

Holmwood School

**Report Card
2025/26**



General information			
School Name	Holmwood School	Headteacher	Dennis Ley
School Type	Community Special	Number on Roll	100
Address	Saltersgill Avenue, Easterside, Middlesbrough TS4 3PT	Local Authority	Middlesbrough
Telephone		Last Inspection	October 2024
Email		Overall Grading	Outstanding
Website		Religious Character	N/A
DfE. No.		Section 48 Grading	N/A
Ofsted URN	111775		
School Context			
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Holmwood is a Special Primary School in Middlesbrough, an area of high socio-economic deprivation and high unemployment. Holmwood School provides for pupils aged four to eleven. It is an inclusive primary school with a positive, caring atmosphere that’s commented upon regularly by visitors to the school.We are committed to everyone being included and we believe that everyone is entitled to a broad and relevant curriculum. Holmwood School is regarded as a Centre of Excellence, as many of our children return to mainstream education, post 16 education and some to UniversityThe pupils have a wide range of conditions, syndromes and disorders including Communication and Interaction difficulties, Attention Deficit, Hyper- Activity, Oppositional Defiance and very challenging behaviours. Many experience other difficulties and social circumstances that affect their ability to trust adults and learn. Currently, a high percentage of our pupils have moderate learning difficulties.There are 100 pupils currently on role including 9 CLA, Previous 12 PCLA. Pupils mainly live within Middlesbrough (92%) but a few pupils attend from neighbouring authorities.Holmwood School is staffed at a 12:4 staff to pupil ratio. With pupil premium funding and an apprenticeship program, we are able to offer additional support throughout the school. This gives rise to the warm and supportive spirit that our community talks highly of. It has enabled many positive relationships leading to better outcomes for children both academically, emotionally and socially.All of the pupils have an EHCP or are in the assessment stage of the process. The large majority of pupils are boys (87.8%). Pupils joining the school after EYFS have had their education disrupted by low levels of attendance or short-term/permeant exclusion from previous schools. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is high (66%) and above the national average. Most pupils are White British.			

Leadership & Governance	Curriculum	Teaching
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ofsted inspectors described the school’s leadership as ‘inspirational’ as leaders ensure that they consistently focus on the individual needs of the pupils. Despite this recognition leaders point out that they are ‘not perfect and there’s never room for complacency, so we will continue to work hard to improve what we do every day to support our young people and ensure they fulfil their potential.’ However, there is little doubt that the school gets most of its drive and vision from ambitious and forward-thinking leaders, who care for both pupils’ and staff’s well being. In September 2024, the inspection team commented that, ‘Staff recognise that leaders are considerate of their workload and well-being. Staff, including early career teachers, appreciate the support that they receive. This includes professional development and regular time to carry out administrative tasks.’ Staff have high expectations of their pupils and pupils respond by working productively. Staff are clearer about what is expected at the end of each age-group and this has helped their confidence levels. Leaders evaluate the curriculum’s impact (teaching and learning reviews) and make changes when necessary. They recognise that there will need to be a degree of flexibility within the curriculum to allow for this. The school is not only well thought of by parents, who are encouraged to be fully involved in their children’s education, but by the community with Middlesbrough’s deputy mayor stating that she has run out ‘superlatives’ to describe the school’s work. Most of the governors at the school are new to their role but are highly skilled. Traditionally, they have been extremely supportive of the school but have also provided the leadership with appropriate levels of challenge. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We believe that we have created a broad and balanced curriculum that interests and motivates our pupils. We have based our wider curriculum on an enquiry-based structure which helps our children to develop both their key substantive knowledge alongside their disciplinary knowledge. The curriculum is well sequenced, and we use the B squared strategy to ensure that we identify key knowledge which is progressively set out. The sequencing of subjects is mapped across different year groups so that it is clear progression in the acquisition of knowledge and skills. There is a focus on reading; all children should have the opportunity to read to others, read for themselves and to be read to. Holmwood School has adopted the Sounds-Write programme for phonics and reading. Reading for pleasure has been a cornerstone of our ethos over the last few years. Opportunities for writing is planned across the curriculum to enable pupils to develop and apply their writing skills in a variety of contexts. We use current affairs resources e.g. Newspapers, Newsround and Magazines to improve pupils’ general knowledge (there is little opportunity for this at home in some cases). A wide range of visits, specifically designed to complement/bring the curriculum to life are planned to enhance learning. Visitors to school also provide more first-hand experience and knowledge. We regularly have live performance, Outdoor Experiences, Virtual Reality, Zoo Lab etc Our curriculum intent has taken account of the local context and pupils are encouraged to talk and learn about their local area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher evaluation has shown that staff are passionate about the subjects that they teach and this impacts positively on the children. We have adapted the rationale captured in the Rosenshine principles to create a whole-school pedagogy which focuses on pupils retaining information for the long-term. Staff identify potential barriers to learning and provide support/resources wherever required. This is identified at teacher appraisals and reviews. Staff will differentiated for an individual child’s needs and academic abilities. This is evident in the pupil’s IEP and the teacher’s planning. Teachers are effective in presenting subject matter clearly and most pupils are able to talk confidently/passionately about their learning. Learning misconceptions are picked up quickly and staff rapidly put in place steps to ensuring that they overcome any difficulties. Staff are adept at recognising the difference between genuine misconceptions and errors. Questioning has been a CPD focus, and staff confidently use this to establish the level of knowledge retained and to check on misunderstandings and misconceptions. The training was focussed on Bloom’s Taxonomy questioning. Classrooms are designed to both support children’s learning and develop their independence. Displays reflect the learning taking place, to celebrate achievement and we are using displays to assist retention. Planning is adapted if pupils are struggling with a concept/skill. Staff can adapt the focus in the next lesson. Staff are aware of oracy expectations and use language and vocabulary appropriate to the year group and child’s abilities.

