

Inspection of a good school: Holtsmere End Junior School

Shenley Road, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire HP2 7JZ

Inspection dates:

23 and 24 May 2023

Outcome

Holtsmere End Junior School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and treat each other with respect. They enjoy engaging lessons. Pupils feel safe around school. There is always a member of staff they feel comfortable talking to. Pupils trust staff to help them sort out any friendship issues.

Pupils rise to the high expectations teachers have of them. They take pride in the work they produce. In most lessons, pupils have lots of opportunities to extend and deepen their learning. They receive helpful guidance when there is something they have not understood. Those who find reading more difficult are supported to improve.

Most pupils behave well. Any pupils who exhibit more challenging behaviour are supported to make positive choices. This ensures that classrooms are calm environments where pupils' learning is rarely disturbed. Pupils are listened to, and they understand how their own behaviour can impact others. As a result, pupils do not have concerns about bullying.

Pupils enjoy a range of experiences that support their wider development. These include performing at The O2 arena and residential trips. Pupils develop leadership skills and learn about caring for the environment through clubs such as the eco-committee, where they get to feed the birds and plant new things.

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

Leaders have constructed an ambitious curriculum that covers a broad range of subjects. They have carefully considered what pupils already know and what they need to know to be well prepared for secondary school. For example, in art, pupils develop skills in shading that prepare them for observational drawing. Leaders have planned the curriculum so that pupils can contextualise learning and connect important knowledge. For example, pupils learn about slavery from a historical perspective while also learning about Africa in geography.

Teachers provide clear explanations and use helpful examples. They constantly check pupils' understanding. Teachers provide guidance if pupils are finding things difficult, or additional challenges to help pupils practise using new knowledge. Consequently, in most subjects, pupils achieve well and produce high-quality work. In a few subjects, this is not done as effectively, so pupils' needs are not as well met. Teachers' subject knowledge is less developed, as subject leaders have had less time to provide guidance to staff and tailor the curriculum.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have their needs precisely identified. Leaders work with pupils and parents to plan the adaptations pupils need. Leaders regularly review how well these are working. Consequently, pupils with SEND are well supported by staff to successfully access the same learning and curriculum as others.

Most pupils read confidently and have developed a love of reading. They look forward to changing their books in the school library, and are inspired by trips to bookshops. However, some pupils who cannot read fluently have joined the school. Leaders have addressed this by training staff and by ensuring they deliver a consistent approach to teaching phonics effectively. Pupils who need it receive well-targeted support and teaching to help them with their reading. This helps them to read with greater accuracy and understanding.

As pupils find lessons interesting, any incidences of disruption are rare. Leaders have carefully identified how best to support pupils who have more complex needs. Teachers use this information to support pupils to manage their emotions effectively and make positive choices, so that everyone can learn.

Leaders provide high-quality personal development opportunities. Pupils learn how to be accepting of differences. They get to visit different places of worship and learn about different faiths. They learn about democracy and how to be leaders through the student council. Staff run interventions, such as 'Circle of Friends', to further support pupils' specific needs.

Leaders make decisions with staff's workload and well-being in mind. Most staff are positive about recent changes to the assessment policy and feel well supported.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that staff are regularly updated on topical safeguarding themes, and that staff receive regular training, so they can identify any concerns. Leaders take effective follow-up action where concerns are raised, and record this so they can spot patterns. They further support pupils by working effectively with social workers and other external agencies when necessary.

Leaders ensure that recruitment processes follow the latest guidance to ensure that adults are suitable to work in schools.

Pupils are taught about risks, such as with regard to online safety. They have a range of staff they are comfortable reporting any worries to.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- A small number of foundation subjects are not as developed as others. In these subjects, staff do not have the same level of subject expertise and are less able to tailor the curriculum to pupils' specific needs. Leaders need to ensure that staff have the subject knowledge and expertise to deliver the planned curriculum effectively in all subjects.

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 March 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	117336
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10268659
Type of school	Junior
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	238
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Philip Murray
Headteacher	Emma McGuigan
Website	www.holtsmerejm.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	12 December 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not make use of any 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 their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in the following subjects: art, early reading and mathematics. For each deep dive, the inspector met with curriculum leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- In addition to meetings with the headteacher and senior leadership team, the inspector met with leaders in the following areas: behaviour and attendance, personal development, safeguarding and pupils with SEND.
- The inspector spoke with the school improvement partner to discuss school improvement work. The inspector met with representatives from the local governing board regarding governance.

- To gather their views on the school, the inspector spoke in formal meetings with groups of pupils. The inspector spoke with pupils around the school site while he observed breaktimes and lunchtimes. The inspector also considered 138 responses to Ofsted’s online survey for pupils.
- To evaluate the school’s safeguarding culture, the inspector viewed safeguarding records and procedures and met with a range of pupils, staff and leaders.
- The 24 responses and 16 free-text responses to the online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View, were considered. The inspector also took account of the 23 responses to Ofsted’s online staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

James Chester, lead inspector

His Majesty’s Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2023