

# Inspection of Howbridge Infant School

Dengie Close, Witham, Essex CM8 1DJ

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Inspection dates: 25 and 26 April 2023

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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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?**

This happy, inclusive school ensures a friendly welcome for everyone. Pupils are safe. They trust the adults to help and care for them. Pupils are kind and respectful to each other.

Breaktimes are energetic and fun. Pupils play together with lots of equipment and enjoy running games. There are quieter areas for younger children and those who prefer to chat or draw. Bullying happens rarely, and pupils are confident that adults stop it straight away.

Leaders provide a wide range of lunchtime clubs for pupils in Years 1 and 2. All pupils attend enthusiastically. These clubs give pupils an opportunity to develop their interests with crafts and 'Lego' or to try new things such as French or ballet. In the summer term, taster clubs help younger children have the confidence to join in.

Pupils know the rules and routines to keep during lessons and around the school. They say that these are fair and mean that everyone can get on with their learning.

Pupils share the ambition of their teachers to do well with their learning. They keep trying, even when things are tricky. From the early years, children show great pride and pleasure in their work.

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

Leaders are ambitious and reflective. They constantly strive to provide a rich curriculum that prepares pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), for their next steps in learning.

In most subjects, the curriculum content is clearly set out. Teachers understand what pupils need to know. Teachers introduce new ideas and vocabulary carefully. They regularly check how well pupils understand what has been taught. Teachers go over things again with pupils who need more support. Pupils practise their learning before moving on. This gives them a secure foundation to build on and be ready for their next year group. Most pupils achieve well.

In a few subjects, the curriculum is evolving. In these subjects, it is less clear what pupils need to know at each step to achieve the goals that leaders have set. While teachers still check how well pupils are faring, systems are not yet in place to ensure that over time, pupils can remember important knowledge and build on this successfully. Likewise, in some subjects, leaders do not know how well the curriculum supports pupils to learn. They do not always know where the curriculum is effective or needs adjustment.

The early years curriculum is well considered. Children, including those with SEND, have many opportunities to develop their independence and knowledge through the stimulating activities that adults provide, both indoors and outside. Adults model and

extend language skills through activities such as planting flowers or counting teddies. Children learn the language of feelings through learning about 'colour monsters'. They learn to be considerate, to share and to take turns.

Leaders put reading at the heart of learning. Teachers introduce classic books and authors from the beginning of Reception. Pupils listen, rapt, as their teachers read high-quality texts to them. In Reception, children excitedly retell their favourite tales using imaginative props. Older pupils talk confidently about their favourite books and authors. Pupils enjoy spending time reading books in the well-stocked library.

Well-trained staff teach phonics effectively. They regularly check what pupils know and quickly correct any misconceptions. Pupils who need extra help get the right support to catch up. Pupils read books matched to their phonic knowledge. This enables them to practise their reading skills. Most pupils, including pupils with SEND, learn to read simple words and sentences accurately. Older pupils read fluently. They understand the texts and can answer questions about what they are reading.

The school's values of kindness, curiosity and respect are evident in pupils' relationships and behaviour. Adults constantly model these values for pupils. From Reception, children learn to listen for sustained periods of time. Routines taught in the early years help children to know what teachers expect. Occasionally, a few pupils lose focus in lessons. Adults quickly spot this and encourage them to join in so that learning continues smoothly.

Pupils learn about concepts such as fairness and democracy. They show tolerance for, and curiosity about, differences and diversity. Pupils learn about healthy lifestyles and relationships. They take action to care for others, for example by raising money and supporting a local food bank.

Staff are proud to be part of a supportive team. They appreciate leaders' efforts to involve them in decision-making and to manage their workloads. Governors know the school well and carry out their responsibilities effectively.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have established a strong culture of safeguarding. Well-trained staff look out for any signs that pupils may be at risk of harm. Staff report any concerns straight away.

Leaders are quick to identify where extra help is needed. They put this help in place. Leaders work closely with families and external services, when appropriate, to keep pupils safe.

Leaders make sure that all the required checks are carried out on staff before they work at the school. Through the curriculum, pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, for example when online or when crossing roads.

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

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

- In a few subjects, leaders have not specified clearly enough the most important knowledge that pupils need to learn as they move through the school. As a result, teachers do not always know what knowledge they should check that understand securely. Some pupils develop gaps in their knowledge. Leaders should ensure that all curriculum plans set out clearly what knowledge is to be learned so that teachers know what to check to make sure that pupils are remembering important knowledge over time.
- Leaders have chosen teams of teachers to lead some subjects. However, some subject leaders do not monitor and evaluate the impact of the curriculum on pupils' learning effectively. Leaders do not know if the curriculum in some subjects supports pupils to learn successfully. Leaders need to develop a more systematic and rigorous approach to check that the curriculum and its delivery in all subjects support pupils to achieve well.

## 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>	114951
<b>Local authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	10255106
<b>Type of school</b>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5 to 7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	258
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Jonathan McDonald
<b>Headteacher</b>	Anna Conley
<b>Website</b>	<a href="https://howbridge-inf.essex.sch.uk">https://howbridge-inf.essex.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	12 November 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school does not currently 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 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.
- The inspectors met with school leaders, governors, including the chair of the governing body, subject leaders and the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, science and design and technology. For each deep dive, the inspector spoke with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of

pupils' work.

- The inspectors met with the designated safeguarding lead and other staff to discuss safeguarding in the school.
- The inspectors considered the 44 responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including 26 free-text comments. The inspectors also considered the 14 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.
- There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil survey. The inspectors spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences of school life and their learning in lessons to understand what it is like to be a pupil at this school. They also observed the behaviour of pupils at breaktimes and around the school.

### **Inspection team**

Lynne Williams, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Wayne Jarvis

His Majesty's Inspector

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