

Highwood Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114869
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	357640
Inspection dates	23–24 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Jackie Cousins

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	52
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Janet Young
Headteacher	Helen Hutchings
Date of previous school inspection	7 February 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited seven part-lessons and observed all four teachers who were teaching during the inspection. Meetings were held with the headteacher, the governing body, the special educational needs coordinator, middle leaders and staff. The inspectors talked to two groups of pupils from Years 1 to 6. The school's work was observed and its documentation scrutinised, including policies relating to safeguarding and risk assessment. An analysis was made of school data on pupils' attainment and progress, and the inspectors looked at pupils' work in books and on display. Inspectors analysed completed questionnaires from staff and pupils, as well as 26 from parents and carers.

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

- The attainment of pupils in Year 6 in writing and mathematics, especially girls.
- The use of feedback to increase pupils' progress.
- Pupils' attendance since September 2010.
- The use of school development targets by school leaders, including the governing body, to improve the rate of progress.

Information about the school

Highwood School is much smaller than the average primary school. The large majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds and speak English as their first language. A small number are from minority ethnic groups including travelling communities. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. An average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. Pupils are taught in three mixed-age classes. Class 1 provides for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Year 1. Class 2 offers provision for Years 2 to 3, and Class 3 provides for Years 4 to 6. The school has National Healthy Schools Status and the Activemark award. The school has faced considerable challenges with staff illness in recent years.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Highwood Primary School is a good school. Pupils of all abilities and backgrounds are included successfully into learning, whether they start at the school in Reception or any other year group. This is because staff provide good quality care and guidance, and treat pupils as unique individuals. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and say they enjoy many school activities and projects. For example, one said, 'I like writing stories. It's fun.' Pupils' attainment is average, and they achieve well from their various starting points in response to good teaching. Teachers use a good balance of practical exploration and adult-led learning activities, and they use assessment well to plan lesson activities and track pupils' achievement. Occasionally, the objectives for learning are too broad and so different groups of pupils do not know specifically what skills they are expected to use in each lesson.

The school places a high level of importance on promoting community cohesion. School leaders are involved astutely in developing provision in the village for the young and for older people. Pupils from the school helped to plan the new community hall and the path to it. The older pupils look after the younger ones carefully and so pupils from all age groups establish strong friendships. Behaviour is good because staff guide pupils calmly and firmly. Pupils learn successfully about people in other countries because whole-school projects are used thoughtfully to develop their awareness. For example, older pupils created pictures and wrote successfully about cultures and foods of various countries in Asia.

Good leadership from the headteacher and her team is driving improvements and inspires others to work together effectively. All staff are proud to be part of the school. Teachers and teaching assistants work diligently and are keen to raise pupils' attainment further in handwriting and numeracy. Pupils' progress meetings involve senior leaders and teachers, but they do not keep detailed records of these meetings so it is not easy for staff to evaluate the impact of the strategies agreed on pupils' learning. The school engages satisfactorily with parents and carers. A small minority expressed concerns about the amount of progress their child is making and how they could improve their basic skills. This is because they do not receive written information regularly about their child's achievement or what they can do to support their child's learning.

Considerable improvements since the last inspection include better use of practical activities and child-initiated learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage. This means that children get a good start to their education. Girls' attainment has improved significantly in all classes. This is because a detailed tracking system is used well by senior leaders to evaluate all pupils' attainment. Self-evaluation is used well by school leaders as a tool for forward planning, and so the school is in a good position to improve in the future.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment by Year 6, particularly in handwriting and pupils' application of numeracy in different subject areas, by ensuring that:
 - learning objectives shared in lessons always challenge all groups of pupils to do well, especially in sharpening their key skills
 - strategies that teachers will use to support learning are recorded effectively for all pupils not making as much progress as expected.
- Develop a stronger partnership with parents and carers by ensuring that:
 - parents and carers receive more detailed information on a regular basis about how successfully their child is progressing and the ways in which they can assist.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils' attainment is broadly average in Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics and this has been the position for the last two years. From below expected levels of skills on entry in Year 3, those pupils currently in Year 6 have made good progress. Observations of lessons and an analysis of pupils' books show that current Year 6 pupils are working at expected levels in writing and mathematics. A more able Year 6 girl demonstrated considerable skill in using adventurous vocabulary and flashbacks to create an imaginative story about going to the planet Neptune. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 enjoy writing exciting newspaper articles and use punctuation well due to good use of resources by staff. Older pupils learn to measure angles accurately in a quadrilateral due to high levels of staff expertise. Occasionally not enough is expected of pupils' presentation skills, and they do not always apply their numerical understanding well in new situations. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities progress well because staff make good use of monitoring and extra programmes of study to promote their learning.

