

# Howe Park School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	132786
<b>Local Authority</b>	Milton Keynes
<b>Inspection number</b>	360436
<b>Inspection dates</b>	14–15 February 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Jacqueline Marshall

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	241
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Darren Thomas
<b>Headteacher</b>	Rosalind Jacklin
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	28 January 2008
<b>School address</b>	Bowland Drive Milton Keynes Milton Keynes MK4 2SH
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<b>Age group</b>	3–7
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited nine lessons, observed nine teachers and held meetings with groups of pupils, staff, school leaders and representatives of the governing body. They looked at school documentation including policies, pupils' progress data, attendance figures and the school's development planning. They scrutinised pupils' work and evaluated 122 parental and carer questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The effectiveness of the school's strategies for improving the learning and progress for all pupils including boys, particularly in writing.
- The use staff make of assessment information to support and challenge pupils' learning to secure and maintain good achievement.
- The effectiveness of leaders, including the governing body, in checking, reviewing and taking actions in order to sustain good outcomes.

## Information about the school

Howe Park is a larger-than-average infant school. The school has two Nursery classes which take children from the local area. The majority of children in the Nursery move into the Reception class, while the rest join from other local play groups. The children come from White British families and a wide range of other ethnic backgrounds. Almost a fifth of the pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is below average and represents a range of needs. The school has gained the Healthy Schools accreditation, the Inclusion Mark and the Quality Mark. Over the last two years, there have been many changes to staff, with three new teaching staff appointed from January 2011.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**1**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**1**

## Main findings

This is an outstanding school. Since the last inspection, staff and the governing body have worked hard to maintain the tremendously high levels of care, guidance and support provided for pupils. There is a very strong focus on every aspect of the school's pastoral care which ensures that pupils and their families are extremely well supported. All staff work effectively to ensure that pupils achieve well in their learning and develop exceptionally as mature and caring individuals. Pupils benefit from very supportive relationships with all staff and display a great deal of enthusiasm for learning. Because of the school's exceptionally strong focus on its pastoral care, pupils contribute extremely effectively to the school and wider community. This is demonstrated well through their readiness, even from the very youngest age, to be involved in how the school is run. Pupils participate enthusiastically in the school council as well as willingly taking on responsibilities such as 'playground pals' or simply tidying up in their classrooms.

The school has very effectively focused on maintaining good teaching and learning for the pupils throughout a period of staff changes and recent appointments. Senior leaders and the governing body have an exceptionally clear awareness of the school's effectiveness and look constantly for ways to improve pupils' attainment and personal development further. For example, there is a strong shared commitment among all staff to raising attainment still further for all pupils. The school has focused very effectively on systematically developing pupils' writing and has been particularly successful in engaging and encouraging boys to write through the wealth of experiences provided in the curriculum. While this has yet to be seen in the results at the end of Year 2, achievement has risen steadily. This constant striving to reflect on outstanding practice and still look for ways to improve, together with leaders' accurate self-evaluation and actions to maintain and build upon the high levels of pastoral care seen at the time of the last inspection, show the school has an excellent capacity for further improvement.

Pupils' achievement is good because the school adapts its exceptional curriculum particularly well to ensure that every individual's needs are met and pupils are thoroughly engaged in their learning. Although there is a small degree of variability between different classes, all groups of pupils make at least good and sometimes better progress from their starting points in the Early Years Foundation Stage to when they leave to join the junior school. All staff know the pupils' abilities extremely well. This is because of the highly effective checks regularly made on their progress and the considerable skill with which the school adapts and targets the well-focused support it gives individual pupils. Teachers and other adults mark pupils' work alongside them and discuss the next steps in their learning. However, some inconsistencies remain and, as a result, opportunities are sometimes missed to ensure pupils always have a clear understanding of what they are working on next and how to get better.

