

Old Heath Community Primary School

Address: Old Heath Road, Colchester, Essex, CO2 8DD

Unique reference number (URN): 114710

Inspection report: 14 April 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.

Strong standard

Early years

Strong standard 

Leaders prioritise getting children off to the best possible start to their school lives. They target the use of additional funding and staffing highly effectively to achieve this. This is significantly and swiftly reducing gaps in learning for children who have any barriers to learning. Staff provide effective modelling and frequent opportunities for children to take turns and collaborate. This promotes children's personal social and emotional development very well. They are encouraged to express themselves through words and helped to understand and communicate their feelings appropriately. Staff identify children's additional needs swiftly and provide targeted support. This ensures children progress very well across the areas of learning.

The curriculum is thoughtfully planned and built around high-quality texts. Staff use frequent talk, repetition and practise to develop children's vocabulary and communication skills. Teachers identify misconceptions promptly and revisit learning to secure children's understanding. Children's 'learning journeys' demonstrate the positive progress they make from their individual starting points.

The learning environment is well designed and establishes clear expectations for children's behaviour, routines and attitudes to learning. This ensures they are well prepared for their transition into Year 1. Staff are well trained and appropriately qualified. Leaders provide a high-quality induction for parents and carers. Every child receives a pack of practical resources to take home to support their learning.

Disadvantaged children and children with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive effective support, making them difficult to distinguish from their peers. Children take pride in their achievements and are well prepared for the next stage of their education

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

Despite weaknesses in curriculum design in some subjects, pupils typically acquire the foundational knowledge needed to progress through the school. Over time, pupils build appropriate knowledge and skills from their starting points, and most achieve well. Variation in curriculum sequencing means that, in some subjects, pupils do not develop deeper or more complex knowledge as effectively as they could.

Attainment at the end of key stage 2 has remained close to national averages. This includes the proportion of pupils achieving the higher standard in reading and mathematics. Outcomes in phonics are above average and pupils develop secure early reading knowledge. The gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers is reducing.

Pupils recall key learning across a range of subjects and take pride in their work. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make steady progress. This is because staff

understand their needs and provide appropriate support. As a result, pupils are prepared suitably for the next stage of their education.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders pay close attention to pupils' attendance. They have a clear strategy for monitoring and checking on attendance. Leaders recognise when pupils may need extra support to attend more regularly, including those who are disadvantaged or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. They work closely with families to help them understand the impact of irregular attendance. Leaders go to great lengths to support parents in getting their children into school, including arranging transport where needed. The attendance of all pupils is close to the national average. Similarly, persistent absence has reduced and is in line with national averages as a result of the school's actions.

Pupils behave well. This is reflected in their positive attitudes towards school and learning. Staff have high expectations, which pupils respond to well. Pupils understand and follow the school's rules and routines. They show care and respect towards one another, demonstrating pride in each other and their school community. Pupils are confident that staff deal with any incidents of poor behaviour promptly and effectively. They trust adults to take concerns seriously. Pupils report that bullying and discriminatory behaviour are rare. They know that adults would support them if any issues occurred. Pupils understand the importance of looking after their mental health and emotional wellbeing. They appreciate how staff help them to manage their behaviour and anxiety. Pupils feel safe and supported. They talk positively about their friendships and experiences at school.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

This is a happy and welcoming school, where pupils feel valued and included. Leaders and staff know pupils and their families well. They make appropriate checks on pupils' academic, social and emotional progress. For example, staff quickly identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding and spot potential barriers to learning. They provide well-considered support to reduce barriers and close gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding. As a result, pupils make suitable progress from their individual starting points. Leaders work closely with other agencies, including social care, when required. This joined-up approach ensures that support is well tailored to meet pupils' needs.

Leaders do not use alternative provision. They adapt internal provision to meet pupils' needs well. Those pupils who require more precise support to meet their needs benefit from the school's recently introduced provision, The Den. Leaders ensure that staff receive appropriate training. All staff receive ongoing guidance from the special educational needs coordinator.

