Holmwood School

Report Card
2026/27



General information

School Name	Holmwood School	**Headteacher**	Dennis Ley
School Type	Community Special	**Number on Roll**	Currently 96
Address	Saltersgill Avenue, Easterside, Middlesbrough TS4 3PT	**Local Authority**	Middlesbrough
Telephone	01642 819157	**Last Inspection**	October 2024
Email	office@holmwoodschool.org.uk	**Overall Grading**	Outstanding
Website	www.holmwoodschool.org.uk	**Religious Character**	N/A
DfE. No.	8067005	**Section 48 Grading**	N/A
Ofsted URN	111775		

School Context

- Holmwood is a primary special school in Middlesborough catering for 100 pupils from the ages of four to 11, from Middlesborough and a few other local authorities. An additional ten of these pupils in Key Stage 1 attend the Support Centre. They remain on their mainstream school role, attending with a view to transferring back to their setting if possible. The locality is one of high deprivation, and most pupils are socially disadvantaged. Pupils join the school following fixed term or permanent exclusion or significantly low attendance in their mainstream setting.
- Most pupils are boys. All pupils have Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) with two thirds of pupils having Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) difficulties and a third having autistic spectrum conditions (ASCs) as their primary need. Pupils have a range of coexisting conditions including difficulties with Communication and Interaction, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Oppositional Defiant Disorder and initially present with significant challenging behaviours. Holmwood has achieved nationally recognised awards: Trauma and Attachment Award, Inclusion Mark, Headstart Gold, Digital Resilience Achievement, Activemark, International School status, Platinum Sing Up and Healthy School.
- Holmwood aims to provide a high-quality service for parents and families of Middlesbrough and district whose children have Special Educational Needs and or Disabilities (SEND). It aims to extend pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding through a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum and develop positive self-image in each pupil.

Safeguarding

- Safeguarding is highly effective.
- In a school such as Holmwood, safeguarding is of paramount importance as almost all 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.
- Leaders and those responsible for governance are fulfilling their responsibilities in relation to reporting, referrals and record-keeping, as set out in 'Working together to safeguard children' and part four of 'Keeping pupils safe in education'.
- There is a commitment to creating a culture of vigilance where all staff, governors understand their responsibilities.
- Safeguarding is always a high priority for the school as many families need support. It is successfully coordinated by several 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.
- The school successfully manages safe recruitment and allegations about adults who may be a risk to pupils and vulnerable adults.
- All staff receive CPD
- Leaders know and fulfil the statutory requirements for safeguarding. These include managing safer recruitment, reporting, referrals, record keeping and the 'Prevent' duty.

Inclusion

- Everything that Holmwood stands for is about inclusion. The very nature of its intake, almost three-quarts 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 rigorously analysed during team meetings. Leaders and staff have high expectations for these pupils.
- Staff successfully adapt their lessons for an individual child's needs and academic abilities. This is evident in the pupils' IEP and the teachers' planning. Planning is adapted if pupils are struggling with a concept/skill. Staff can adapt the focus in the next lesson.
- 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 to assist retention.
- 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 being outstanding across school.
- Leaders identify pupils' needs quickly and accurately, including any emerging or changing needs.
- Exceptional standards of inclusion have been sustained over time so that barriers to learning and wellbeing for pupils to ensure highly positive outcomes and experiences for pupils.
- Leaders' actions have a transformational impact on how well these pupils achieve and thrive across all areas of school life and have ensured that they feel they belong within the school community.

