

Home Farm Primary School

Address: Shelley Road, Lexden, Colchester, Essex, CO3 4JL

Unique reference number (URN): 147713

Inspection report: 27 January 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Exceptional

Attendance and behaviour

Exceptional 

Leaders encourage and inspire pupils to believe in themselves. Pupils take pride in their progress. They are highly motivated and learn to manage and talk about their feelings. Older pupils build long-lasting relationships with younger pupils. They act as superb role models. Staff rarely have to remind pupils of the school's expectations for their conduct. Pupils are highly respectful of adults and each other when speaking. They take turns, put their hands up to answer questions and listen attentively to each other, regardless of their age. There is a culture of tolerance. Pupils know what bullying is and that it is never acceptable in school or in life. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school's culture and pupils' behaviour. Pupils who need additional help to manage their behaviour have bespoke support, which has a very positive impact.

Pupils' attendance is an absolute priority. The school's procedures for ensuring that all pupils attend school regularly are meticulous. Pupils' attendance rates are consistently above the national average. The strength of the school's systems means that leaders take action before a pupil's attendance becomes a concern. They put carefully tailored support in place to reduce barriers to attendance. Leaders work closely with parents and carers to understand the reasons for absence. Lateness is followed up with equal rigour. This is a school where pupils do not want to miss a single day and every second counts.

Strong standard

Achievement

Strong standard 

Pupils develop the knowledge and skills that they need so they are well prepared for the next stage in their education. Pupils' attainment in national tests and assessments is consistently above average. This is because leaders ensure pupils secure strong foundational knowledge in reading, writing and mathematics and teachers identify pupils' needs quickly.

Teachers provide targeted support for disadvantaged pupils and for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, so that they make the progress that they should across the curriculum to achieve ambitious targets. Pupils learn to evaluate and discuss their progress across the curriculum. They talk confidently about their strengths and the areas they need to improve. They learn to take ownership of, and responsibility for, their learning.

Curriculum and teaching

Strong standard 

Leaders have developed and refined the school's ambitious and broad curriculum. They regularly review the content and teaching of the curriculum to ensure it meets pupils' needs. Pupils acquire strong foundations for future learning. Close collaboration with secondary schools in the trust has strengthened teachers' subject knowledge and expertise.

Children learn to read as soon as they start school. Most pupils keep up with the phonics programme because teachers systematically check pupils' progress. Pupils who find phonics difficult receive the support that they need for as long as necessary. Staff have expert subject knowledge and high expectations. Teachers deliberately plan opportunities for pupils to practise key foundational skills in mathematics, reading and writing across the curriculum. Staff make deliberate adaptations to their teaching to ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils have appropriate support.

Staff engage in action research and share teaching approaches and practices, coaching and learning from each other. Leaders provide opportunities for staff to train and become experts in their field. They teach the curriculum consistently well. They provide opportunities for pupils to revisit, revise and practise their learning. This helps pupils remember and recall the important information and vocabulary that staff want pupils to know.

Early years

Strong standard 

Children's achievement in the early years reflects the well-designed curriculum that builds secure foundations for Year 1. Children engage enthusiastically in purposeful activities that are consistently linked to high-quality texts and phonics learning. Children demonstrate high levels of concentration, positive attitudes and growing independence. They learn to solve problems, for example how to get across the puddle in the playground without falling in. They take great pleasure in playing outside and exploring the learning environment. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve well. Staff provide sensitive support and adaptations, enabling these children to access the same learning as their peers.

Leaders' informed approach underpins phonics teaching. Staff model language effectively and use interactions to extend children's vocabulary. Assessment strategies are well embedded without creating an unnecessary burden. Staff use ongoing observations and checks to identify children's next steps and implement timely keep-up support sessions.

The learning environment, indoors and outdoors, promotes curiosity, communication and early writing. Pupils feel safe, know they have trusted adults and show positive behaviour and self-regulation. The school values parents and carers as important partners in their children's education.

