

Holbrook Academy

Address: Ipswich Road, Holbrook, Ipswich, Suffolk, IP9 2QX

Unique reference number (URN): 137208

Inspection report: 23 June 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.

Expected standard

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders have high expectations for pupils' attendance. They monitor pupils' attendance closely and identify patterns in pupils' absence quickly. If a pupil begins to miss school regularly, staff work promptly with pupils and their families to remove barriers to attendance. A range of effective support, including high-quality pastoral care, helps pupils to attend more regularly. Leaders work successfully with pupils who are persistently absent. As a result, pupils improve their attendance over time.

Leaders have created a warm and welcoming school where pupils develop a secure sense of belonging. Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Teachers show pupils how to behave so there is a shared understanding of expectations. Pupils have someone to talk to if they need extra help. Some pupils access designated areas, such as the HUB, if they need extra support. Staff respond quickly and effectively to rare incidents of bullying. As a result of leaders' actions, suspensions have reduced considerably. The calm and orderly environment allows pupils to focus well on their learning. Pupils are keen to learn. When teachers provide suitably challenging work, they respond positively and engage well with their learning.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

The school identifies pupils' needs well, including additional needs that emerge over time. Leaders provide support to a range of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Many pupils with SEND benefit from additional support with their social, emotional, mental health. Staff work effectively with external agencies, including mental health services, to support pupils and their families. Some pupils attend the thrive provision or the Student Support Centre, where they receive targeted support and teaching in mathematics and English. This helps them to achieve well from their starting points.

The school supports disadvantaged pupils well, including those known or previously known to social care. Staff identify barriers to learning and wellbeing accurately. Leaders use pupil premium funding appropriately to ensure that pupils receive the support they need. A wide range of pastoral support including counselling and targeted interventions helps pupils with their wellbeing. The school have appropriate systems in place to support pupils who arrive mid-year. As a result, pupils who struggled in other schools often achieve success at Holbrook.

Leaders use a small number of carefully selected off site providers to meet pupils' individual needs. They monitor these placements carefully to ensure that pupils receive an appropriate education and support.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Leaders have established a broad programme for pupils' personal development. It reflects the school's shared values, including their Holbrook Way. Pupils benefit from a range of opportunities that prepare them well for life beyond school. For example, they participate in

a range of clubs such as criminal law, mahjong, chess and card games. There are a range of educational visits and a Community Action group. Through this work, many pupils support local primary schools, a local care home and environmental projects. This builds pupils' confidence and sense of belonging to the local area. Pupils also contribute to the wider school community through the Friends of Holbrook Association which includes fayres and cake sales. Leaders monitor pupils' participation in the enrichment offer, including that of vulnerable groups, to ensure pupils are well represented.

The school ensures that pupils are well prepared for their future through impartial careers guidance. Pupils benefit from meaningful work experience opportunities and visits to appropriate local providers.

The personal development programme supports pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development effectively. Through Life Skills lessons, assemblies and tutor time, pupils learn about healthy relationships, online and offline safety and wider contextual issues such as water safety. Pupils typically develop a secure understanding of fundamental British values. They learn about respect and tolerance. The majority of pupils apply this knowledge well in their interactions with others. However, sometimes pupils make inappropriate comments around race and gender which make some pupils feel uncomfortable.

Pastoral care is a strength of the school. Pupils value the support they receive from a range of staff. This includes targeted mental health support such as counselling.

Needs attention ●

Achievement

Needs attention ●

Over time, too many pupils underperform in national tests and examinations. Leaders' work to improve outcomes has increased some pupils' achievement. For example, in English and mathematics, the number of pupils achieving a grade 4 or above in their GCSEs has improved. However, some pupils' progress through the curriculum remains too slow. This is particularly the case for pupils who join the school at, or above, national average. Typically, these pupils do not make sufficient progress from their starting points. As a result, some pupils are not as well prepared for their next steps as they should be.

Leaders have a robust approach to developing pupils' foundational skills and knowledge in mathematics and English. Pupils who struggle in these areas receive the support they need to access the curriculum. They benefit from high-quality support, including small group teaching, to help them to catch up with their peers.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention ●

Leaders have implemented quality assurance processes to improve the quality and consistency of curriculum and teaching. While there are some aspects of strength, leaders' strategic oversight needs further development to ensure pupils have a consistently positive experience in lessons. While the curriculum is broad and balanced, teaching is not as effective as it should be. In some subjects, including English and mathematics, teachers

typically check pupils' understanding well. They act quickly to address gaps in pupils' knowledge. They support pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, appropriately. In these subjects, teachers generally have high expectations of what pupils should achieve.

However, this is not typical across the curriculum. Teachers do not consistently support pupils well enough to learn the curriculum effectively. In the main, teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils should know and be able to do. This is particularly the case for pupils who join the school at or above national average. Teachers' use of assessment is variable. When it is used, and gaps in pupils' skills or knowledge are identified, teachers do not typically take appropriate action to address this. There are often insufficient opportunities for pupils to deepen their understanding or to practise their learning. As a result, not all pupils learn the curriculum as well as they should.

Leadership and governance

Needs attention 

Leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They have taken appropriate action to improve many aspects of the school's work. For example, they have reduced suspensions and ensured pupils attend regularly. The proportion of pupils achieving grade 4 or above in English and mathematics has increased. However, too many pupils continue to underachieve because the quality of the education they receive is inconsistent. Leaders do not routinely identify and prioritise the actions that will have the greatest impact on improving pupils' achievement across different subjects and year groups. While much of leaders' work is effective, they have not acted with sufficient urgency or precision to improve the quality of teaching. As a result, improvements in the quality of teaching have not been sufficiently wide ranging.