Curriculum

- The school has successfully created a broad and balanced curriculum that interests and motivates pupils.
- The wider curriculum is based on an enquiry-focused structure which helps the children to develop both their key substantive knowledge alongside their disciplinary knowledge.
- The curriculum is broad, balanced and motivating. The foundation skills are covered well, complemented by the enquiry based wider curriculum.
- There is clear progression and sequencing so that pupils gain relevant skills, knowledge and understanding for life beyond and after Holmwood.
- Leaders ensure that the curriculum is delivered taking account of the local context and life in diverse modern Britain. Pupils are exposed to current affairs using Newsround and newspapers. The curriculum is enriched by visitors to school, and school visits.
- 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 have established our approach to ensure maximum impact.
- 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. The school regularly has live performance, Outdoor Experiences, Virtual Reality, Zoo Lab, etc.
- Leaders make astute decisions about how the curriculum and teaching should adapt and evolve
- Leaders ensure that the curriculum is of a consistently high quality across subjects and year groups
- Leaders ensure that the curriculum is consistently taught well
- Leaders' actions have a transformational impact on the learning of the pupils,. These pupils are now exceptionally well prepared for future success.

Teaching

- Teacher evaluation has shown that staff are passionate about the subjects that they teach and this impacts positively on the children.
- Teaching staff have high expectations, deep knowledge of pupils and their subjects. They take every opportunity to reinforce positive conduct and engagement, resulting in trusting relationships and high levels of engagement with learning.
- Staff 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 constantly adapt their teaching methods 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.
- Skilled TAs are well deployed, using their knowledge of pupils and trusting relationships to make early, supportive changes for pupils before they become significantly dysregulated.
- 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.
- Well targeted scaffolding supports pupils' independence in learning. Teachers use a variety of assessment for learning approaches, including 'cold calling' to check on pupils understanding.
- 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.
- Staff are aware of oracy expectations and use language and vocabulary appropriate to the year group and child's abilities.

Achievement

- Holmwood does not rely entirely on national assessments to measure pupil achievement. Naturally, they do play a part, however there are so many other factors that must be considered, not the least being the school's success in reintegrating pupils back into mainstream provision.
- The school has been judged special school of the year on five consecutive occasions. Last year, Prestige's Special School of the Year Award said: 'Holmwood School offers a beacon of hope and opportunity for its students..'
- Holmwood school is outward facing, with a long highly effective track record of improving outcomes in school and in the wider community.
- The Key Stage 1 Support Centre and the Holmwood Outreach Service, which provides support and continuing professional development (CPD) to mainstream, specialist settings and families alongside external visitors to the school, significantly improves expertise and outcomes beyond the school.
- When it comes to the academic side, there is significant evidence that there is improvement in the performance of almost all the children which can be described as outstanding in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The focus on helping pupils retain key knowledge for the long term is making a positive impact in all parts of the curriculum, not just the core.
- Staff 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. The aim is for all children to become life-long, passionate readers.
- Pupils, who struggle with reading, are provided with additional support and are picked up early. This starts upon entering the school 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.
- All pupils, are well prepared for the next stage in

Attendance & Behaviour

- 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 March 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 95% throughout the year.
- Leaders recognise that attendance is key to progress for all. Leaders use their trusting relationships with families, including support and honest conversations, to enable pupils who previously couldn't face going to school to enjoy and engage with it.
- Most 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.
- Exceptional standards of attendance and behaviour have been sustained over time so that there is a highly inclusive culture in which all pupils feel that they belong.
- Pupils who need it receive exceptional and tailored support from highly skilled staff to improve their attendance and behaviour, with perceptible results.
- Holmwood share their learning and best practice externally to support system-wide improvement, for

Personal Development & Well-Being

- Ofsted inspectors in March 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 visits 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 special needs, 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. An Evaluation Report is in place.
- The curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to understand the importance of living a healthy lifestyle and to keep fit.
- Staff are continuing to develop the pupils' understanding of consent.
- It also provides pupils with some opportunities to understand more about mental health. The curriculum addresses issues of pupils' safety well.
- 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. The school promotes whole school events to celebrate British values.
- In addition, the school has worked hard to increase our children's experiences of social diversity.
- Pupils have the opportunity to learn about their options for secondary education,. The school adopted a programme to engages with employers in the local area to ensure that pupils are well informed.
- Exceptionally high standards of personal development and wellbeing have been sustained.
- Holmwood shares their learning and best practice externally to support other schools including local and