Achievement

Attendance & Behaviour

Personal Development & Well-Being

- At Holmwood we cannot rely entirely on national assessments to measure our pupils' achievement. Naturally, they do play a part, however there are so many other factors that we have to consider, not the least being our success in reintegrating pupils back into mainstream provision.
- The school has been judged special school of the year on four consecutive occasions. Last year, Prestige's Special School of the Year Award said: 'Holmwood School's unique approach and nurturing atmosphere has enabled its alumni to enjoy great success in secondary education and higher education.'
- Ofsted commented in its September 2024 report that staff, 'share a determination that all pupils will progress academically and socially. This includes those pupils who attend the school's specially resourced provision.'
- When it comes to the academic side, we are pleased to say that progress as measured by improvement in performance of almost all our children can be described as outstanding in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Our focus on helping pupils retain key knowledge for the long term makes us confident that this is case in all parts of the curriculum, not just the core.
- We endeavour to ensure that all pupils enjoy reading. A wide variety of extra-curricular events are offered to raise the profile of reading, e.g., Reading Challenges, Days to celebrate authors, World Book Day. Our aim is for all our children to become life-long passionate readers.
- Pupils, who struggle with reading, are provided with additional support and are picked up early. This starts in EYFS and continues through the school.
- Reading for enjoyment is an important feature in the school with pupils being encouraged to read for pleasure through the school's reward scheme and author study.

- Our pupils' behaviour is exemplary and very little learning time is lost to disruptions in lessons. The children are clear about expectations in lessons, and they will readily share their achievements.
- In September 2024 Ofsted inspectors commented that 'Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are noteworthy. Classrooms are calm and pupils learn without disruption. Pupils learn to develop, and demonstrate, high levels of respect for each other.'
- The school has prioritised management and has adapted behavioural management techniques from Team Teach, Incredible Years, SNAP and research from the College of Education and Human Development to support its strategies.
- Pupils have a good awareness of bullying (this is a focus within our PHSEE curriculum) and any instances are dealt with decisively and effectively. Anti-bullying policy is up to date and is regularly reviewed by the 'Governing Body. Rare incidents of bullying are recorded on CPOMS and reported to the headteacher.
- Lunchtimes are mostly calm, staff support pupils with use of social skills and to engage in playground activities.
- Holmwood School's attendance is historically good and is regularly above 94% throughout the year.
- Procedures across the school have had a positive impact with attendance.
- The vast majority of pupils arrive at school on time – anyone who shows any erratic late pattern follows our attendance steps to improve this.
- The school has a rigorous attendance monitoring system.
- In relation to attendance inspectors noted that 'Leaders have developed well-embedded systems that promote regular attendance. As a result, pupils attend school very well.'
- We have not had any fixed term or permanent exclusions for the 15 years. Children have the right to fulltime education.

- Ofsted inspectors in September 2024 were extremely positive about the school's personal development and well-being of pupils. They remarked, 'Pupils' personal development is exceptional. It successfully extends into all aspects of school life. The school offers many opportunities that help pupils to develop their artistic and sporting interests, for example horse riding tuition or painting with local artists.'
- Pupils visit local areas of interest through residential trips that broaden pupils' knowledge of their locality. Pupils learn how to use money confidently and how to cook independently. They are involved in community church services and sing at a local care home. This successfully develops their inter-generational understanding.'
- Pupils', despite their SEN, show good levels of perseverance when tackling challenging tasks and work well in a variety of group contexts (pairs or in small groups).
- Holmwood School has focus on delivering a curriculum that has a focus of developing a child's character. A Character Education Evaluation Report is in place.
- The curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to understand the importance of living a healthy lifestyle and to keep fit. It also provides pupils with some opportunities to understand more about mental health. The curriculum addresses issues of pupils' safety well.
- We ensure that pupils are provided with opportunities to demonstrate how democracy works through promoting democratic processes, such as an elected school council. This also ensures that pupils have a voice. We have whole school events to celebrate British values.
- We have worked hard to increase our children's experiences of social diversity.

