

Holt Farm Infant School

Ashingdon Road, Rochford, SS4 1RS

Inspection dates 23–24 January 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- From low starting points, children in the Reception classes make good progress in communication, in linking sounds to letters, in learning to write and in understanding numbers.
- Pupils in Years 1 and 2 make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics, reaching broadly average standards by the end of Year 2.
- Standards in reading, writing and mathematics have been rising since the last inspection leading to good achievement over time.
- Good teaching enables pupils to learn well because work is set at the right level for them and resources are well chosen.
- Pupils' behaviour and safety in lessons and around the school are good.
- Leaders and the governing body rigorously check the quality of teaching to improve it so that it builds on pupils' learning.
- Good leadership and governance have brought about good improvement in all aspects of the school's work since the last inspection.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Marking of pupils' books does not always show them the next steps in learning.
- The quality of pupils' topic work is not always checked against individual literacy and numeracy targets.
- Work is not always hard enough for a few of the most-able pupils.

Information about this inspection

- All teachers were observed teaching in the 12 lessons seen, jointly with senior leaders. Three learning walks also took place, including one jointly with the deputy headteacher. Pupils were observed reading in lessons and six pupils read their books to an inspector.
- Inspectors sampled pupils' books and two case studies together with senior leaders. Children's work in the Reception classes and records of the school's links with parents and carers in the Early Years Foundation Stage were also seen.
- The inspection took account of 48 responses to Parent View (the online questionnaire for parents and carers). Staff questionnaire returns were also looked at.
- Inspectors examined a range of school documents including the school development plan and summary self-evaluation, minutes of governing body meetings, safeguarding policies and procedures and records of attendance and behaviour.
- Meetings were held with three members of the governing body, the leadership team, six parents and carers and one group of pupils.

Inspection team

Declan McCarthy, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Ken Parry

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Holt Farm is a large infant school with eight classes, including three Reception classes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage and few speak English as an additional language.
- An average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding for children known to be eligible for free school meals and those in local authority care).
- A below-average proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are supported through school action. The proportion of pupils who are supported at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- Since the last inspection, the school has developed its extended services, offering holiday clubs, a range of outside professional support, attendance support workers and educational psychology services with a group of local schools. The school has received the Quality in Extended Services award in recognition of this work.
- A new Chair of Governors and new parent governors are in post.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching to outstanding and build on pupils' good achievement by:
 - consistently informing pupils of their next steps in learning when their work is marked
 - always extending the learning for all of the most-able pupils
 - making sure that pupils always know how well they are achieving in their literacy and numeracy targets when doing their topic work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children's attainment on entry to the Reception classes is below what is expected in all areas of learning overall but varies slightly from year to year. Robust and accurate performance information shows that children's skills in linking letters to sounds, and knowledge and understanding of the world are low. Children make good progress in all areas of learning so by the time they enter Year 1 most have reached and some exceeded the goals expected for their age.
- Children settle into their routines quickly because staff work well together as a team and work closely with families prior to children's admission. Good consistency in showing children how to link letters to sounds helps them to make good progress in reading and writing. They have plenty of chances to explore the world around them through play, to develop their physical co-ordination and creative skills and deepen their knowledge of number. This has led to children making good progress in all these areas of learning.
- Standards have risen since the last inspection and, as a result, the gap in pupils' performance in reading, writing and mathematics compared with other pupils nationally has narrowed significantly. By the end of Year 2, standards in reading, writing and mathematics are broadly average. All groups of pupils in Years 1 and 2, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs and the few who speak English as an additional language, make good progress from their different starting points.
- The attainment of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is also broadly average and these pupils make equally good progress as their peers. The performance of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is therefore as good as all other pupils, and they are not falling behind in their basic skills.
- In 2012 a broadly average proportion of pupils met the required expectations in the Year 1 national reading check representing good progress from their low starting points. A few of these pupils made outstanding progress as their prior attainment was particularly low.
- On a few occasions, a very small number of the most-able pupils are not reaching expected levels because they are not given difficult enough work to do.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching has moved from satisfactory at the time of the last inspection to good. This is a result of regular and robust checking by senior leaders of the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and progress.
- Teachers usually make good use of what they already know about pupils to set work at the right level for them, although on the rare occasion, tasks for a few of the most able pupils are not demanding enough. Pupils have a good idea of how well they are doing when their work is marked, although teachers do not always inform them of their next steps in learning.
- The quality of feedback to pupils in lessons is good. Teachers and teaching assistants consistently inform pupils how well they have done, clarify their misunderstanding and inform them of what they need to learn next. In a lesson where teaching was outstanding, the teacher and teaching assistant worked very well together in checking pupils' sentence work and showing

them how to reach the next level of attainment. As a result all pupils made outstanding progress.