Early Years

- Currently there are no EYFS pupils

Leadership & Governance

- The small but highly experienced senior leadership team have established a settled, highly skilled and passionate influence at Holmwood, changing the lives of troubled pupils who have experienced significant disruption and trauma at the start of their school life.
- 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.
- Senior leaders and the experienced settled team monitor the delivery of the highly effective curriculum, including peer observation, regular learning walks and using a variety of external quality assurance opportunities.
- 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.
- Leaders' engagement with and support for families is exemplary. They build trust, have honest conversations to develop family understanding and resilience, and signpost families to relevant and practical support. This includes support to fill in applications, and access to specialist services with provision of food and clothing.
- 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 established in their role and highly skilled. They have been extremely supportive of the school and have also provided the leadership with appropriate levels of challenge.
- Exceptionally high standards of leadership and governance have been sustained.

Key Ofsted Inspection messages from October 2024

Teaching and Curriculum	• Pupils receive an exceptional quality of education. • Pupils learn a rich and well-developed curriculum. • Teachers and support staff are knowledgeable. They share a determination that all pupils will progress academically and socially. • Staff expertly meet the academic needs of all pupils. • Staff ensure that pupils remember important knowledge and learn to apply it independently. • Pupils learn to discuss learning effectively across a range of subjects and topics.
Behaviour and Attendance	• Pupils who have had previously difficult school experiences flourish. • Pupils' attitudes to learning and attendance consistently demonstrate significant improvements from their starting points at the school. • Classrooms are calm and pupils learn without disruption. • Leaders have developed well-embedded systems that promote regular attendance. As a result, pupils attend school very well. • Leaders their learning and best practice externally to support other schools locally and national networks
Personal Development	• Staff have a deep understanding of pupils' personal and social needs. • The school creatively supports pupils to develop more broadly. They rapidly develop their abilities to be confident and independent. • Pupils value other people's differences and celebrate diversity. • Pupils' personal development is exceptional. It successfully extends into all aspects of school life. • Pupils are well prepared for adulthood. Pupils learn how to use money confidently and how to cook independently. • Leaders their learning and best practice externally to support other schools locally and national networks
Achievement	• Pupils achieve very well and leave the school well prepared for their next steps in education. • Pupils take ownership of their learning and feel pride in the achievements they make. • Leaders their learning and best practice externally to support other schools locally and national networks

Key Ofsted Inspection messages from October 2024 (continued)

Leadership and Governance	• The leadership is inspirational. • 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. • Governors know the school very well. • The governors have a secure and deep understanding of the school and challenge leaders robustly. • Leaders their learning and best practice externally to support other schools locally and national networks
Inclusion	• Pupils are extremely well supported at Holmwood School. • Staff ensure that the school consistently focuses on meeting the individual needs of pupils. • All pupils benefit from an educational offer that is carefully designed to meet their special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). • Effective learning interventions strengthen pupils' writing skills and mathematical knowledge. • Leaders their learning and best practice externally to support other schools locally and national networks
Safeguarding	• The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Holmwood School
Next Steps 2026-27

Leadership and Governance 	• To continue to seek, analysis, implement actions and monitor progress and impact of the voice of our stakeholders.

Curriculum 	• To ensure the accelerated progress of all children in writing.
	  ○ To raise progress in writing for all year groups, Y1 – Y6, so children in all year groups met expected progression by the end of the year.
	  ○ To improve the ability to moderate writing

Teaching 	• Aim for teaching teams to share and adopt best practice in the school, to further develop extension and challenge, so every moment is a learning moment. • Aim for teaching teams to make consistent use of pupil misconceptions, to deepen and extend learning.
Achievement 	• To continue to share best practice externally to support other schools locally and national
Attendance & Behaviour 	• To record and analyse incidents of low-level behaviour in order to have a reduction.

Holmwood School
Next Steps 2026-27

Personal Development & Well Being 	• To continue to share best practice externally to support other schools, locally and nationally.
Inclusion 	• To plan, deliver and analysis the impact of inventions for pupils
Safeguarding 	• Revised requirements from Keeping Children Safe in Education (Sept 2026) will be incorporated into school policy and procedures.
EYFS 	• N/A