Inclusion

Safeguarding

Early Years

- Everything that Holmwood stands for is about inclusion. The very nature of its intake, almost three-quarters of the pupils have social, emotional and mental health issues and more than a quarter are on the autistic spectrum, demands that pupils' individual needs are catered for.
- Staff identify potential barriers to learning and provide support/resources wherever required. This is identified at teacher appraisals and reviews.
- Staff will differentiate for an individual child's needs and academic abilities. This is evident in the pupils' IEP and the teachers' planning.
- Group activities are undertaken by pupils throughout the day tend to be organised in mixed ability so that all pupils play a role in offering suggestions and completing tasks for the group.
- Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to learn in a variety of ways and there is an expectation that pupils are given the opportunity to learn collaboratively. To facilitate this, children are offered a variety of contexts (for example, various groups sizes, pairs etc.)
- Teachers encourage pupils to raise questions during lessons and reassure pupils that their questions are valued highly.
- Classrooms are designed to both support children's learning and develop their independence. Displays reflect the learning taking place, to celebrate achievement and we are using displays to assist retention.
- Planning is adapted if pupils are struggling with a concept/skill. Staff can adapt the focus in the next lesson.
- The use of pupil premium grant is carefully analysed by Governing Body and SLT members to ensure that it is providing maximum impact for pupils. As a result, the needs of disadvantaged pupils are well met, with their progress outstanding across school.

- Safeguarding is highly effective.
- In a school such as Holmwood, safeguarding is of paramount importance as almost all our pupils could be described as being vulnerable..
- Safeguarding is a whole-school priority. The safeguarding systems are robust, regularly reviewed, and embedded in daily practice.
- There is a commitment to creating a culture of vigilance where all staff, governors, and volunteers understand their responsibilities.
- Safeguarding is always a high priority for the school as many families need support. It is successfully coordinated by a number of professionals.
- All statutory requirements are met, and vulnerable pupils protected. The school shares all relevant documentation on the school website.
- Pupils receive high levels of care, guidance and support resulting in outstanding personal development.
- All staff receive regular training and other updates to give them the knowledge and confidence they need. When action is needed to safeguard children, this is taken rapidly and is carefully recorded.
- The school has strong links with other agencies involved in making sure that pupils are properly protected.
- Child on Child Abuse policy is up to date and regularly reviewed.

- We have a skills-based progressive curriculum linked to the new framework in place. This helps to track children to end of Reception
- We make excellent use of the reception baseline to identify a starting point for every child. Our expert practitioners are then able to provide appropriate activities, linked to need.
- We have put greater focus on vocabulary and spoken language, and this is seen in the weekly planning, This has helped to reduce word gap in disadvantaged children. However, we recognise we have more to do in this area.
- We are currently overhauling our continuous provision so that there is greater match to children's need. Planning for EYFS is regularly reviewed by the deputy headteacher and the SENCo. In this way, the level of expertise put into organising the daily activities is excellent.
- There has been a greater focus on using interventions to support language skills and confidence in communication.
- Reading is also prioritised with several opportunities for children to settle down with a high-quality text set out around the setting.
- We value our early years' children's parents and seek to engage them at various points of the year. We have structured conversations with them which help to staff to agree short-term targets with them, both at home and school.
- Teaching is mostly practical with minimal amount of time spent on the carpet. Practitioners are quick to pick up on any misconceptions and understanding almost immediately.
- Although there have been changes to staffing in our early years, we have managed to retain outstanding practice, which is recognised beyond the school.

Primary School

Next Steps 2025-26

Leadership and Governance



- Continue to develop 'Middle Leaders' transition to become whole school leaders.

Curriculum



- We need to continue to ensure that our reading books are closely linked to our Sounds-Write programme that we implemented and that all children have access to books that link to their reading ability.

Teaching



- Continue to consider the questions: 'What is it like for a child here?', 'What differences are we making?' and 'How do we know?'

Achievement



- To ensure the accelerated progress of all children in writing.

Attendance & Behaviour



- Continue to reduce the need for sanctions and interventions due to unacceptable behaviour

School

Next Steps 2025-26

Personal Development & Well Being



- To improve the quality and utilization of outdoor play spaces to promote physical health, creativity, and social skills among students.

Inclusion



To maintain exemplary standards

Safeguarding



- Revised requirements from Keeping Children Safe in Education (Sept 2022) will be incorporated into school policy and procedures.

FYFS



- Introduction of spoken language into areas of continuous provision as a prompt for staff to support progression.