

Houldsworth Valley Primary School

Inspection report

| | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 124546 |
| Local Authority | Suffolk |
| Inspection number | 359698 |
| Inspection dates | 27–28 January 2011 |
| Reporting inspector | June Woolhouse |

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 | 4–9 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 122 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mark Rodman |
| Headteacher | Philip Mellor |
| Date of previous school inspection | 26 September 2007 |
| School address | Rowley Drive Newmarket CB8 0PU |
| Telephone number | 01638 663214 |
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 12 lessons, observed six teachers and held meetings with the headteacher, the teaching staff, governors and pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at the school development plan, safeguarding documents, school policies, pupils' work in their exercise books and displays of work in classrooms. They analysed information from 36 questionnaires completed by parents and carers in addition to those from staff and pupils.

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

- Is teaching consistently good enough to raise attainment and increase pupils' achievement for all groups?
- Is provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage effectively promoting children's learning and progress?
- How effective are leaders and managers at all levels in assessing and tracking pupils' progress and planning challenging lessons to overcome the legacy of underachievement.
- Is the school's capacity to sustain planned improvements sufficiently embedded?

Information about the school

This smaller-than-average sized primary school serves pupils living in the centre of Newmarket. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average; their needs include speech, language and communication difficulties and emotional, social and behavioural difficulties, autistic spectrum disorder and visual impairment. An average proportion of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds. A private nursery operates on the site in one of the school's classrooms and is inspected separately. The school is preparing to take pupils up to the age of 11 years as part of Suffolk local authority's school reorganisation into a two tier system. In September 2011, Year 4 pupils will remain in this school and become Year 5 pupils. From 2012 they will become Year 6 pupils. Parents and carers will be able to enrol their children full-time from the start of the Reception class from September 2011 within the Early Years Foundation Stage. The school has completed all the Healthy School accreditation modules.

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?**4****The school's capacity for sustained improvement****4**

Main findings

In accordance with section 13(3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

The school is less effective now than it was at the last inspection in 2007. The issues for improvement set out in that report have only recently begun to be tackled as a result of significant support and intervention by the local authority. Although the school provides a friendly, welcoming atmosphere and the majority of parents and carers say that their children enjoy school, pupils do not achieve as well as they should. The school's record for improvement over the past three years is weak and its capacity to improve is inadequate.

There is no formally organised leadership team to ensure that the important subjects of English and mathematics are appropriately taught and that pupils' achievement is assured through rigorous tracking of progress. The headteacher has done some monitoring of teaching and learning but the appointments of a literacy leader and teacher to manage special educational needs and/or disabilities are very recent and systems are not sufficiently robust to guarantee improvement in learning, teaching and assessment. Self-evaluation procedures are limited although the headteacher's judgements are mostly accurate. A termly improvement plan, now supported by the local authority, was introduced in September 2010 with a clear focus on raising attainment, improving leadership, management, teaching and learning and establishing the right intervention programmes for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The impact has been some improvement in pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics, but the work in pupils' books indicates that attainment remains well below what is expected in all year groups.

Achievement is inadequate. Most groups of pupils underachieve, including the small number who speak English as an additional language. Attainment is low and pupils' progress is inadequate because teaching is not strong enough to accelerate the pace of learning in all classes. Intensive support provided by the local authority is helping to raise the attainment and accelerate the progress of pupils in Year 4. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress, as a result of effective individual support when they are withdrawn from class, or are supported in small groups within a lesson by teaching assistants. Pupils are not well-prepared for the next stage of their schooling and until very recently the gap between their achievements and national expectations was not closing.

The quality of teaching, planning and assessment of learning is inadequate. This means that pupils do not make the progress expected of them. Some good teaching was

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observed but not enough to raise attainment quickly by ensuring that all pupils make rapid progress. A significant proportion of teaching was inadequate because planning did not match pupils' needs. Assessment of pupils' learning is not sufficiently accurate to inform what they need to learn next. In addition, classes are organised across two year groups so the ability range is particularly wide. Inspection evidence shows that learning is not planned well enough to meet the needs of this wide ability range.