Pupils feel safe in school and know how to keep themselves safe, for example when using the internet. Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles well and enjoy taking part in the twice-weekly physical exercise sessions. One pupil summed up others' thoughts when he said, 'I like learning a different sport each half term.' They are knowledgeable about foods that are good for them and those that should not be eaten too often. For instance, they are very clear about the need to only eat crisps occasionally because science lessons are used successfully to develop knowledge of different food types. The pupils learn to dance to Indian music as a result of good use of visitors' expertise. Pupils concentrate well in lessons because staff work diligently to make lessons fun. They are satisfactorily prepared for the next stage of education because of their sound literacy and mathematics skills and effectively promoted social skills. Pupils' attendance has risen to average, and this has been maintained since September 2010 because the school has been rigorous in monitoring every child's attendance.

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

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
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
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	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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?

Teaching develops pupils' key skills well because staff have good levels of knowledge and a good understanding of pupils' individual needs. During the inspection, pupils in Year 2 were learning how to organise their work carefully, develop their basic skills well and record their answers to problems systematically. In one good session seen, questioning was used very effectively to encourage pupils to consider facts carefully. Discussion times allowed pupils to explore their ideas in detail and this meant that they learnt to talk about what might happen in their stories. As a result, when they started to write they were really clear about how the plot would develop. Teachers mostly use their knowledge of pupils' prior learning effectively when planning for their next steps. Occasionally, planning for lessons does not ensure that different groups of pupils are effectively identified to work at higher levels of skill.

A high emphasis is now given to the promotion of language, English, mathematics and science skills. The curriculum is effectively enriched, for example by the teaching of French. The pupils very much enjoy all the exciting projects planned for them and the special event days. They really enjoy the extra activities offered for sports and the arts. Older pupils particularly value art sessions because, as one pupil said, 'It gives you a freedom to do what you want.' Pupils learn well about a wide range of beliefs in well-planned assemblies and religious education sessions.

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

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Pupils receive high levels of care from staff and so relationships are very positive. From the moment that pupils start at the school, their pastoral needs are met successfully. Those from minority ethnic groups are supported effectively and so they are successfully integrated into school life. Pupils whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable are identified well and they are assisted to make good progress in their personal and academic studies. Staff work skilfully to support all pupils, and especially those with additional needs. Feedback is used effectively to discuss individual education plans with pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. This means that individual needs are met well.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher leads the school with considerable professionalism and is ably supported by a committed team of staff. One parent summed up their thoughts by saying, 'I visited several schools before making my decision to send my child to Highwood. This school was my choice because of the headteacher's enthusiasm for the school.' School development planning is thorough and sets clear targets for future improvements in the quality of education. This is assisting the school to consistently improve outcomes for all pupils. Pupils have equal opportunities to learn because the school works carefully to remove any discrimination or obstacles to learning, and staff work astutely to meet pupils' individual needs. Partnerships with other agencies and schools to support pupils' learning and promote their well-being are well established.

The governing body is supportive, challenges school performance satisfactorily, and is involved suitably in planning for the future. Occasionally, it does not use a systematic approach to collecting the views of pupils or their parents and carers. It makes sure that child protection and health and safety matters are dealt with carefully. Safeguarding procedures meet requirements well. All staff receive regular training in child protection and thorough records are kept of the checks completed on staff. Risk assessments are carried out regularly.

