

Inspection of a good school: Holywell Primary School

Forge Lane, Upchurch, Sittingbourne, Kent ME9 7AE

Inspection dates:

3 and 4 July 2024

Outcome

Holywell Primary School continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Nicky Murrell. This school is part of the EKC Schools Trust Limited, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Tammy Mitchell, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Graham Razey.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils cannot wait to get into school when they arrive in the morning. They are eager for the day ahead, excited by the challenges of the curriculum and what their teachers have in store for them. Pupils learn an ambitious curriculum that is enriched by a wide variety of interesting experiences.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They apply themselves to their learning, working hard and with enthusiasm. Pupils develop a good understanding of the subjects they study and are keen to talk about their learning.

The school has a very inclusive culture. Pupils are respectful of people's differences. Being different in this school is something to be celebrated. Pupils are fiercely opposed to discrimination of any kind. They are passionate about championing the rights of everyone.

Pupils get along well. They are taught to manage any disagreements maturely and are given strategies to use if they have any disagreements with their friends. This means that pupils are confident and resilient to cope when things go wrong. If they are unable to resolve their problems their teachers are quick to respond with the help they need. Pupils also appreciate 'talk time' with a trusted adult if they are feeling upset or worried.

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

The school has a culture of high expectations for all their pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Everyone working in the school is dedicated to realising these aspirations. The curriculum is designed to ensure that pupils are well prepared for the next steps in their education and their future lives. This includes

extensive, well-considered opportunities that extend pupils' experiences beyond the curriculum.

Pupils develop a deep understanding of the knowledge and skills they study across the curriculum. They draw confidently on what they already know when learning new things. They build on their prior knowledge successfully, deepening and extending their understanding. They convey their ideas confidently in writing, using interesting and varied vocabulary. Sometimes, however, pupils' writing contains several errors in spelling, punctuation and letter formation because this knowledge is not secure.

Reading has a high profile in the school. Right from the start of the early years, children are immersed in a vast array of high-quality books and stories. Phonics is taught consistently well. This ensures that children get off to a good start learning to read. Staff make sure that no one gets left behind. Pupils, including those with SEND, are given effective, focused support to help them catch up quickly. As pupils move through the school their love of reading grows. The repertoire of books they have read continues to expand and they become confident, fluent readers.

The school's values of 'ready, respectful, responsible and resilient' underpin the life of the school. In the early years, warm, supportive relationships with adults help children to quickly learn important rules and routines. Over time, pupils build on this strong start and develop their 'learning powers' further. They develop motivation to learn and perseverance when faced with a challenge. Pupils take responsibility for their behaviour and their learning. They have a mature approach to school life. They show interest in their learning and a commitment to work hard.

Leaders provide the dedicated team of teachers and support staff with helpful training, support and guidance. They have worked closely as a team to develop and refine an effective approach to teaching the curriculum. Leaders continue to be mindful of the impact of any changes on the workload of their staff. Teachers are knowledgeable about the subjects they teach. They explain concepts clearly, showing pupils precisely what they need to know and be able to do in order to be successful. Vocabulary is taught explicitly. Pupils have the language they need to articulate their ideas and their understanding clearly.

Staff get to know pupils really well. They routinely check whether pupils have remembered the crucial components of the curriculum. Staff seek to understand any barriers to learning that pupils may have. They use this knowledge to make effective adaptations to the curriculum for pupils, particularly for those with SEND. Additional support is also sensitively given to any pupils and their families to ensure pupils regularly attend school.

Carefully planned outdoor learning helps to develop pupils' resilience and confidence. Pupils take risks in a safe environment, climbing trees and toasting marshmallows in the fire circle. Pupils benefit from a wide range of clubs, for example engineering, drama and singing. Pupils also compete in sporting events, such as cricket, rounders and football. Visits from the local police community support officer and the fire brigade help pupils learn how to keep themselves safe.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some pupils are not yet secure in their use of important elements of writing, including spelling, punctuation and handwriting. Consequently, some pupils' writing can contain several errors in these areas. The school needs to ensure that writing is taught consistently well so that pupils secure this important knowledge and apply it fluently.

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 predecessor school, Holywell Primary School, to be good in April 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](#)' 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	147752
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10322048
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	207
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Graham Razey
CEO of trust	Tammy Mitchell
Headteacher	Nicky Murrell
Website	www.holywell.kent.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Holywell Primary School converted to become an academy in March 2020, joining the EKC Schools Trust Limited.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.
- The school runs a breakfast and after-school childcare 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 their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, senior leaders, staff and pupils. They also met with the CEO, the chair of the board of trustees and representatives from the local governing board.

- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: art and design, early reading and mathematics. 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 listened to some pupils read. The inspector also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.
- 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 met pupils from different year groups to talk about their learning and experiences at school.
- The views of staff, pupils and parents were gathered through discussions and through Ofsted's online surveys.

Inspection team

Leah Morgan, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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