

Inspection of Howbridge Church of England Junior School

Howbridge Road, Witham, Essex CM8 1BZ

Inspection dates: 21 and 22 November 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

The headteacher of this school is Lisa Dale. This school is part of the Diocese of Chelmsford Vine 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, Emma Wigmore, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Caroline Hobbs. There is also a trust executive lead, Rebecca More, who is responsible for this school and one other.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school threads the values of friendship, compassion and perseverance through school life at Howbridge. The school is inclusive. Pupils have a strong understanding of difference and show tolerance in their relationships with peers.

Adults encourage pupils to work hard and have high aspirations. Pupils feel proud of their work. They enjoy their learning. Pupils use what they know to learn even more and are inspired by the work they do. They are creative in their work, and produce high-quality pieces of writing, artwork and musical compositions.

Pupils participate in a range of activities out of the classroom, such as trips, the Community Speed Watch, fundraising, food collections and visits to the local care home. Pupils are proud of their school's sporting achievements, including recently winning a district sports event.

The majority of pupils want to follow leaders' high expectations of how they should behave, and they behave well during lessons. However, there is a minority who find regulating their behaviour harder and need adult support. This prevents them, and sometimes other pupils, from being able to learn.

A focus on outdoor play and learning to be social has made sure that pupils typically play well together at breaktimes.

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

The school has designed a broad, balanced and ambitious curriculum. It sets out the key knowledge pupils need to learn and breaks this down into manageable chunks. Pupils' learning builds gradually, and they learn to make links between different subject areas.

Teachers' subject knowledge is strong. They explain things clearly and often recap on pupils' previous learning. This helps with pupils' recall. Teachers highlight the subject-specific vocabulary pupils need to learn. Subsequently, pupils use appropriate language when talking about and recalling their learning.

The school promotes a love of reading. High-quality books underpin learning in all subject areas and enable pupils to deepen their knowledge of the curriculum. For instance, in Year 6, pupils made inferences from a complex text due to their learning in history. Staff effectively deliver the school's phonics programme for those pupils who are still learning to read.

Most pupils behave well. Adults model the behaviour they expect and apply the school's behaviour policy consistently. Classrooms are generally calm spaces, which help pupils learn. A school focus on developing breaktimes has ensured that pupils have more options for outdoor play and learning. A small number of pupils struggle to meet adults' high expectations. These pupils get additional help to regulate their

feelings and emotions. Although behaviour has improved over time, school leaders do not have a sufficiently clear overview of behaviour incidents.

The school has effective processes in place to support the identification of any pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils with SEND learn the same curriculum as their classmates, sometimes with adapted tasks or additional adult support. This typically works well in lessons. However, support is inconsistent when pupils have one-to-one support. While some staff have had training in supporting pupils with more complex behaviour needs, others have not.

The personal development programme is a strength of the school. It develops pupils' understanding of diversity as well as financial education. The school's programme allows pupils from all year groups to take part in enterprise and to develop links with the community. Older pupils learn about healthy relationships as part of their relationships and sex education curriculum. Pupils develop as leaders, for instance through being a member of the school council or a classroom ambassador.

The school has been through a period of turbulence in staffing. The trust and the local governing body have ensured that the school has a highly skilled and dedicated leadership team. They have also ensured that staff's workload is manageable. Parents are aware of the staffing turbulence and are generally supportive of the school's work.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- A few staff are not as well versed at managing the more complex behaviour of a few pupils. This means that some pupils struggle to learn in their lessons. The school should make sure that staff receive appropriate training for managing pupils' complex behaviour so that lessons are not disrupted.
- The current system for recording behaviour incidents does not give a sufficiently clear view of patterns or trends. This hampers staff's ability to identify issues and possible solutions. The school should review the current system so that the monitoring and evaluation of actions to improve behaviour are sharper.

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	140666
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10288528
Type of school	Junior
School category	Academy sponsor led
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	367
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Caroline Haines
CEO of the trust	Emma Wigmore
Headteacher	Lisa Dale
Website	www.howbridgejunior.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	8 June 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The substantive headteacher joined the school in September 2019.
- The school currently has interim arrangements in place for leadership in a period of absence of the headteacher and other senior leaders.
- The school is part of the Diocese of Chelmsford Vine Schools Trust and has a Christian religious character. Its previous section 48 inspection for schools of a religious character was in December 2016. The school's next section 48 inspection will be within eight school years.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors had discussions with the chair of the trust, trustees, executive leader for the trust and members of the local governing body. Inspectors also met with members of the senior leadership team, the special educational needs coordinator, curriculum leader, pastoral leaders and staff.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, art and music. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors 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.
- Inspectors took account of a wide range of information, including the school's website, development plans, surveys, information about pupils' needs, leaders' monitoring of quality of teaching and records about pupils' behaviour.
- Inspectors spoke with parents, staff and pupils and considered the 41 responses to Ofsted's survey, Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Sonia Innes, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Nicola Shadbolt	Ofsted Inspector
Sue Cox	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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