

# Inspection of a good school: Tollesbury School

East Street, Tollesbury, Maldon, Essex CM9 8QE

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Inspection dates: 23 and 24 May 2024

## **Outcome**

Tollesbury School continues to be a good school.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils love attending this school as there is so much to see and do. In addition to their stimulating lessons, pupils have an array of clubs to choose from. As pupils exclaimed, 'there is something for everyone'. Activities range from dance to coding, to colouring and gardening. Staff enthusiastically and willingly give of their free time for the benefit of the pupils.

Relationships between staff and pupils are warm and respectful. Pupils trust staff to help them if they have any concerns. In lessons, pupils want to do their best. As a result, they listen carefully and contribute fully to discussions. Staff have high expectations of what pupils can do. Pupils rise to the challenge of this, opting to choose a more difficult task when they think they have mastered the easier one. They do not give up when learning becomes difficult.

Older pupils are good role models for younger pupils. They are proud of being part of the school council and making a difference for their school community. Pupils are actively involved in the big project to decarbonise the school. They are passionate about protecting the environment. The sports ambassadors also have a role in leading others.

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

The school's ambitious curriculum cultivates a joy in learning. There is a sharp focus on helping pupils extend their vocabulary and their understanding of the wider world. This equips pupils well to live in modern Britain.

Many staff are highly skilled at teaching the curriculum. They receive helpful training and are enthusiastic about trying out new methods. For instance, in design technology, pupils have a thorough understanding of how to create complex mechanisms for battery operated lights. This is because staff encourage pupils to explore their learning and not be afraid of failure. Staff provide helpful explanations which are easy for pupils to follow. As a result, pupils model confidently to others how to solve problems, such as in mathematics.

There is a rich reading culture in the school. Pupils read widely and this has a positive impact on their writing. They write confidently and at length for a variety of audiences and purposes. Staff's emphasis on vocabulary helps pupils learn to manipulate tone and mood. While outcomes in reading have been consistently high at the end of key stage 2, this has not been the case recently for younger pupils sitting the phonics screening check. The school has acted on the recommendations from the local authority to strengthen this. Phonics teaching is more precise, staff are consistently delivering the chosen scheme and pupils are reading books that match the sounds they know. However, there is inconsistency in how staff support children when they listen to them read one to one. This means some pupils do not get the help they need to practise their decoding and blending.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) thrive at this school. This is because staff know pupils and their starting points very well. They know the strategies that will help pupils with SEND contribute fully in lessons. Pupils with SEND socialise well with their peers, electing to go to a quiet space when they need to during playtimes.

Pupils demonstrate kind and thoughtful behaviour. They understand clearly what is right and wrong. Pupils are sensitive to the power of words. They know the impact unkind words can have on another person. The routines for the classroom are instilled early on. Children in Reception learn to sit quietly on the carpet, know how to take turns and use their manners with 'please' and 'thank you'. Staff encourage effective communication. They listen carefully to children and show them how to take part in conversations and ask questions.

The wider curriculum ensures that pupils undertake a range of opportunities to support their development and learning. The school makes full use of its links with the local community. Pupils enjoy visits from the local fire service. This supports their learning of fundamental British values. They also fundraise for local charities and contribute to the local food bank. The use of a trust fund helps talented musicians have access to instruments and tuition.

The high morale of the school is monitored by the governing body. They are keen for staff to have the time and support to do their job well. They also closely consider other aspects of the school, such as provision for SEND. However, governors are less clear about the effectiveness of the curriculum in early years and the foundation subjects.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

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

- Staff support pupils in differing ways when they listen to pupils read one to one. Some staff are more adept than others at reinforcing pupils' phonics knowledge and understanding of what they have read. This means that some pupils are not supported as well as they could be when they practise their reading. The school should agree a

consistent approach for when staff listen to pupils read and provide further training, so that staff use this time effectively.

- Governors' knowledge and understanding of the effectiveness of the early years curriculum and that of the foundation subjects is less well developed. This limits the challenge and support they can give for these areas of provision. Governors should ensure their monitoring of these areas provides them with the information they need to hold leaders fully to account.

## 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 May 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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	114925
<b>Local authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	10345138
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	174
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Local authority
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Stephen Leatherdale
<b>Headteacher</b>	Kate Garnett
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.tollesbury.essex.sch.uk">www.tollesbury.essex.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	26 March 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The new chair of governors took up the role in April 2024.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the chair of governors, members of the governing body, the headteacher, senior leaders and staff. She also met with the school's effectiveness partner from the local authority.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics and design technology. For each deep dive, the inspector held discussions about the curriculum, 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 listened to pupils read with a familiar member of staff.

- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in and around the school.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspector considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. She gathered pupils' views through formal group discussions and informally at social times.

### **Inspection team**

Liz Smith, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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