The school's approach to professional development does not develop teachers' expertise well enough. It is not matched closely to the needs of different subjects and phases. Leaders do not evaluate the implementation and impact of staff professional learning with sufficient rigour. Consequently, improvements in teaching and assessment are limited in scope and have not led to consistent improvements in pupils' achievement. This is particularly the case for pupils who join at or above national average.

The trust has strengthened leadership capacity since taking responsibility for the school a year ago. It is too early to evaluate the full impact of this work. Those responsible for governance fulfil their statutory responsibilities effectively. Staff appreciate leaders' consideration of their wellbeing and workload. Parents and carers' views of the school, as reported in Ofsted's surveys, are more variable.

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

Pupils enjoy attending this small, friendly school. They study a broad range of subjects, including technology, music and art. Many pupils enjoy their lessons and like learning new information. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) generally benefit from appropriate help. This enables many of them to access the curriculum successfully. Pupils who join the school needing extra help to transition to secondary

education are typically well supported to make secure progress over time. However, pupils' experiences in lessons is too variable. Often pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to address gaps in their knowledge or to deepen their understanding. Teachers' expectations of what pupils should know and do are not consistently high enough. As a result, over time, too many pupils do not achieve well including in national examinations.

Pupils are included well in school life. They have access to a wide range of enrichment opportunities which they enjoy. They like the different clubs such as netball and art. Pupils develop positive friendships with their peers. They trust the staff and feel welcomed in school. Pupils are typically friendly and polite. They benefit from opportunities to develop their confidence, such as through leadership roles.

There is a warm and friendly culture at Holbrook Academy. Pupils attend well. They receive extra help to come to school if they are struggling to attend. Pupils generally behave well both in lessons and during social time. Some pupils receive extra help to manage their emotions. This reduces barriers to their learning and ensures that lessons are rarely disrupted. Pupils feel safe in school. They know they are well looked after and cared for. Lunch and break times are positive experiences. Pupils like to take part in different activities. They enjoy spending time with their friends. Bullying is rare and dealt with effectively.

Next steps

- Leaders should improve the precision with which they identify underlying causes of pupils' underachievement so that actions lead to pupils making consistently secure progress through the curriculum.
 - Leaders should ensure that professional development is sharply aligned to improving teaching, and evaluate its impact through consistent improvements in pupils' achievement across all subjects and year groups.
 - Leaders should establish and implement a coherent approach to assessment so that assessment information is used effectively to inform teaching, address pupils' misconceptions and improve pupils' academic outcomes, including in national examinations.
 - Leaders should strengthen pupils' understanding of the protected characteristics so that inappropriate comments, including those relating to race, gender and appearance, are challenged and reported and become uncommon for pupils to experience.
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About this inspection

This school is part of East Anglian Schools 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), Angelo Goduti, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Stella Mackenzie. 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 (HMI) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMI. Inspectors spoke with trustees, governors, the CEO, senior leaders and representatives

from the virtual school during the inspection. The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships. The school currently makes use of 2 alternative provisions, both are unregistered.

The school has undergone a significant change since the last inspection. In 2024, a new headteacher was appointed. In 2025, they joined East Anglian Schools Trust.

Headteacher: Claire Elliott

Lead inspector:

Bessie Owen, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Garry Trott, Ofsted Inspector

Steven Hogan, Ofsted Inspector

Ian Stoneham, 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 23 June 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

593

Well below 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: 1,067

School capacity

600

Well 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: 1,154

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

23.61%

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: 28.9%

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

5.23%

Well above 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: 3.09%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

15.68%

Close to average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 13.4%

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

English and maths GCSE

Percentage of pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	34.2%	45.4%	Below
2023/24 (final)	31.9%	45.9%	Below
2022/23 (final)	34.5%	45.3%	Below

Attainment 8

A measure of pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	41.2	46.1	Below
2023/24 (final)	38.4	45.9	Below
2022/23 (final)	43.3	46.3	Close to average

Progress 8

How much progress pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	-0.61	-0.03	Below
2022/23 (final)	-0.28	-0.03	Close to average

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' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils achieving grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	17.2%	25.8%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	20.0%	25.8%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	9.5%	25.2%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (final)	32.7	34.9	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	33.4	34.6	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	28.1	35.0	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	-0.77	-0.57	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	-1.07	-0.57	Below

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' English and maths GCSE grade 5 or above

Percentage of disadvantaged pupils who achieved grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (final)	17.2%	53.1%	-35.9 pp
2023/24 (final)	20.0%	53.1%	-33.1 pp
2022/23 (final)	9.5%	52.4%	-42.9 pp

Disadvantaged pupils' Attainment 8

A measure of disadvantaged pupils' point scores across 8 subjects including maths (double weighted), English (double weighted if both language and literature are taken), 3 EBacc measures and 3 GCSE or technical measures.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2024/25 (final)	32.7	50.4	-17.7
2023/24 (final)	33.4	50.0	-16.7

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	28.1	50.3	-22.2

Disadvantaged pupils' Progress 8

How much progress disadvantaged pupils made between the end of primary school (key stage 2) and the end of secondary school (key stage 4), compared to pupils across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 2.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2023/24 (final)	-0.77	0.16	-0.94
2022/23 (final)	-1.07	0.17	-1.24

Destinations after 16

Destinations after 16

Percentage of pupils staying in education or employment for at least 2 terms after the end of secondary school (key stage 4).

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023 leavers (revised)	95%	92%	Average
2022 leavers (revised)	95%	93%	Average
2021 leavers (revised)	93%	94%	Average

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 (3 term)	8.4%	8.4%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	10.1%	8.9%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	10.0%	9.0%	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 (3 term)	26.6%	23.4%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	31.3%	25.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	30.0%	26.5%	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.

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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