There are aspects of the school that are satisfactory and in some cases good. Pupils say convincingly that they feel safe and get on well together. They behave well in lessons because adults are consistent and positive in managing behaviour. Pupils are proud of the part they take in the school council. They can explain well how the school teaches them to be healthy. The curriculum is satisfactory because it takes account of pupils' broader needs and interests. Attendance has improved and is broadly average because pupils are closely monitored to ensure they attend regularly. Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Children are cared for and supported sufficiently when they start school so that they settle into routines and make broadly satisfactory progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - improving the effectiveness of the leadership team to monitor and evaluate teaching and learning systematically across the school
 - developing a programme of regular monitoring activities for all school leaders, to include time to evaluate evidence and feed the information back to teachers
 - increasing the governing body's role in monitoring the school's performance in order to challenge school leaders more precisely and secure rapid improvement
 - ensuring that the governing body maintains an up-to-date central record of risk assessments.
- Raise attainment in reading, writing and mathematics and increase pupils' rates of progress by:
 - increasing teachers' knowledge and understanding of attainment levels in English and mathematics, as exemplified in the National Curriculum descriptors, to raise expectations and to know what to plan for the pupils
 - implementing a consistent approach to planning that identifies learning objectives and what pupils will know by the end of a lesson, linked to the National Curriculum levels appropriate to their ages
 - increasing the accuracy of assessments of what pupils are learning so that they know what they need to learn next and tasks are planned accordingly
 - setting learning targets that are realistic and challenging for all groups of pupils
 - establishing a whole-school spelling and handwriting policy and using this to improve pupils' writing and presentation skills.
- Improve provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - planning adult-led sessions that engage children for a suitable length of time for their ages and levels of development, in communication, language and literacy and problem-solving, reasoning and numeracy

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- ensuring that opportunities are planned for children to independently explore and consolidate their learning but with adult support when appropriate.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

4

Children enter school with skills below those expected for their age and they make broadly satisfactory progress by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage in the majority of the six areas of learning. Attainment remains below what is expected at the end of the Reception Year with a significant number of children not achieving the expected levels in their emotional development or their communication, language and literacy skills. This means they begin Key Stage 1 already behind in their learning. Achievement is inadequate in Key Stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils continue to underachieve in Key Stage 2. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress because they are taught basic literacy skills, individually or in small groups. Pupils who speak English as an additional language make inadequate progress because they do not receive specialist English teaching necessary for the early stages of learning another language.

Pupils are capable of making good progress when teaching is planned accurately to meet their needs. Inspectors saw examples of this such as when they organised themselves into pairs, followed instructions and discussed how to make a fruit salad. The younger pupils used pictures to help them follow the correct sequence of steps. Those who were not involved in the practical tasks straight away placed their sentences and pictures in the what they thought was the correct order in their work books and discussed them to check their accuracy. Pupils enjoyed the practical nature of the activity, made good progress in their reading, speaking and listening skills and behaved in a co-operative and helpful way. Older pupils were also seen making good progress in a numeracy session because tasks matched their levels of attainment. In satisfactory lessons, pupils spent too long listening to individuals talking to the teacher about aspects of their learning rather than independently checking their own work against what they should have learned by the end of the lesson. Progress was inadequate when pupils tried to test a hypothesis in science but did not have the reading or writing experience, or knowledge and understanding of testing, to record their results. Work in books across all classes shows low attainment and inadequate progress. Too often, pupils do not write enough or do not have basic knowledge of spelling and their work demonstrates insufficient attention to handwriting style and presentation.

Nonetheless, pupils enjoy practical activities which they find interesting and were thoroughly engaged in trumpet playing by the peripatetic music teacher. They enjoy a range of sporting activities including games, swimming and ballroom dancing. They participate enthusiastically with the 'wake and shake' activity that takes place on the playground at the start of each day. They support local charities generously in fund raising events. These activities have a satisfactory impact on their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

| | |
|---|----------|
| Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning | 4 |
| Taking into account: | |
| Pupils' attainment ¹ | 4 |
| The quality of pupils' learning and their progress | 4 |
| The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress | 3 |
| The extent to which pupils feel safe | 2 |
| Pupils' behaviour | 2 |
| The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles | 2 |
| The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community | 3 |
| The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 4 |
| Taking into account: | |
| Pupils' attendance ¹ | 3 |
| The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 3 |

¹ 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?

