

Howitt Primary Community School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	135172
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	381824
Inspection dates	19–20 January 2012
Lead inspector	John Horwood

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	435
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Bob Harper
Headteacher	Mandy Marriott
Date of previous school inspection	7 May 2009
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

John Horwood

Additional inspector

Raymond Biglin

Additional inspector

Ann Behan

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors used a number of strategies to observe learning. The strategies included lesson observations ranging from five minutes to full lessons. A total of 9.5 hours was spent observing teaching, which included visiting 22 lessons taught by 14 teachers. Meetings were also held with staff, members of the governing body and groups of pupils. Informal discussions also took place with parents, carers and pupils. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at documents including the school improvement plan, minutes of meetings, the school's information on pupils' progress and samples of pupils' work. The responses to 63 questionnaires from parents and carers, 13 responses from staff and 98 responses from pupils were examined and analysed.

Information about the school

Howitt Primary Community School is larger than the average primary school and admits pupils mainly from the Heanor area. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is much lower than that found nationally and very few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is higher than that found nationally. The proportions of pupils with disabilities or with special educational needs are similar to the national figures and very few have a statement of special educational needs.

The school has achieved the Investors in People award and the ECO Bronze award. It meets the current floor standard.

There is an on-site breakfast club managed by the governing body.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school. It continues to improve because of good leadership. There has been a good impact on the issues identified in the previous report.
- Pupils enjoy school and most show a real love of learning. There are excellent relationships between adults and pupils.
- The safety of pupils is a high priority and safeguarding requirements are met. There has been significant investment in improving the site and the building. Pupils and their parents and carers confirm that pupils feel safe.
- The behaviour of the vast majority of pupils is good. A very few pupils who find it difficult to control their behaviour are being helped to improve. Pupils and their parents and carers confirm that any incidents are well dealt with.
- Pupils, including children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, make satisfactory progress. Attainment throughout the school has been rising steadily. Attainment at the end of Year 6 is broadly average. There are no significant or consistent differences between the achievement of any group of pupils.
- Teaching has improved since the last inspection and the proportion of good teaching has risen. Teaching has a positive impact on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In the best lessons pupils are set challenging tasks matched to their abilities but this is not the case in all lessons. The marking of pupils' work is good and informative in some classes but is variable across the school.
- Parents, carers and pupils identify many improvements in the school and are pleased with the caring attitude of staff and leaders. Leaders have tackled the issues from the previous inspection well.
- The school provides good support for all pupils including those with disabilities and those with special educational needs.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching to become at least good and a significant proportion

outstanding by ensuring that:

- teachers use assessment data to plan work that always matches pupils' abilities
- marking consistently gives pupils' guidance on how to improve their work and to reach the next level in their learning
- teachers provide children with opportunities in the Early Years Foundation Stage to practise their literacy and numeracy skills using information and communication technology.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Children enter the Nursery with skill levels well below those expected for their age. They make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and attainment is below average when they move to Year 1. Children are helped to learn by the majority of teaching being good and a good range of resources both indoors and outdoors. Parents and carers are very pleased with the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage and say that they appreciate the way they are involved in their child's learning. Most parents and carers who returned the inspection questionnaires consider that their children make good progress. Inspection evidence shows that within Key Stages 1 and 2 pupils make satisfactory progress, although very recent school progress tracking data show that many are making good progress. The rising attainment in Key Stage 1 seen at the previous inspection is now having a positive impact on the attainment levels at the end of Year 6. Although the current pupils in Key Stage 2 are on track to reach above average attainment levels, the attainment over a sustained period is broadly average. There are no significant differences between attainment in subjects. Reading skills are broadly average throughout the school. Pupils with disabilities and those with special educational needs make good progress from their individual starting points and the attainment level gaps compared to others are narrowing. Throughout the school the progress seen in lessons is always at least satisfactory and sometimes good and this is confirmed by the work seen in books. Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals make progress in line with other pupils.

Pupils enjoy their learning as was seen in a Year 3 design and technology lesson when they showed high levels of interest and enjoyment in activities associated with packaging. Many lessons engage them fully because they are linked to real situations and make learning relevant. This was seen in a Year 5 lesson where pupils showed a real interest in learning about the relationships between the sun and the moon through stimulating role-play activities. Other lessons often involve visitors from the community to link learning to future work opportunities. This was seen in a Year 6 activity where a local builder explained how calculations are used in building design. Pupils with disabilities and those with special educational needs are supported well by teaching assistants on appropriate tasks for their specific needs.