Inclusion

Strong standard 

Leaders have a systematic approach to checking pupils' progress across the curriculum. This helps the well-trained staff to identify any factors that may make it difficult for pupils to achieve as well as they should. These factors could be linked to attendance, a gap in pupils' knowledge or a specific special educational need and/or disability.

Staff use the information that they gather to identify, and then implement, strategies to assist pupils. This begins with teachers making adaptations in the classroom but may also involve targeted help in small groups.

The recently created 'Studio Class' ensures that pupils who struggle to access the curriculum with their peers have bespoke support and provision. Teachers create well-designed activities with clear steps to help pupils succeed. The school works closely with parents and carers to ensure that pupils have the right help in place at home and in school. Staff check the impact of their adaptations and make changes if pupils are not making progress. Leaders ensure that staff have the right skills and expertise to provide the necessary support that pupils need. They liaise with other agencies and professionals, advocating for the pupils, and supporting them to achieve their hopes and aspirations.

Leaders make targeted use of the funding that they receive to support disadvantaged pupils and close achievement gaps.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard ●

Leaders are passionately persistent in ensuring that the pupils in their care have the academic and pastoral support that they need to be successful, not only in school, but in life. Leaders know the school and pupils well. They use the information that they gain from their checks on pupils' progress to make astute strategic decisions and adapt provision to meet changing needs. As a result, all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, benefit from a high-quality education and nurturing support.

Leaders invest in staff. They prioritise their wellbeing. Leaders ensure that staff have the time, knowledge and skills to teach the content of the curriculum. Leaders are extremely ambitious and outward-facing and seek to underpin their actions and plans for improvement in evidence-based research and practice. Staff engage in professional learning and have many opportunities to further develop their subject knowledge and professional interests. Leaders ensure that teachers have the support, training and coaching that they need to be successful.

The local governing body gathers the views of parents, carers, pupils and the community and ensures these views inform decisions. Governors have a wide range of skills and provide appropriate support and challenge. The trust values the contribution that the school makes to trust-wide policies. Leaders are able to focus their attention on meeting the needs of all pupils in their care as a result of the shared services and support provided.

Personal development and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

From the moment that children start school, staff encourage them to think big and believe, inspire and grow. This ambition underpins the school's high-quality personal, social, health and economic education curriculum. In designing the curriculum, leaders have thought about pupils' prior experiences and how to enhance their knowledge of the world beyond school and prepare them for the next stage in their education. For example, pupils learn to use a timetable and money to purchase tickets and travel on public transport, and they attend a careers fair.

The curriculum revisits key themes and builds on prior knowledge each year. Within the curriculum, there is flexibility to adapt to emerging needs. Pupils learn about online safety and develop an age-appropriate understanding of healthy relationships. Pupils learn to celebrate what makes them unique and different and what they share in common. They

learn about different faiths and cultures, how to talk sensitively and ask questions to deepen their understanding. They gain a secure knowledge of fundamental British values. Pupils are inclusive. Through the curriculum, they develop empathy and learn to consider the world from different perspectives.

Pupils enjoy a range of before- and after-school and lunchtime clubs, which include coding, boccia, choir and girls' football. Staff target some clubs specifically to support identified pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. This ensures that everyone can participate in the rich offer.

There are many opportunities for pupils to take on leadership roles. Some roles are democratically elected, while others follow an application and interview process. The house system helps pupils understand the importance of teamwork. There are ample opportunities for pupils to further develop their interests and explore and discover new talents. Leaders are constantly reviewing their offer and consult with pupils. For example, pupils play a role in evaluating the school improvement plan. Pupils make important decisions about the changes that they want to see at the school and they learn how to put their ideas into action.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Pupils, staff and parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about what it means to be a member of the Home Farm community. Staff encourage pupils and each other to 'Think BIG' (Believe, Inspire and Grow). Pupils benefit from a broad and ambitious curriculum. There are opportunities for pupils to revisit prior learning and connect this to new content. Staff identify, and take swift action to reduce, any barriers to learning so that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils, have the support that they need to benefit from the wide curriculum offer. As a result, the majority of pupils achieve the ambitions of the curriculum and their attainment in national tests and examinations is consistently above average.