Leaders make deliberate choices about how they use additional funding, such as the pupil premium. This includes funding additional support in the early years to help children develop communication and language skills. As a result, the gap between disadvantaged children and their peers is closing. All children get off to a positive start and achieve well.

Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or

disabilities, speak confidently about how staff support them and help remove any barriers to learning. They demonstrate high levels of self-esteem. Pupils feel confident sharing worries and difficulties, knowing this will help them succeed.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders have a clear and accurate understanding of the school's context and pupils' needs. They use this knowledge to shape the well-considered personal development and wellbeing programme. This programme supports pupils' understanding of others' beliefs, different cultures and of right and wrong. The curriculum provides pupils with many opportunities to develop their confidence, resilience and independence. Wider experiences enrich pupils' learning. Pupils value these opportunities. They speak positively about how activities, such as residential visits, help them overcome fears and prepare for future education, employment and life beyond school.

Pupils learn to reflect on their own beliefs and experiences and to show respect for others. They develop positive social skills. Pupils have a secure understanding of fundamental British values, such as democracy, equality and mutual respect. Pupils appreciate the cultural diversity of their community. Everyone is equal, regardless of race, religion, gender or ethnicity. Pupils feel safe in school. They know that they can raise any concerns with trusted adults. Pupils are confident that they will receive appropriate help and support. They also learn how to stay safe online and in the community. The curriculum includes appropriate provision for relationships and sex education. Pupils learn about healthy and respectful relationships based on trust, honesty and respect.

Leaders provide pupils with meaningful opportunities to take part in decision-making across the school. The whole school parliament is involved in making important decisions. These include purchases and making leadership appointments. These experiences help pupils build responsibility, develop leadership skills and understand democratic processes.

Leaders see the need to improve how they evaluate the impact of their offer. They should use new information, like the clubs and inclusion analysis, more regularly. This will help ensure that all pupils, especially those who are disadvantaged, receive the support they need.

Needs attention

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention 

The curriculum does not yet ensure that pupils build knowledge securely and progressively across all subjects. There is curriculum framework. However, the clarity of sequencing and progression of important knowledge differs across subjects. This inconsistency limits how well pupils develop and deepen their understanding over time.

In subjects such as science, leaders have identified the essential knowledge that pupils should learn and the order in which staff teach it. These well-sequenced plans help pupils make secure connections and remember important ideas. In other subjects, the curriculum does not clearly show how learning progresses year by year. As a result, pupils' knowledge

is less secure. The early years curriculum is thoughtfully designed and provides children with rich learning experiences that prepare them well for Year 1.

Teachers demonstrate appropriate subject knowledge and introduce new content clearly. Children begin learning to read and write as soon as they start school, and many develop a strong interest in stories and books. Staff prioritise essential knowledge in English and mathematics. However, pupils are not consistently expected to apply these skills independently or across the wider curriculum. At times, teachers do not identify or address misconceptions quickly enough. Leaders recognise the need to strengthen the consistency of curriculum delivery and are working to ensure that teaching aligns more closely with the planned curriculum across all subjects.

Leadership and governance

Needs attention 

Current systems for monitoring, evaluation and quality assurance are not robust enough to secure consistent improvement across the school. Leaders know the school well and demonstrate a strong commitment to staff and pupils' wellbeing. However, processes used to evaluate the quality of curriculum implementation and teaching lack the structure and rigour needed to drive sustained improvement. Monitoring relies too heavily on the headteacher and informal approaches. This limits leaders' ability to evaluate the impact of actions on teaching and to ensure that practice aligns with the intended curriculum. The prioritisation of key staff for classroom teaching duties further reduces leadership capacity.

Leaders promote a caring and supportive culture that pupils, staff and families value. At times, this emphasis on care reduces the level of challenge needed to secure consistently high-quality practice across subjects.

Those responsible for governance show commitment and provide support. Governors visit the school regularly and plan for future leadership changes. However, governors do not consistently provide sufficient challenge to evaluate the school's performance in depth. This limits their ability to hold leaders to account and to evaluate the impact of improvement actions. Leaders recognise the need to strengthen systems and increase leadership capacity to secure sustained improvement.

