

Inspection of Houldsworth Valley Primary Academy

Rowley Drive, Newmarket, Suffolk CB8 0PU

Inspection dates: 6–7 November 2019

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Good

Early years provision

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous
inspection

Not previously inspected

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders have high expectations about what pupils should be learning and achieving at Houldsworth Valley. Pupils love attending this school. The school is a calm place where pupils enjoy learning new things and playing with their friends. Pupils say it is 'a great place to be'. They trust in adults to provide them with the best opportunities. In this Rights Respecting School, it is clear how pupils care for and look after each other.

Pupils feel happy and safe. Leaders have worked hard to successfully improve behaviour. Leaders take any incidents of bullying and unkindness seriously. They work sensitively with pupils to respond to any concerns. Pupils say adults look after them and are approachable if they are worried about anything.

Relationships between adults and pupils are positive. Staff talk to pupils about their learning. Pupils are listened to and their views are taken seriously. Pupils are happy and confident in all that they do. Pupils enjoy the wide variety of clubs, trips and residential experiences on offer.

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school's work. They praise the improvements made and, in particular, the strengths the headteacher has brought to the school. Parents are involved in the day-to-day life of the school, such as attending 'reading cafes' and information sessions so that they can help with their children's learning.

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

The personal development of pupils is exceptional. Leaders make sure that pupils have valuable experience to prepare them well for their future lives. Pupils have a deep understanding of British values. They develop respect for other faiths, cultures, values and opinions. They take on whole-school responsibilities, such as within the school council, and as eco leaders and members of the rights council.

The headteacher is a highly effective leader. She, alongside governors and the trust, has brought about significant improvements in a short space of time. They have raised expectations, increased pupils' achievement and improved behaviour.

Children rise to leaders' expectations and get off to a 'running start' in early years. Staff have a thorough understanding of how younger children learn. From a young age, children are excited about school. Well-planned, fun activities captivate children's interest in class and outdoors. From low starting points, children do well in reading, writing and mathematics. They have many chances to investigate, explore and be curious about learning, which ensure children are ready for Year 1.

Pupils experience high-quality education as they move into key stages 1 and 2. Senior leaders have thought carefully about what they want pupils to learn. The curriculum is well thought through and staff teach reading, writing and mathematics very effectively. Pupils develop knowledge and skills effectively.

They are enthusiastic about completing their work, try hard and talk confidently about their learning.

A particularly successful focus has been promoting a love of reading. All classrooms have reading areas with lots of books to choose from. Pupils talk enthusiastically about their favourite books. They read regularly to practise their reading. Younger pupils have daily phonics sessions, which help them learn their sounds quickly and to use the sounds to read unfamiliar words. Older pupils understand in depth what they are reading and are encouraged to read widely in subjects other than English.

Leaders have improved their support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Well-planned support helps pupils to learn effectively. Teachers adjust tasks so that pupils with SEND can take part and contribute in lessons successfully.

The curriculum is less developed in some subjects, namely art and modern foreign languages (MFL). Leaders have a clear plan in place to develop the curriculum in these areas with further training already scheduled. While the headteacher is supported by a capable, enthusiastic leadership team, most subject leaders are new to their roles. Although they are being supported to develop their leadership skills, this work is still in the early stages. Subject leaders do not have as clear a strategic overview of their areas of responsibility.

The trust, governors and leaders work well together to move the school forward on its improvement journey. They share a 'no excuses' attitude to make sure Houldsworth Valley continually improves. Governors have a good understanding of their role and provide a balanced level of support and challenge. The trust, while closely checking the school's performance, listens to leaders and provides equally good support.

Leaders care about their staff and have taken positive steps to manage workload and well-being. Staff enjoy the challenge of becoming staff member of the week and are motivated by the thoughtful messages from their 'secret buddies'.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and all staff place the highest priority on keeping pupils safe. Leaders make sure that all staff have the right checks before beginning work at the school. Also, they check that staff have completed the training they need to be able to spot concerns. Staff know what to do if they identify any pupils who may be at risk of harm. The family liaison officer works closely with support available in the local area to successfully support and help pupils and families.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including when online. Pupils say that they feel safe in the school and their parents agree.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders and teachers have worked very effectively to plan a coherent curriculum in many subjects, including for example history and geography. In subjects such as art and MFL, these plans are less well implemented. Leaders need to ensure that a high-quality curriculum is consistently in place across all subjects.
- Subject leaders' work supports senior leaders' ambitious intentions. However, subject leaders are new and inexperienced to leadership roles. Senior leaders need to continue to provide training and guidance so subject leaders develop increased rigour and precision in their checking of the quality of education.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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're 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	143861
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10110194
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor led
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	309
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Michael Parish
Headteacher	Lisa Tweed
Website	https://houldsworthvalley.co.uk/
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Houldsworth Valley Primary Academy opened in January 2017.
- The school is part of the Unity Schools Partnership trust.

Information about this inspection

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

- During this inspection, inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, deputy assistant headteachers, the special needs coordinator, and members of teaching and support staff. Inspectors met with the subject leaders for reading, mathematics, history, geography, art and MFL. In addition, the lead inspector met with the trust's primary adviser, who has supported leaders to develop the whole curriculum.
- The lead inspector met with the school office manager to discuss safeguarding arrangements. She had a telephone conversation with a governor and also met with members of the governing body, including the chair, and with the chief executive officer (CEO) of Unity Schools Partnership.

- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documents, including those related to curriculum planning and development, safeguarding arrangements, behaviour, attendance, exclusions, the school's evaluation of its own performance, the school's development plans and the trust's work to support the school.
- The subjects of reading, mathematics, history, geography, art and MFL were considered in detail as part of this inspection. Inspectors also checked the curriculum provision in other subject areas during the second day of the inspection. Inspectors spoke to curriculum leaders, visited lessons, looked at a range of pupils' work, and met with teachers and pupils. Inspectors visited phonics lessons and heard pupils read to staff.
- Alongside leaders, inspectors looked at a sample of pupils' books from all year groups and across a range of subjects to evaluate pupils' learning in English, mathematics, history, geography, art and MFL and throughout the wider curriculum.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils about their experiences of school life and their learning to find out what it is like to be a pupil at Houldsworth Valley. There were 37 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for pupils. Inspectors also observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and during break- and lunchtime.
- An inspector joined a whole-school assembly during the first day of the inspection.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents, taking into account the 50 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as the 28 free-text responses.
- Inspectors took account of the 28 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire, listened to staff who chose to meet inspectors, and met with staff new to teaching.

Inspection team

Tracy Fielding, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Kay Tims

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Jo Nutbeam

Ofsted Inspector

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