

Inspection of a good school: Holt Farm Infant School

Ashingdon Road, Rochford, Essex SS4 1RS

Inspection dates:

13 and 14 March 2023

Outcome

Holt Farm Infant School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

At Holt Farm, pupils enjoy learning. They develop a sense of curiosity about the world. Teachers plan exciting activities across the curriculum. These deepen pupils' understanding of different topics. Activities include a history-based Great Fire of London day and trips to local zoos and gardens to learn about science and the natural world.

Leaders know pupils and their families well. Pupils understand that staff care for them, and they feel safe. Pupils know what to do if they feel worried or upset. They become increasingly resilient. Older pupils learn how to keep themselves safe independently, for example when they use the internet.

There are regular opportunities for pupils to share their views on the school with leaders, such as the pupil council. There are a range of craft, sports and games clubs. Pupils take part in fundraising for charity. As a result, pupils become confident and active young people.

Pupils behave well. They treat each other and adults politely and kindly in classrooms and around school. Bullying is very rare. If it does happen, it is dealt with quickly and effectively.

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

Leaders have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. They have thought carefully about the knowledge they want pupils to learn. Leaders break down the curriculum into small steps so that pupils can build up their knowledge.

Teachers check how well pupils are learning. They review how effectively pupils are developing their knowledge and adapt their teaching to ensure they are taking into account what pupils know and remember. This helps pupils to achieve well. Leaders have brought in regular opportunities for pupils to review their work. Consequently, pupils feel more confident when moving on to new learning.

In Reception, leaders have made significant changes to the teaching of early reading. A new phonics scheme has been introduced. Children enjoy a range of stories, rhymes and poems. These ensure children are immersed in language and books. Consequently, children quickly develop a love of reading.

Reception teachers identify weaker readers quickly and put in place well-considered additional support so pupils become fluent readers. However, some Year 1 and Year 2 pupils who find learning to read difficult do not routinely receive the precise support they need. This is because some texts do not fully match the phonics scheme and are difficult for pupils to decode. Leaders have plans to update the phonics scheme and texts in these year groups. They are also working on making texts more interesting for pupils. These plans are not yet complete, and this work is in its early stages.

Leaders make sure that all pupils can access the curriculum. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified swiftly. Effective support is put in place to develop their knowledge and, where needed, their social skills. Teachers use their knowledge of the pupils to adapt their lessons effectively, for example by introducing parts of topics to some pupils before they introduce them to others. This ensures pupils have access to the vocabulary and subject-specific knowledge, which helps them successfully understand what they are learning.

Pupils are well behaved in lessons. There is very little interruption to learning. Staff know pupils well and build positive relationships with them. They use clear and consistent approaches and have high expectations of behaviour across school. Leaders celebrate and promote good conduct, for example by rewarding helpful 'lunchtime superstars'. On the rare occasions when pupils do not speak kindly to each other, leaders act quickly to ensure that this is not repeated.

Leaders aim for pupils to be 'happy, friendly, incredible and safe'. In personal, social and health education lessons, pupils learn about managing their well-being and the importance of families and friends. Leaders help pupils to understand how their learning links to the outside world. For instance, visitors from the fire service talk to pupils about their jobs. In mathematics, pupils learn about money and telling the time as they learn about numbers. Leaders are committed to widening all pupils' horizons. They do this by providing support for disadvantaged pupils to attend trips and take part in clubs.

Staff feel well supported and value the opportunities to develop their skills.

The governing body is active and ambitious for all pupils to succeed. Governors support and challenge school leaders and ensure that the correct safeguarding procedures are followed.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff quickly identify risks to pupils. They work closely with local services to ensure that support is put in place. They provide advice for families on how to access help. Staff regularly check on pupils to ensure they remain safe and happy. They are alert to changes in pupils' behaviour.

Staff have an up-to-date knowledge of risks to pupils. They know how to keep pupils safe in school and how to report issues. Leaders carry out checks on staff as part of their recruitment to the school.

Pupils learn how to stay safe. They learn about personal space and positive relationships. This is evident in how well they look after each other in school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- A small number of readers in Years 1 and 2 do not make the progress that they should. This is because the texts used do not always precisely match their needs. Leaders should ensure that the new phonics scheme is fully implemented and that staff are trained to deliver it effectively. This is so that all pupils are given the support they need to learn to read so they can access the rest of the curriculum more successfully.

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 January 2013.

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	114879
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10255236
Type of school	Infant
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	201
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Charlotte Scrivens
Headteacher	Robin Goodier
Website	https://www.holtfarm-inf.essex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	26 September 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not have any pupils in alternative provision.

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 his evaluation of the school.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders and the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator.
- Deep dives were carried out in three subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector also visited the library and heard pupils read.
- Members of the school governing body met with the inspector. A representative of the local authority also spoke with the inspector.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at other times around school. He met with groups of pupils.

- The inspector held a series of meetings with leaders and pupils to discuss the school's safeguarding arrangements. He scrutinised a range of records relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.
- The views of staff, pupils, parents and carers were considered during discussions throughout the inspection and through their responses to Ofsted's online surveys.

Inspection team

Steve Woodley, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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