

Inspection of a good school: Old Heath Community Primary School

Old Heath Road, Colchester, Essex CO2 8DD

Inspection dates:

2 and 3 December 2021

Outcome

Old Heath Community Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy being part of this happy, hard-working school community. Pupils care about each other. They get on well with staff. Pupils and their parents told the inspector that the school is a caring and welcoming place. Pupils are keen to uphold the school's mantra of 'tell the truth and show respect, think of others and try our best'. Pupils behave well. They follow the school rules. Pupils want to learn, and they work hard.

Pupils learn about how others may be different from themselves. They understand the importance of being kind to each other. Bullying rarely happens. Pupils know that unkind behaviour is unacceptable, and that staff would deal with it quickly and well.

Pupils enjoy presenting their performance poetry in assemblies, and collecting poems in their 'Old Heath Anthology'. They take pride in their weekly golden awards, and relish receiving an 'Old Heath Heart Award' for an exemplary contribution to their school. They love their forest school lessons and they take on extra responsibilities, including organising theme days and charity events. There is a broad range of clubs that pupils enjoy. Pupils look forward to trips, for example the Year 6 residential trip to Yorkshire.

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

Leaders have constructed a curriculum that is broad and ambitious, and is adapted to the needs of pupils. Curriculum leaders have strong subject knowledge. They are passionate about their work and they provide effective support and professional development for teachers. Leaders keep a careful check on the curriculum and make sure that pupils' work is of a good standard.

Leaders have prioritised reading across the school. The early reading curriculum is carefully organised so that pupils' phonics knowledge builds over time. Pupils use their knowledge of sounds to read unfamiliar words accurately. All teachers share their love of books with pupils. Pupils read a wide variety of books, often linked to the school's

curriculum. Pupils make connections between the books they read and their learning in other subjects.

Learning is planned carefully from the early years to Year 6. In mathematics, children in the Reception class build their vocabulary about number and shape, so that by Year 1 they can accurately use mathematical vocabulary. By Year 6, many pupils are confident mathematicians who can reason well and solve problems fluently. In other subjects, well-considered curriculum thinking supports pupils to build their knowledge, step-by-step. For example, Year 4 pupils successfully recall their learning of biomes, which they are studying in geography.

Teachers have a good understanding of what pupils are learning. They use in-class checks to make sure that pupils are on track. However, pupils' speaking and listening skills are underdeveloped. During the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been periods of time when many pupils have not been able to engage in class discussions or practise new vocabulary. As a result, some pupils lack the confidence to join in debates and respond to questions. Leaders have plans to improve pupils' oracy, but these are not fully developed.

The early years curriculum is carefully planned and supports children's development. The curriculum prepares children well for the next stage of learning. For example, early skills in geography are developed through talking about places the children have visited. Shared books, stories and sounds introduce children to the beginning of their reading knowledge.

There is a range of effective support for pupils who fall behind with their learning. Adults help weaker readers to catch up. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders provide clear information about the needs of pupils with SEND. Teachers use this information effectively to make helpful changes in how they support pupils with SEND to access the same curriculum as their peers. As a result, pupils with SEND achieve well throughout the curriculum.

Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Clear routines are in place, leading to calm, purposeful behaviour in class and around the school. Effective processes deal with any poor behaviour, which rarely occurs. In the early years, routines promoting good behaviour are established right from the start. Consequently, pupils have positive attitudes towards others and their learning.

Leaders ensure that pupils' personal development is well considered. Pupils study an appropriate range of topics, including rights and responsibilities, equalities and diversity, emotional well-being and how to keep healthy. Leaders place a high value on pupils having the right knowledge and the confidence to successfully take part in British life. Leaders promote and celebrate individuality and difference.

Governors are committed to ensuring that the school continues to improve. Governors are well informed, and use the information they receive to hold leaders to account.

Leaders, including governors, look after staff well-being and keep a close eye on staff workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders provide staff with relevant and up-to-date safeguarding training and information.

Procedures for reporting concerns are clear. As a result, all staff have a good understanding of how to protect pupils from harm and report concerns, however minor.

Safeguarding records are detailed and monitored closely. Leaders work closely with relevant partners and agencies to ensure that the most vulnerable pupils in the school get the support they need.

The curriculum includes teaching pupils about risks at school and at home, including when online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There are gaps in pupils' speaking and listening skills. During the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been periods of time when pupils have not had the opportunity to practise using new vocabulary or join in class discussions. Some pupils lack the confidence to respond to questions. Leaders are planning ways to improve pupils' oracy, but these are not fully developed. Leaders should give priority to completing this work and should embed this provision across the curriculum, to ensure that pupils develop these skills well.

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 a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour, or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in March 2012.

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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	114710
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10200123
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	208
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Dominic Collins
Headteacher	Amanda Mitchelson
Website	www.oldheath.com
Date of previous inspection	29 September 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, some subject leaders have been appointed to their new roles.
- There is a breakfast club which provides morning childcare.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and has taken that into account in his evaluation.
- The inspector met with the headteacher and members of the school's leadership team.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in the following subjects: early reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector spoke to leaders about the curriculum for other subjects and looked at curriculum plans.

- The inspector met with the special educational needs coordinator and the leaders with responsibility for disadvantaged pupils.
- The inspector met with six members of the local governing body, including the chair of the local governing body.
- The inspector held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector looked at the single central record of pre-employment checks. He spoke to leaders, school staff, governors and pupils about the arrangements for safeguarding.
- The inspector spoke to parents before school. He considered the 24 responses made by parents to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including 17 free-text responses. He also considered the eight responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for staff. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

Nick Rudman, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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