Staff teach pupils to be persistent, collaborative, inquisitive, disciplined and imaginative. In the Reception Year, high-quality interactions, consistent routines and expectations ensure that children settle quickly. They take advantage of everything there is to learn. This positive start is built upon as pupils transition through the school. Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to their learning and exemplary behaviour. They know what bullying is and they are confident such incidents would be dealt with quickly. Attendance rates are high. Pupils talk with enthusiasm about their learning. They do not want to miss school. Pupils are extremely well prepared for their transition to secondary school.

Pupils' emotional health and wellbeing are as important as their academic achievement. There are many opportunities to enrich pupils' understanding of the curriculum through carefully planned visits and a well-structured personal, social, health and economic education programme. This has been thoughtfully designed to take into account the context of the school and broaden pupils' experiences. There are opportunities for pupil leadership and enterprise. Pupils learn about risk and how to stay safe, be responsible and look after their school, each other and the environment. There are positive and trusting relationships

between pupils and staff. Pupils, staff and parents feel listened to. They know that their voices make a difference.

Next steps

- Leaders and those responsible for governance should sustain the effectiveness of their work in all areas, so that all pupils continue to benefit from a high-quality education.
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About this inspection

This school is part of the Alpha Trust, which means that other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Gillian Marshall, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Lawrence Jones.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspection activities:

Inspectors spoke with leaders at school and trust level during the inspection.

The school does not use alternative provision.

Headteacher: Richard Potter

Lead inspector:

Oriana Dalton, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Heather Hann, Ofsted Inspector

Vicki Webber, Ofsted Inspector

Stuart Pope, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.



This data is from 27 January 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

424

Above average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 272

School capacity

420

Above average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

6.37%

Well below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 26.3%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

2.83%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.5%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

9.67%

Below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Well below average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standards in a combined reading, writing and mathematics measure.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	77%	61%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	75%	62%	Above
2023/24 (final)	78%	61%	Above
2022/23 (final)	77%	60%	Above

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	83%	74%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	82%	75%	Above
2023/24 (final)	87%	74%	Above
2022/23 (final)	80%	73%	Above

Pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	81%	72%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	82%	72%	Above
2023/24 (final)	82%	72%	Above
2022/23 (final)	80%	71%	Above

Pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	90%	73%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	89%	74%	Above
2023/24 (final)	92%	73%	Above
2022/23 (final)	91%	73%	Above

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	60%	46%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	S	47%	S
2023/24 (final)	67%	46%	Above
2022/23 (final)	S	44%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	70%	62%	Above

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (revised)	S	63%	S
2023/24 (final)	83%	62%	Above
2022/23 (final)	S	60%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	70%	59%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	S	59%	S
2023/24 (final)	67%	58%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	S	58%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	70%	60%	Above
2024/25 (revised)	S	61%	S
2023/24 (final)	83%	59%	Above
2022/23 (final)	S	59%	S

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics, including the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	60%	68%	-8 pp
2024/25 (revised)	S	69%	S
2023/24 (final)	67%	67%	-1 pp
2022/23 (final)	S	66%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	70%	80%	-10 pp
2024/25 (revised)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	83%	80%	4 pp
2022/23 (final)	S	78%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	70%	78%	-8 pp
2024/25 (revised)	S	78%	S
2023/24 (final)	67%	78%	-11 pp
2022/23 (final)	S	77%	S

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	70%	80%	-10 pp
2024/25 (revised)	S	81%	S
2023/24 (final)	83%	79%	4 pp
2022/23 (final)	S	79%	S

‘S’ in the table above indicates the data has been suppressed, which is usually due to small cohorts. The suppression rules applied by the DfE when publishing the data have been mirrored and applied in the report card.

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	3.7%	5.2%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	4.2%	5.5%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	4.8%	5.9%	Below

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	6.3%	13.3%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	8.2%	14.6%	Below
2022/23 (3 term)	9.8%	16.2%	Below

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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