

Inspection of Holmes Chapel Primary School

Middlewich Road, Holmes Chapel, Crewe, Cheshire CW4 7EB

Inspection dates:	4 and 5 February 2025
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

Until November 2020, the school was exempt from routine inspection because it was judged as outstanding for overall effectiveness at its previous inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The school has not been inspected under section 5 of the Act since June 2015. Since September 2024, schools have not been awarded an overall effectiveness grade.

The principal of this school is Fiona Gresty. This school is part of The Aspire Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Kevin Simpson, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Sue Bowen.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are very proud to attend Holmes Chapel Primary School. They are greeted warmly each morning by staff and the school's therapy dogs, Barra and Skye. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They know the three school rules well. Pupils are 'kind, safe and respectful' in all that they do. This makes for a purposeful atmosphere that permeates the school so that pupils are ready to learn.

The school expects pupils to achieve well, and they do. Pupils leave the school well prepared for the next stage in their education. This goes beyond pupils' academic achievement. The school encourages pupils to be compassionate and responsible citizens. They care about their school and wider community.

Pupils are helped to develop their skills and talents. They attend a wide range of clubs such as coding, singing and drama. Pupils relish the regular visits to museums, theatres as well as the local forest and river. These trips give pupils first-hand experiences that bring learning to life.

Pupils benefit from many opportunities to develop their leadership skills. School councillors, for example, help to organise charity fundraising events and well-being officers encourage younger pupils to play harmoniously in the playground.

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

The school has an ambitious curriculum. It sets out the most important knowledge that pupils should learn from the early years to the end of Year 6. The school has carefully considered the ways in which it can help pupils to learn well. Staff design lesson activities that enable pupils to make sense of new concepts. They use their expertise to ensure that pupils commit this knowledge to their long-term memory. Staff carry out checks on how well pupils have learned and remembered what they have been taught. Staff use this information to identify the most appropriate next steps. Pupils talk confidently about what they have learned. In the main, pupils' work is of a high standard.

The teaching of early reading and phonics has a high priority. The phonics programme begins swiftly when children start in the Reception Year. Well-trained staff teach the letters and sounds that children need so that they can begin to learn to read. In addition, children enjoy discussing books during story-time. As pupils move through Years 1 and 2, they become more accurate readers. By the end of Year 6, pupils read with fluency and expression. They can talk about books and authors that they like. However, some pupils do not keep up with the phonics programme. This is because they are not ready to learn the same sounds as the rest of the class and so cannot access this learning. Although these pupils receive additional support which is better matched to their needs, they do not learn to read as well as they might.

Pupils behave exceptionally well. They listen very carefully in class, valuing one another's thoughts and ideas. For example, children in the Reception class learn to take turns in

discussions. At breaktime, pupils love to play with their friends. Older pupils help to look after their younger 'buddies'. This helps pupils to feel a sense of belonging.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are identified early on. Staff make adaptations to their teaching so that pupils can access the same learning as their peers. This means that, in the main, pupils with SEND learn well.

The personal, social and health education curriculum is well thought out. Lessons help pupils to develop their confidence. They are encouraged to share and discuss their own opinions while being receptive and accepting of the opinions of others. This promotes high levels of mutual tolerance and respect. Skilled staff support pupils to develop a critical understanding of issues beyond their local community. Pupils understand the fundamental British values and why they matter. Pupils show empathy for their peers who may need additional support. They know about healthy relationships and how to be a good friend. There are many opportunities for pupils to learn new skills. For example, each pupil in Year 4 learns a musical instrument. They were proud to perform to parents and carers at an international concert venue.

The vast majority of pupils have high levels of attendance. For a small number of pupils where this is not the case, the school offers support to their families to help these pupils to attend better.

The local academy committee and the trust know the school well. They ensure that school leaders have the appropriate support and challenge that they need to drive improvement. Staff appreciate the support that they get from those responsible for governance for their professional development, workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- A small number of pupils at an early stage of reading struggle to keep up with their peers. This hinders how well these pupils learn to read. The school should ensure that these pupils receive timely and effective support matched to their needs. This support should enable these pupils to learn to read accurately and fluently.

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	140083
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	10348292
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	419
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Sue Bowen
CEO of the trust	Kevin Simpson
Principal	Fiona Gresty
Website	www.holmeschapelprimary.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	25 and 26 June 2015, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of The Aspire Academy Trust.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024, will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- 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. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken this into account in their evaluation of the school.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: 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.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, science, geography and computing. For each deep dive, inspectors 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.
- Inspectors also discussed with pupils their learning in some other subjects.
- An inspector observed pupils from Year 1 to Year 3 read to a familiar adult.
- The inspectors met with the principal, head of school and other leaders. An inspector also met with the chair of trustees and members of the local academy committee, including the co-chairs.
- An inspector met with the CEO of the trust.
- The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and breaktimes. They also spoke with pupils about their views of school life.
- The inspectors considered the views of parents. They reviewed the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments.
- The inspectors considered the views of staff who responded to Ofsted's online survey.

Inspection team

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