

Inspection of a good school: Holywell School

Red Lion Close, Cranfield, Bedford, Bedfordshire MK43 0JA

Inspection dates: 11 and 12 July 2023

Outcome

Holywell School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Holywell School attend a school with values rooted in its Christian ethos. They are welcoming and friendly. They take on responsibilities that make their environment and community richer and more rewarding. For example, Year 8 mathematics and English mentors help Year 6 pupils to prepare for their end-of-key-stage tests. The junior worship team works with the local reverend to plan and deliver services for pupils in the church for key Christian festivals.

The majority of pupils behave well and have a positive attitude to their learning. They know that their teachers want them to do well. Pupils respond to these aspirations by staying focused and working hard. However, there are some pupils who find it more challenging to concentrate in class. At times, these pupils disrupt the learning of others.

Pupils are tolerant and respectful of each other's differences. They understand that everyone is an individual. They know it is unacceptable to be unkind because someone is different. Bullying is not tolerated, and cases are rare. If it does happen, pupils know they have someone to talk to and are confident it will be dealt with.

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

Leaders liaise with lower schools to understand what pupils should know. They discuss what pupils need to know to transition successfully to upper school. They use these considerations to plan, in detail, what pupils need to know and when. Leaders have broken broad learning aims into small, logically ordered pieces. As a result, what pupils learn builds on what they have been taught before.

In most subjects, teachers use expert subject knowledge to help pupils learn. They give clear and exact instructions. Teachers provide well-structured examples to show how to compose responses. As a result, pupils complete learning tasks and progress through the curriculum.

Leaders have the same high aspirations for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) as they do for everyone else. In most cases, teachers adapt the way in which they teach to support pupils with SEND to produce work of as equally high quality as their peers. However, some teachers set work that is too easy, rather than changing how they teach to ensure all pupils achieve well. Consequently, pupils with SEND sometimes do not learn as much as they should.

Most pupils behave well, and most lessons proceed without interruptions or distractions. However, some staff do not apply policies to manage behaviour consistently. Consequently, some pupils do not understand what they should and should not do, leading to some low-level disruption. Teachers are not always quick enough to deal with this.

Leaders have prioritised ensuring that all pupils become fluent readers. Those who struggle with reading access an effective catch-up programme. Many read with fluency, and those who struggle with confidence read well with positive encouragement from teachers.

Leaders have planned the personal, social, health and economic programme well. Pupils learn how to maintain healthy lifestyles and relationships. The programme helps them understand different cultures and lifestyle choices. The careers programme embeds aspiration and prepares pupils for the next phase of education.

Staff feel that leaders support their well-being. Most feel that leaders consider their workload when implementing new initiatives. Staff feel valued and respected and are proud to work at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that staff receive regular training that enables them to understand the signs that a pupil may need help. Staff are vigilant in identifying and swiftly reporting pupils who may be at risk. Leaders respond quickly. They are tenacious when working with external agencies to get the support that pupils and their families need.

Pupils feel safe. They know there is always an adult to talk to if they are worried about something. Leaders ensure that pupils learn how to stay safe, including from any specific local risks. In response to local intelligence, leaders added lessons on how to stay safe near water.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Not all teachers adapt their teaching to meet the needs of all pupils. This means that some pupils do not learn as well and make limited progress through the curriculum.

Leaders need to ensure that all teachers adapt their teaching approaches to meet the needs of pupils with all levels of prior attainment and SEND effectively.

- Not all staff apply the behaviour management system consistently. This means that some pupils do not meet the high expectations that leaders have of them. This, in turn, leads to other pupils' learning being disrupted. Leaders should ensure that all staff use the agreed protocols for dealing with disruptive and disengaging behaviour consistently and fairly.

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 2014.

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	138844
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	10288520
Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	9 to 13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	730
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Pauline Kendall
Headteacher	Michael Simpson
Website	www.holywellschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	20 October 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has a religious character, Church of England, and was last inspected under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 in November 2016. The school's next section 48 inspection will be within eight school years.
- Leaders do not use any alternative provision.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with leaders, including the headteacher, the deputy headteachers and the special educational needs coordinator. They met with governors and the school's school improvement adviser.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, science and history. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited a sample

of lessons, spoke to staff, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector also listened to a sample of pupils read to a familiar adult.

- To further inspect the curriculum, inspectors reviewed curriculum documentation for geography, art and English and reviewed documentation setting out the support for pupils with SEND.
- To inspect safeguarding, the lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding leads to review safeguarding records. The inspector also met with the school business manager to scrutinise the single central record of recruitment and vetting checks. To further evaluate safeguarding, inspectors also spoke to governors, staff and pupils and reviewed surveys.
- To gather pupils' views, inspectors spent time observing and speaking to pupils. The lead inspector reviewed the 71 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.
- To gather parents' views, inspectors reviewed the 109 responses and 73 free-text responses submitted to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View.
- Inspectors spoke with several staff, reviewed the 42 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and considered the one letter submitted directly to the lead inspector.

Inspection team

Dave Gibson, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Victoria Hearn

Ofsted Inspector

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