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## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' progress by:
  - building on the best practice already seen in some classes to ensure that pupils always understand exactly what to do to improve their work and know the next steps in their learning.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**1**

Throughout the school, pupils achieve extremely well in their personal, social and emotional development. Because of the school's successful strong focus on its pastoral care, children contribute extremely effectively to the school community. This is demonstrated well through their readiness to be involved in looking after the school as well as caring for their learning environment as they look after the school grounds and tidy up daily. Pupils' understanding of how to stay safe and lead a healthy lifestyle is excellent. This is demonstrated particularly well by the enthusiasm and knowledge children show as they make very good use of the extensive outdoor learning environment to exercise and enjoy their healthy snacks daily. Pupils talk confidently about the healthy choices they make in what they eat and the importance of personal hygiene. For example one pupil explained that, 'Fruit is good for you but you need to have a balance', while another observed that, 'You have to wash your hands with soap; it help to kills the germs that are bad for you.' Their behaviour is exemplary, when both working with an adult or playing independently, and they show considerable support for one another regardless of age, gender or ethnicity. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good and, with many different ethnic heritages represented in the school population, their cultural awareness within the school is particularly strong. Pupils' enjoyment in learning and ability to take responsibility for their own learning, along with above-average attendance, are key factors in their effective development of workplace skills.

Pupils achieve well academically. They are clear about their learning and talk with confidence, including sharing their ideas willingly with one another. During a history session on finding out about the past from a range of sources, pupils in Year 2 were keen to talk to their partners about ideas. Using skills from good prior learning, they confidently discussed what they would be learning during the lesson and contributed their own suggestions about the steps to success they needed in order to achieve this. Pupils of all ages talk eagerly about what they have been learning and know they have individual targets. The trend in attainment in the Year 2 national tests over the last three years is above average, though average in writing. As part of a whole-school focus on improving the quality of assessment, the school has ensured different groups are targeted very effectively to enable them to make equally good gains. Consequently, all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those at the early stages of learning English, make the same good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. A similarly successful focus on increasing boys' willingness to write has led to a significant improvement in their progress in lessons and their written work and they are now achieving well.

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*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

## How effective is the provision?

Pupils' tremendous keenness to learn is due in a large part to the exceptionally innovative curriculum and the good quality teaching. The extremely creative links between subjects help to stimulate and foster pupils' considerable interest and bring the curriculum alive. Such links provide further opportunities to challenge and stretch their learning. Boys' engagement in their learning is particularly well promoted with topics chosen carefully to capture their interest and focus their concentration. This approach, including the very popular Forest Schools project, is exceedingly successful and valued extremely highly by pupils, parents and carers alike. All staff play their part in delivering this rich, stimulating and engaging curriculum. Some of the key features of the effective, and sometimes better, teaching seen across the school are: the very good relationships adults have with children; the well-targeted use of highly trained additional adults both in small groups and on a one-to-one basis; very effective behaviour management; and the effective questioning adults use to extend and challenge pupils' learning. In a Year 1 literacy lesson, pupils of all abilities were targeted well, ensuring they developed their understanding of patterns in their writing very effectively. Through effective questioning by the teacher and subsequent support from the teaching assistant, any misconceptions for individuals were successfully tackled. Pupils used coloured pencils to highlight examples in their own writing before discussing as a group how they could further improve an example from one of their books. However, opportunities are sometimes missed to involve pupils as effectively in how to improve or give this level of guidance when marking pupils' work. Since the last

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inspection, the school has been successful in maintaining attainment in reading and mathematics and basic skills of information and communication technology are developed very effectively.

The programme of out-of-school activities for pupils is strong. Clubs very effectively promote pupils' positive relationships and encourage healthy lifestyles. Pupils' welfare and personal, social and health needs are catered for extremely well because the school works exceptionally closely with parents and carers as well as outside agencies where needed. Transition to the junior school is extremely well managed because of the very close ties built up between the staff to ensure pupils' learning journey is seamless.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, supported exceptionally well by other leaders, including the highly effective governing body, provides a clear vision for how the school can move forward. Following the restructuring of the senior leadership team, the headteacher has extremely effectively fostered a tremendously positive spirit and a real team atmosphere of 'can do'. As part of the school's extremely effective development planning, leaders at all levels are positively encouraged to take on responsibilities. They are highly involved in analysing the school's results and checking teaching to see where it is most effective. They have been extremely successful in ensuring teaching overall is good following a series of staff changes. However, staff are constantly aware of the need to share good practice and identify where improvements are needed. As a result, all leaders have an exceptionally clear understanding of the school's overall strengths and weaknesses. Considerable efforts are made by the school to involve parents and carers in every aspect of the school's work. These extremely strong links are another of the contributory factors to the school's outstanding success. The expertise of leaders and staff is shared with other schools to help improve their effectiveness.

