

Inspection of Hollybush Primary School

Fordwich Rise, Hertford, Hertfordshire SG14 2DF

Inspection dates:	28 and 29 January 2025
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy school. They have positive and caring relationships with the adults who work with them. Pupils generally behave well in lessons. Staff help them to talk about their feelings. There are safe spaces to go to for pupils who feel upset. When staff talk to pupils about their behaviour, they do this in a calm and consistent way. Bullying is rare, but when it happens adults promptly act.

Leaders have reviewed the curriculum. However, its delivery is inconsistent. The programmes of study are not always completed as intended. Sometimes, teachers do not check on pupils' understanding well enough. This means that pupils do not always make the connections they might between the different things they learn. This stops them from achieving as well as they could.

Pupils enjoy roles of responsibility. These include being a reading buddy, play leader or a duck farmer. Pupils from a young age have a very strong understanding of how to keep themselves safe, both online and in the community.

Children in the early years are happy in school. They are confident in their routines and access activities to support their physical and emotional development. Staff identify themes that engage and promote children's interests well.

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

The school has developed a curriculum that is effectively planned and sequenced. However, the delivery of the curriculum across the school is inconsistent. This is because not all subjects are taught as intended. This means that pupils do not always learn knowledge in a logical way. As a result, some pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), develop gaps in their knowledge.

Teachers do not always find out exactly what pupils know, remember and can do. Consequently, they do not always know when pupils are ready to move on to new learning. As a result, sometimes pupils are not sufficiently challenged.

The reading curriculum is still being developed. In early reading, pupils who are falling behind are not identified quickly enough. Because of this, some pupils struggle to blend the sounds they learn into words. Consequently, some pupils are not yet as confident and fluent with their reading as the school would like.

In the early years, the environment is calm and engaging. There are rich opportunities to stimulate children's curiosity. Children know and follow the classroom routines well. Teachers have identified the importance of improving children's spoken language and vocabulary. As a result, staff plan daily activities that help support the youngest children to communicate effectively. Children are supported well as they move from Nursery into the Reception Year.

Staff identify the needs of pupils with SEND accurately. This information is used effectively to help pupils with SEND access the same curriculum as their peers. Teachers adapt lessons appropriately. However, the variability in curriculum delivery means that some pupils with SEND are not progressing as well as they might. The school has developed 'the nest' as a separate provision for a small number of pupils with specific needs. Staff in the nest are highly trained. They provide a bespoke curriculum which enables pupils who attend to thrive.

The school has been successful at improving pupils' behaviour. A recently implemented behaviour system is ensuring that pupils' behaviour is effectively managed. This includes in classrooms and during social times. Pupils know right from wrong. They are welcoming and friendly to visitors.

Pupils enjoy the broad range of clubs that are on offer such as musical theatre and art. They understand that there are views and beliefs different to their own. Pupils understand the concepts of democracy and the rule of law. They are being prepared well for life in modern Britain. Pupils speak enthusiastically about the opportunities to go on educational visits, such as whole-school theatre trips, art on location and the beach. The school provides high-quality pastoral support. All pupils know who to speak to if they have worries. They feel well looked after here.

Staff are overwhelmingly positive about the consideration given to their workload and well-being. They value the training they receive. They are proud to work at the school.

Governors do not consistently ask sufficiently probing questions to enable them to effectively hold leaders fully to account. This limits how well governors conduct their roles and their effectiveness in securing school improvement.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school has yet to identify the important content that pupils should learn to become confident and fluent readers. Consequently, some pupils do not build their reading knowledge and skills well enough. The school should make sure that the reading curriculum is well planned and sequenced, and that staff have the knowledge and skills to ensure all pupils can become confident and fluent readers.
- Teachers do not identify precisely what pupils have learned in some subjects. This means they do not always know when pupils are ready to move on to new learning. The school should make sure that all staff have the skills to check pupils' learning so that they identify pupils' misconceptions and address them effectively.

- The governing body does not always hold school leaders fully to account, for example by asking probing questions. The governing body should ensure that it has a rigorous and effective programme for checking the work of the school and therefore holding leaders fully to account for their actions.

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	117263
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10345183
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	217
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	David Craddock
Headteacher	Valerie Noon
Website	www.hollybush.herts.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	19 and 20 June 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school provides before- and after-school childcare.
- The school does not use any 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 that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, interim special educational needs coordinator, early years leader, designated safeguarding leader and subject leaders.
- Inspectors met with members of the governing body, including the chair, and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, history and computing. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector listened to pupils from Years 1, 2 and 3 read to an adult.
- The lead inspector evaluated the curriculum plans and spoke to leaders and pupils about several 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 inspectors spoke to a range of pupils to learn their views about the school. They also took account of responses to the pupil survey.
- The inspectors considered responses to the staff survey and spoke to a range of staff. They took account of responses to Ofsted Parent View questionnaire and the free-text responses.

Inspection team

Nichola Pickford, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Gina Bailey

Ofsted Inspector

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