Community cohesion is well supported by the school's leadership. Pupils are involved successfully in supporting village activities. For example, they recently helped to improve the appearance of the village through the effective use of their skills. Pupils successfully raise money for people less fortunate than themselves in Britain. Pupils are well aware of the effects of climate change on the world. Global issues such as an awareness of how a lack of water affects people are developed effectively due to thoughtful leadership from staff.

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

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children achieve well from starting points that are below national expectations for their age, and standards are broadly average by the start of Year 1. This is due to the fact that initial and regular assessments are used well. Children settle into school life quickly because staff gather information effectively from new parents and carers. They develop their basic skills effectively because staff use resources well. In a good lesson seen children learnt to write effectively because the teacher showed them carefully how to create the letter 'o' on the playground using chalk. This allowed children to learn how to move their arm and hand to form the letter accurately. Children learn to use their senses successfully when they experiment with different materials to see what effect gravity has on them. Occasionally, opportunities are missed to plan activities to extend children's learning, and so one or two are not always fully challenged.

The children's personal, social and emotional development is good because all adults ensure that the welfare of each individual is supported methodically. Children are successfully encouraged to be independent and behave well. A reasonable balance of adult-led and child-initiated learning is provided through good planning. The leadership of this stage of education is good.

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

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
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	2

Views of parents and carers

The proportion of questionnaires returned by parents and carers was above average. Parents and carers are generally satisfied with the education provided. The oldest pupils have had several teachers this academic year due to staff sickness, and although the school has worked hard and successfully to make the best of the situation, some concerns about progress came through in the questionnaires. A small minority of parents and carers raised concerns about the ways in which the school enables them to support their child's learning, and the inspectors also raised this as. A small minority did not agree that unacceptable behaviour is dealt with effectively, but inspectors judged it to be handled well. A few felt that their views were not always listened to, but evidence collected during the inspection indicates that their concerns are acted on thoughtfully by staff.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Highwood 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 26 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 52 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	8	31	16	62	2	8	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	13	50	11	42	2	8	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	12	46	11	42	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	9	35	9	35	4	15	2	8
The teaching is good at this school	10	38	12	46	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	11	42	9	35	3	12	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	8	31	16	62	0	0	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)	10	38	8	31	1	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	13	50	10	38	2	8	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	9	35	6	23	3	12	2	8
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	12	46	8	31	3	12	2	8
The school is led and managed effectively	11	42	7	27	0	0	2	8
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	12	46	11	42	1	4	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).

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.



25 March 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Highwood Primary School, Chelmsford, CM1 3QH

Thank you for helping us to find out about your school. It was enjoyable to speak to some of you and hear your views. Your school provides you with a good education. You told us that it is a happy school where you all get on well together, and we agree. These are some of the best things about your school.

You told us, how much you enjoy the many topics you study in mathematics, English, art and physical education.

You contribute to the community effectively and you told us how proud you were of the way you helped to tidy the village and were polite to local people.

You feel safe in school because staff work attentively to care for you.

You behave well in school because staff guide you thoughtfully.

You get a good start to learning in the Reception class.

You know how to keep yourselves healthy and most of you know which foods you should only eat occasionally, such as crisps.

Your headteacher and senior teachers have good ideas about how to make the school even better, and we have asked them to do the following in order to raise your attainment to even higher levels by Year 6 in handwriting and numeracy.

Set more detailed objectives for lessons, so that all of you are clear about what you need to include in your work.

Make sure teachers are clearer about the ways they will help those of you who are making slower progress.

Give your parents and carers more information about how you are doing and what they could do to help you learn even faster.

Continue to listen carefully to staff comments, come to school every day and enjoy all the wonderful things you are learning at Highwood Primary School.

Yours sincerely

Jackie Cousins

Lead inspector

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