps them safe.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site.
- The inspector considered responses to the Ofsted staff and pupil surveys alongside responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text responses from parents.

Inspection team

Julie Carrington, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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