- Teachers offer a wide range of approaches to interest pupils, including working on their own, learning together in pairs and in small groups, and using practical resources. A good balance between adult-led activities and those the children choose for themselves in the Reception classes help them to develop confidently as learners.
- In a mathematics lesson, where teaching was good, the teacher made good use of technology to show a film of 'Mr Odd' and 'Mr Even' to consolidate pupils' understanding of odd and even numbers. A teaching assistant also made good use of toy fish as a visual practical aid to develop pupils' skills of subtraction.
- Teaching of communication, reading, writing and mathematical skills is good, although occasionally teachers do not promote literacy and numeracy enough in topic work by referring to how well pupils have done against their targets. For example, in the history topic on Guy Fawkes, pupils were not informed about how well they were using full stops and capital letters or their use of adjectives when writing about the Gunpowder Plot.
- The teaching and support provided for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, and those who speak English as an additional language, is good. Teachers and teaching assistants break tasks down into smaller achievable steps and make good use of practical resources. As a result, pupils deepen their understanding of new learning and make good progress. Support groups in literacy and numeracy for pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium are good and sometimes outstanding, helping pupils to improve their learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' behaviour and safety around the school is good. They play safely outside in the playground and during 'wet play' in classrooms and they move safely around corridors.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons is good and they are keen to learn. Very few minor incidents of disruption in lessons, such as talking while others are talking, occur. Any such incidents are dealt with effectively and pupils respond well. Pupils focus on their activities, listen carefully and follow instructions.
- Nearly all parents and carers agree that pupils behave well and feel safe in school. This was confirmed in discussion with a small group of parents. Pupils also said that they feel safe in school and behaviour is good.
- Pupils have a developing understanding of different types of bullying and know to tell an adult if they see any bullying. They said that staff deal with any incidents of bullying effectively, which is consistent with the school's own records. Incidents of unacceptable behaviour and the few exclusions are properly recorded and relate to a very few pupils with extremely challenging behaviour. Most pupils' attendance is above average and their punctuality is good.

The leadership and management are good

- Senior leaders have improved the school significantly since the last inspection by developing

strong team work among the staff with a shared drive and commitment for improvement. Staff morale is high, which is reflected in the strongly positive responses in the staff questionnaires.

- The management of the performance of teachers is good. The quality of teaching is systematically and rigorously checked against the national standards for teaching. All teachers are observed termly. Regular pupil-progress meetings are held to determine the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and progress. All this information is brought together by senior leaders and used effectively to identify strengths and weaknesses. Any weaknesses are transformed into targets for improving the performance of teachers, with training and support provided to meet them.
- There is a close link to the performance of teachers and any increase in their salaries. Performance objectives for teachers are closely linked to those of the headteacher. These originate from the school's view of itself, which is used effectively to set whole school priorities for development.
- There is a strong emphasis on developing the basic skills of literacy and numeracy across different subjects, with a variety of support groups to help pupils who are in danger of falling behind.
- Extra funds for the pupil premium are used well. Good additional support by well-trained teaching assistants for the teaching of letter sounds, reading, writing and numeracy skills has helped eligible pupils to make rapid progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Good opportunities to enrich learning include a variety of visits and visitors to the school, such as a keeper of exotic animals and a guide dog for the blind and a wide range of after school clubs. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. There are good opportunities for pupils to reflect in assemblies and on their own progress in lessons, and to experience a sense of wonder in the sensory garden.
- The strong positive responses by parents and carers who completed Parent View are a reflection of the good partnerships between school and home. The school has established strong links with parents and carers of children in the Reception classes, through regular home visits prior to admission and frequent sharing of information about their child's progress through informal discussions and achievement records called 'learning journeys'.
- The school promotes equality of opportunity well by making sure that all groups of pupils achieve equally well. Staff foster good relations and tackle discrimination effectively.
- The local authority has provided good support for staff and governors in the school, particularly in looking after finances, staffing matters, training and managing performance.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have made sure that the headteacher's targets for improvement are based on whole-school priorities for development and that teachers' objectives are linked to those of the headteacher. They are well informed about the strengths and weaknesses of teaching and make sure that only good teaching is rewarded with an increase in salary. They understand how the school's performance information compares with all schools nationally. Governors see that statutory requirements, particularly those for safeguarding, are met. They regularly check the school's single central record for vetting staff and visitors. The governing body provides good oversight of the school's income and expenditure, particularly for the pupil premium. Governors ask challenging questions such as, 'How many pupils who receive the pupil premium are not participating in the additional literacy and numeracy classes provided for

them?’ They look carefully at how effective the use of pupil premium has been in improving the achievement of those known to be eligible for this funding.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	114879
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	405546

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	217
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Richard Iles
Headteacher	Robin Goodier
Date of previous school inspection	21 September 2010
Telephone number	01702 544058
Fax number	01702 530076
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