Although teachers have started to use national assessment materials, judgements are not accurate enough to inform planning suited to the wide ability range in mixed-age classes. An inconsistent approach throughout school to planning lessons makes it difficult to monitor exactly what pupils are learning year-on-year. Planned activities are not sufficiently different from each other, for example, to enable the older or more-able pupils to reach the expected levels of attainment in English and mathematics. Consequently, teachers' expectations are not pitched at the right level and pupils' progress is limited. Teachers are following recommended national schemes for literacy and numeracy but they are not planned with sufficient rigour to guarantee pupils' progress. Pupils were given opportunities in some lessons to discuss their ideas with a partner, enabling them to organise their thinking in preparation for the next task. However, this involvement in their learning is not consistent. Teachers and teaching assistants give satisfactory support in small groups. They lack the right level of training to integrate literacy skills and provide coherence to pupils' understanding so they can apply their reading, writing and calculating skills across the curriculum.

The curriculum is satisfactory and a recent focus on social and emotional aspects of learning has resulted in improved behaviour and relationships. Spanish has been introduced to introduce pupils to a modern foreign language. Pupils benefit from a peripatetic specialist music teacher who regularly teaches all Year 4 pupils. Art, physical

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education and topics provide satisfactory opportunities for practical work and this is reflected in classroom displays. Older pupils look forward to residential trips and pupils in Key Stage 2 swim on a weekly basis.

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. The pupils whose circumstances have made them vulnerable are supported well and individual records are up to date. Staff and governors are trained appropriately in child protection and safeguarding procedures. This is reflected in pupils' views that they feel safe and cared for at school, and endorsed by those parents and carers who returned their questionnaires. Satisfactory links exist with a range of agencies such as social services, the education welfare officer and local authority curriculum support services which benefit the most vulnerable pupils.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

| | |
|--|----------|
| The quality of teaching | 4 |
| Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning | 4 |
| The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships | 3 |
| The effectiveness of care, guidance and support | 3 |

How effective are leadership and management?

At present the school is managing a number of changes to the teaching staff and the increased demands of a termly raising attainment plan. These changes followed a local authority audit triggered by concerns about pupils' attainment at the end of 2010. The audit identified serious weaknesses in how the headteacher and staff were organising provision. Those responsible for leading and managing the school do not demonstrate adequate drive for embedding school improvement. There has been little concerted effort, until recently, to tackle low attainment or designate responsibility to staff to monitor what pupils are learning in classrooms and evaluate whether or not it is good enough.

A comprehensive electronic system is in place to track pupils' progress but most of the information is held by the headteacher. This is not helpful in supporting teachers' use of assessment to promote learning, nor does it develop their skills in tracking the progress of individuals and groups of pupils against national expectations. The present raising attainment plan is very ambitious in its intention to close the attainment gap rapidly. However, the targets do not appear to be based on the previous end-of-year assessments, so expectations are unrealistic. There is some confusion about how children's progress is tracked across the Early Years Foundation Stage scales.

The governing body knows that the school is doing less well than it should be. They visit the school and report back to other governors of what they see in classrooms and oversee the budget satisfactorily. Safeguarding procedures are satisfactory, although a coherent, centrally held record of risk assessments, is not complete. The governing body is too dependent on the headteacher for information about pupils' progress and has not been effective in holding the school to account for the shortcomings in provision and outcomes since the last inspection.

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The school ensures that all pupils are treated equally and there is no discrimination in the broadest sense. However, most pupils are affected by inadequate provision in English and mathematics with the exception of a few individuals who have received one-to-one tuition this year. The school operates as a cohesive and harmonious community. The governing body understands the school's context and promotes community cohesion to a satisfactory level locally. The school ensures pupils develop some understanding of national and global communities through charity events. The school recognises the importance of working in partnership with parents and carers and weekly events encourage visits to their children's classrooms.

These are the grades for leadership and management

| | |
|--|----------|
| The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement | 4 |
| Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning | 4 |
| The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met | 4 |
| The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers | 3 |
| The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being | 3 |
| The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination | 3 |
| The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures | 3 |
| The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion | 3 |
| The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money | 4 |

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enjoy learning especially the activities they choose for themselves. They receive satisfactory levels of care and participate readily in daily routines such as hanging coats, hand washing or organising their break-time snacks of fruit and drinks. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those who speak English as an additional language, receive good individual support. Planned activities cover all six areas of learning and cater for children's interests, for example, they learn about themselves and family relationships. Accommodation and resources are good and there is immediate access to very attractive grounds and equipment for vigorous outdoor play using bikes and trucks or climbing equipment.