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

Pupils are proud and positive advocates for their school. They are eager to share their learning. Pupils talk with enthusiasm about the subjects they study. They love coming to school. Pupils are excited to find out what they will be learning each day. They run into the playground to wait for the bell to ring and then settle swiftly in class, ready to learn. Children in the early years get off to a positive start. They settle quickly into clear routines and live up to staff's high expectations. Children make significant progress from their starting points. Pupils achieve well overall and are ready for the next steps in their learning journey.

Pupils' care and wellbeing are at the heart of everything this school does. Staff know their pupils well. Relationships between staff and pupils are respectful and caring. Older pupils act as role models for younger pupils. There are opportunities for all pupils to contribute to

the life of the school through a school parliament. They also contribute to important decisions, such as appointing staff and deciding on new play equipment. Pupils benefit from a wide range of clubs at lunchtime and after school. A range of trips further enhances their learning and broadens their experiences.

Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to school. They know what to do if they do not feel safe. Pupils trust the adults in school to help them. Bullying is extremely rare. Playtimes are happy times to socialise and play with friends. Central to the school's ethos is the 'Old Heath Heart'. Pupils know and understand the importance of telling the truth, showing respect, thinking of others and trying their best.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure greater clarity and precision in how the curriculum in all subjects is sequenced and how knowledge and skills build progressively over time.
 - Leaders should ensure that teaching approaches and resources are used consistently well so that all pupils, especially older pupils, are challenged appropriately and supported to achieve the curriculum's ambitious end points.
 - Leaders should strengthen their systems for evaluating the impact of the curriculum and provision, so that they can identify weaknesses promptly and demonstrate how well all pupils benefit.
-

About this inspection

The chairs of the board of governors in this school is Emilie Askew.

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

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

Inspectors spoke to the headteacher, other leaders, governors, pupils, staff and parents during the inspection. Inspectors also spoke with the a representative from the local authority.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school does not currently make use of any alternative provision for pupils.

Headteacher: Amanda Mitchelson

Lead inspector:

Oriana Dalton, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Ceri Jones, Ofsted Inspector

Mark Carter-Tufnell, His Majesty's 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 14 April 2026

School and pupil context**Total pupils**

213

Close to 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

210

Below 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)

22.07%

Close to 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

4.23%

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

9.39%

Below average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Above 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	63%	61%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	70%	62%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	70%	61%	Above
2022/23 (final)	50%	60%	Below

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	72%	74%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	80%	75%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	73%	74%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	63%	73%	Below

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	76%	72%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	80%	72%	Above
2023/24 (final)	80%	72%	Above
2022/23 (final)	67%	71%	Close to average

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	76%	73%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	80%	74%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	87%	73%	Above
2022/23 (final)	60%	73%	Below

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	37%	46%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	63%	47%	Above

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	33%	46%	Close to average
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	63%	62%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	88%	63%	Above
2023/24 (final)	33%	62%	Below
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	47%	59%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	63%	59%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	33%	58%	Below
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	53%	60%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	63%	61%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	67%	59%	Close to average
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	37%	68%	-31 pp
2024/25 (revised)	63%	69%	-7 pp
2023/24 (final)	33%	67%	-34 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	63%	80%	-16 pp
2024/25 (revised)	88%	81%	7 pp
2023/24 (final)	33%	80%	-46 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	47%	78%	-30 pp
2024/25 (revised)	63%	78%	-16 pp
2023/24 (final)	33%	78%	-44 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	53%	80%	-27 pp
2024/25 (revised)	63%	81%	-18 pp
2023/24 (final)	67%	79%	-13 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
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)	4.6%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	5.9%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	5.6%	5.9%	Close to average

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)	10.5%	13.3%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	12.9%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	17.6%	16.2%	Close to average

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.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspects services providing education and skills for children and learners of all ages, and inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk



© Crown copyright