Quality of teaching

Teachers have excellent relationships with pupils; they identify learning objectives clearly and have good subject knowledge. They manage behaviour well. The school's rewards and sanctions policies are understood by pupils and used consistently by staff. Assessment systems are used to a varying degree within the classroom and this is why much of the teaching is still satisfactory. It is, however, an improving situation as teachers develop their skills in using assessment data and provide activities throughout lessons that challenge all pupils. An example of this was seen in a Year 4 mathematics lesson where all abilities were well catered for through the good use of short, direct teaching mixed with group activities. Pupils who needed extra help benefited from working in a small group with the teaching assistant. There are procedures for the marking of pupils' work and the setting of targets but the evidence seen in pupils' books shows that this is not yet fully established across the school. Only in a minority of books are teachers providing constructive comments when they mark pupils' work and advising them on how to improve.

The planned curriculum supports both academic and personal skills well. Teachers use topic work to extend and develop pupils' basic skills across the curriculum. In the Early Years Foundation Stage teachers could not make as much use of information and communication technology as is often seen for this age group as there are no visual and audio recording devices freely available for children to use. Much of the topic work helps pupils learn about other countries and there are some links in place to support their understanding of different communities. Teachers are good role models and have high expectations of pupils' academic and social development. The vast majority of pupils and their parents and carers who completed questionnaires say teaching is good. A few made written comments supporting the inspectors' view that it had been satisfactory in previous years.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Parents and carers, as well as pupils and staff, are very clear that the standard of behaviour in the school has improved since the previous inspection. The responses from the questionnaires are more positive than in most schools. While pupils and parents and carers identify a few incidents of inappropriate behaviour, including bullying, they say they are rare and are dealt with well. This includes the very few recorded racist incidents, the number of which is consistently reducing. There have been a very few exclusions but these have been well managed and parents and carers have been fully involved. The school is a very harmonious community. No parents or carers raised any safeguarding concerns. During the inspection behaviour was at least good and on some occasions was outstanding. Pupils say they feel safe in school because they know that adults will sort out any problems that arise. They talk about a very few pupils who do have difficulty controlling their behaviour but they know that adults will always ensure that pupils are kept safe from harm. They have a good awareness of how to keep safe. Inspectors support the prevailing view that behaviour and safety are typically good. Rates of attendance are improving strongly and are in line with the national average for primary schools.

Leadership and management

The strong leadership identified in the previous report continues. The involvement of middle managers was identified as underdeveloped but distributed leadership is now

fully developed and effective in supporting the process of school improvement. The governing body provides good support and challenge to the school. The members have a good understanding of the school and what needs to be done for it to improve further. The more-experienced governors are supporting their new colleagues to become effective. The headteacher has a clear and determined vision of improving academic standards within a safe and caring environment. Leaders at all levels work well as a team to support this vision. The excellent relationships throughout the school mean that, even in this large school, every pupil is known by all the adults and their needs are addressed on an individual basis, ensuring they all have equal opportunities to succeed. The achievements of groups of pupils are also monitored closely so that any differences are identified early and rectified. There is no evidence of discrimination of any kind. Members of the governing body and school leaders are all actively involved in monitoring the well-being of pupils and all safeguarding requirements are met.

The school self-evaluation documents show that leaders have a good understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement. The school development plan is focused on raising standards but at an achievable rate. Attainment in mathematics and English was low at the time of the previous inspection but in 2011 was broadly average. Although teaching over time is satisfactory the improvements in teaching demanded by leaders have increased the proportion of good lessons. Actions taken by leaders have ensured that behaviour has moved from satisfactory to good and that good behaviour is now the normal situation within the school. There has been good progress on all of the issues identified in the previous report and this confirms that the school has a strong capacity for sustained improvement.

Leaders have supported teachers through a programme of classroom observation and professional development. There has been ongoing development of the assessment systems to enable teachers to be able to use them more readily. The curriculum is broad and balanced with a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities. Good use is made of visitors from the local community to support pupils' learning. The curriculum makes a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This is evidenced throughout the school through the harmonious relationships and pupils' friendly attitudes to each other, for example in the breakfast club. The celebration assembly seen during the inspection was an excellent demonstration of how all of the pupils respond when a calm and reflective environment is created.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



23 January 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Howitt Primary Community School, Heanor, DE75 7FS

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking with you and looking at the work you do. Your school is giving you a satisfactory education.

There are things we admire about your school and these are a few of them.

- You all get on very well together and enjoy coming to school.
- Your behaviour has improved and nearly all of you behave well. The few pupils who have difficulty behaving are supported well by adults.
- You tell us that you feel safe in the school and any rare cases of bullying are dealt with quickly and well.
- You make satisfactory progress as a result of satisfactory teaching but both teaching and progress are improving.
- The headteacher is working hard with other leaders to give you all the best opportunities to reach your full potential.

For the school to become even better we have asked your teachers to:

- make sure they always set you work that matches your abilities and provides you with adequate challenge
- always make helpful comments when they mark your work and tell you what you need to do to get to the next step in your learning
- make sure the youngest children can use recording equipment to help them practise their literacy and numeracy skills.

All of you can help the school move forward by continuing to work hard. We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

John Horwood
Lead inspector

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