Although provision is satisfactory overall, planned opportunities for child-initiated learning are not sufficiently well balanced with those that are adult-led. In addition, some of the teaching observed did not fully cater for the wide range of ability. Concepts were not reinforced enough through first-hand practice, for example through counting objects

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accurately using the number line or identifying letters and sounds within words and sentences.

Assessment of learning takes place on a regular basis and evidence is well-presented in children's individual learning journey books using photographic records. Progress in each learning area is well-organised into a class record using the school's electronic tracking system. Staff are developing a better understanding of what children should be achieving by the end of the Reception year. However, assessments are not always reliable enough or used to gauge progress accurately. This is especially the case when children first start school and it takes half a term to establish a base line for their learning. Links with parents and carers are satisfactory. They join their children in class each week.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

| | |
|--|----------|
| Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage | 3 |
| Taking into account: | |
| Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage | 3 |
| The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage | 3 |
| The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage | 3 |

Views of parents and carers

Most of the views expressed by parents and carers who completed the questionnaire were positive. Most agree that their children enjoy school and are safe there. While preserving anonymity, inspectors investigated some individual concerns raised by a few parents and carers about how well the school helps them to support their children's learning, prepares them sufficiently well for their next school, deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour and takes account of suggestions and concerns. Parents' views of their children's enjoyment of school were more positive than the views expressed through the pupils' questionnaire.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Houldsworth Valley Primary 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 36 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 122 pupils registered at the school.

| Statements | Strongly agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly disagree | |
|---|----------------|----|-------|----|----------|----|-------------------|---|
| | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % |
| My child enjoys school | 18 | 50 | 17 | 47 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| The school keeps my child safe | 22 | 61 | 12 | 33 | 2 | 6 | 0 | 0 |
| My school informs me about my child's progress | 12 | 33 | 23 | 64 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| My child is making enough progress at this school | 14 | 39 | 20 | 56 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| The teaching is good at this school | 15 | 42 | 20 | 56 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps me to support my child's learning | 14 | 39 | 16 | 44 | 5 | 14 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle | 11 | 31 | 23 | 64 | 1 | 3 | 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) | 8 | 22 | 20 | 56 | 3 | 8 | 0 | 0 |
| The school meets my child's particular needs | 16 | 44 | 18 | 50 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour | 9 | 25 | 21 | 58 | 4 | 11 | 0 | 0 |
| The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns | 6 | 17 | 26 | 72 | 3 | 8 | 0 | 0 |
| The school is led and managed effectively | 13 | 36 | 22 | 61 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school | 21 | 58 | 13 | 36 | 1 | 3 | 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

| | Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools) | | | |
|----------------------|---|------|--------------|------------|
| Type of school | 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).

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"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support. |
| 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.



31 January 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Houldsworth Valley Primary School, Newmarket, CB8 0PU

Thank you very much for helping us with the inspection of your school. My colleague and I enjoyed talking to you and observing your lessons. We were pleased to see how well you got on together at playtime and when you discussed some of the things you were learning. We noticed that you know how to keep healthy by eating fruit, drinking water and enjoying delicious school lunches. You certainly get off to a good start to the day with your 'wake and shake' exercises. Many of you told us you enjoyed coming to school, especially to take part in sports. Some of you commented that the work was too easy, this needs to be put right.

The standard of education you receive is not good enough at present. There are some things that your school must do better so that you will make more progress and reach higher levels in English and mathematics before you move to your next school. Your headteacher and teachers have a plan to improve how you learn to read, write and do your mathematics. So that we can be certain this happens your school has been placed in 'special measures'. This means inspectors will visit school each term to check on the progress of school improvement work. We have asked the school to improve by:

- raising your attainment in reading, writing and mathematics
- improving how the headteacher and the governing body keep a check on everything that happens in school to make sure you are making the right amount of progress in your learning
- improving teaching and how well your work is assessed so that you and your teachers will know what to do next to move your learning on quickly
- improving how the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught as they begin to read, write, solve problems and do sums.

I hope you will all work hard to make up some of the lost ground. Please continue with your good efforts that have improved attendance by coming to school regularly and on time.

Yours sincerely

June Woolhouse

Lead inspector

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