

Inspection of a school judged outstanding for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Holmer CofE Academy

Holmer Road, Hereford, Herefordshire HR4 9RX

Inspection dates:

12 and 13 November 2024

Outcome

Holmer CofE Academy has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Jayne Maund. The school is a standalone academy. The academy is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Samantha Lewis.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils' love for learning is sparked at this inspirational school. They engage with a curriculum that captures their interest and deepens their understanding. Staff expect everyone to achieve their full potential. They work with enthusiasm and passion to ensure that all pupils succeed. By the time pupils leave the school in Year 6 they are extremely well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Pupils create cherished memories as the school buzzes with activity from early morning to late afternoon. Pupils' interests and talents are enhanced through the broad range of extra-curricular activities offered. From crochet to rugby and woodwork to yoga – there is something for everyone.

Pupils highly value the friendships they form at the school. They behave extremely well. The playground is a joyful place, where young and older children interact with warmth and care. They look after each other. Staff too know pupils well and care about them. This gives pupils a deep sense of belonging and helps them to feel safe.

The school's values are lived in practice. For instance, pupils learn about the concept of 'trust'. Many are proud to be trusted with leadership responsibilities, going about their duties as prefects and ambassadors with confidence and diligence.

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

The school has faced significant challenges since the previous inspection. The impact of the pandemic, along with the disruption caused by severe flooding that forced classes to relocate, has created many obstacles. Despite these challenges, the school has continued to deliver high-quality education.

Pupils study a broad range of subjects. Staff have identified the important knowledge they expect students to learn and remember in each subject. They teach this information in a logical sequence. This allows pupils to build new knowledge upon what they have already learned. Teachers set tasks to help pupils use and embed this new knowledge. This allows pupils to regularly apply and revisit what they know. For instance, children in the early years practise writing letters and numbers until they become fluent and confident enough to apply their skills in their work. This helps pupils build a strong learning foundation for more complex tasks in the future.

The school places great emphasis on developing adults' expertise. Teachers have a deep knowledge of the subjects that they teach. They present information clearly and are skilled at checking pupils' understanding. This helps them to identify any pupils who might need extra help. Staff quickly recognise the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They make suitable adaptations to ensure that these pupils fully engage in learning. As a result, all pupils make significant progress through the curriculum.

Pupils develop a love for reading at an early age. They are passionate about various authors, remembering many stories they have encountered in school. Adults and pupils are often seen with books in their hands ready for reading. The school's phonics curriculum is well organised and effectively taught. Children begin learning to read and write as soon as they start in Reception, and almost all pupils are fluent readers by the end of Year 1. Teachers quickly identify children who begin to struggle and work determinedly to help them keep up.

The school has cultivated a culture that encourages a love of learning among its pupils. Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes toward learning, displaying a strong desire for knowledge and a willingness to engage deeply with their work. They are eager to attend school regularly. A notable aspect of lessons is the active participation of pupils. The school deliberately teaches pupils how to express themselves clearly and with grammatical accuracy.

The school has made intentional efforts to ensure that pupils understand what life is like in different parts of the country and around the world. For example, they have invited representatives from the world's major faiths to connect with the school. These representatives lead assemblies and workshops to enhance pupils' understanding. Additionally, the school has established a strong link with a school in Pakistan, allowing some pupils to regularly communicate with their peers there. This collaborative work is proving successful. Through respecting the opinions of others, pupils demonstrate a deep understanding of fundamental British values. They respect the opinions of others.

Trustees maintain a sharp focus on the quality of the school's provision. They ensure that the school fulfils its statutory responsibilities, while keeping the best interests of the pupils at the centre of their decisions. Both staff and parents support the school's vision and actively participate in it. This shared vision has created a vibrant learning community where pupils thrive.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged outstanding for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding for overall effectiveness in March 2019.

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

Unique reference number	137731
Local authority	Herefordshire
Inspection number	10343963
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	414
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Samantha Lewis
Headteacher	Jayne Maund
Website	www.holmerceacademy.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	26 and 27 March 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is a standalone academy.
- The school uses two registered alternative provisions.
- The school is within the Diocese of Hereford. Its most recent section 48 inspection took place in March 2017. Section 48 inspections were suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. They restarted in September 2021. The next inspection will be within eight years of the last section 48 inspection.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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 his evaluation of the school.

- During the inspection, the inspector met with the headteacher and the deputy headteacher. He also met with representatives of the board of trustees and the school's improvement partner.
- The inspector visited a sample of lessons, spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- 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' interest first.
- Throughout the inspection, the inspector met with staff. He also considered the opinions expressed through the staff survey.
- The inspector considered the views expressed through Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Jonathan Leonard, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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