All staff play their part in ensuring that safeguarding procedures are rigorous by checking constantly to ensure exemplary practice is maintained across all areas. The school's promotion of equality and diversity is excellent. Staff ensure that there is no discrimination between groups so that all pupils have opportunities to flourish individually and achieve well. Leaders have been particularly effective in promoting community cohesion at school and local levels, and pupils' understanding and contribution are developing extremely well in these areas. The school makes good progress in promoting pupils' understanding of communities and cultures in national and global contexts.

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*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>1</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children in the Nursery and Reception classes grow quickly in confidence and become enthusiastic learners because of the strong focus on their pastoral care. The curriculum is adapted extremely effectively to engage learners, providing rich and stimulating surroundings. Teaching is good and the children learn well from the high quality interventions they receive from teachers and other adults as they play. Learning opportunities are well planned so that children build on their knowledge and understanding both indoors and outdoors. In both the Nursery and Reception classes, all the activities planned link together ensuring children's learning at every turn. For example, in the Nursery, as part of their focus on the fire brigade, children made their own outfits and wore these as they used the role play area to great effect acting out what they would do if they were in a fire. Elsewhere, children learnt about 'longest' and 'shortest' through creating different length tracks in paint using model fire engines or what might happen to foam when water from a hose is squirted on it. Due to effective teaching, particularly in the Reception classes, children make good progress and start in Year 1 with above-average attainment. Here, teachers use assessment effectively to ensure work is tailored closely to children's individual needs and is just what they need for the next steps in their learning.

The early years leader has an extremely good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses and, as a result, has successfully maintained the effectiveness of provision following the recent staff changes. She is now focused on continuing to develop the use of assessment further for those who have recently joined the team in order to build on best practice in the Reception classes. Communication with parents and carers is extremely good, with regular opportunities for them to discuss their children's learning and how they can help their children's development through everyday activities. Parents and carers alike



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praise the school's extremely effective efforts to include them in activities, such as the Bear Hunt workshop as part of children's induction into the Reception classes.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

## Views of parents and carers

The return rate of questionnaires from parents and carers was above average for this type of school. The vast majority of parental and carer questionnaires were positive and most of the written comments expressed considerable satisfaction with the school. They commended the caring attitude of the school, how the school deals with unacceptable behaviour and how much their children enjoy school. Typical comments included: 'The school has a very relaxed, calm and caring ethos'; 'We couldn't ask for more'; 'a brilliant start to school life' and 'My children enjoy the school immensely.'

Only a very few parents and carers reported any concerns with the school. The proportion of parents and carers who felt their child was making sufficient progress was lower than in other areas. Evidence gathered during the inspection showed that pupils make good progress and information on pupils' progress was regularly shared with parents and carers, some of whom commented positively on this aspect of the school's work in their questionnaires.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Howe Park School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 122 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 241 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	84	69	38	31	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	90	74	32	26	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	63	52	53	44	5	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	70	58	45	37	6	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	75	62	45	37	2	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	69	57	52	43	1	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	69	57	51	42	1	1	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	59	49	57	47	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	62	51	56	46	3	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	56	46	63	52	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	52	43	63	52	3	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	67	55	54	45	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	83	69	39	32	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## 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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.

**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.**



16 February 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Howe Park School, Milton Keynes MK4 2SH**

Thank you for talking to us and showing us your work when we visited. We were pleased to hear how much you enjoy coming to school and that your teachers plan such a lot of interesting things for you to do. You get on extremely well with one another and your behaviour around school is first rate. You have an excellent understanding of how to be safe and lead a healthy lifestyle. We agree that there are lots of interesting visitors to your school and activities to get involved in and were especially impressed with how well you look after each other and care for your school. We understand why you think the adults are very good at helping to make you feel really safe and cared for.

Your school is outstanding. The curriculum planned for you meets your needs extremely well. Teachers and other adults are good at helping you to make good progress in your work. The leaders in your school run it particularly well. They know just what needs to be done to make it even better.

In order to help make your school become even better we have asked the adults at your school to work on one thing.

- Make sure you always know just what you can do to improve your work and the next steps in your learning.

You can help by continuing to respect each other's values, both in this school and in later life. Thank you for helping us with our work.

Yours sincerely

Jacqueline Marshall

Lead Inspector

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