

Halifax Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124670
Local Authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	380953
Inspection dates	11–12 October 2011
Reporting inspector	Selwyn Ward

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	394
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Roger Fern
Headteacher	Anna Hennell James
Date of previous school inspection	9 July 2009
School address	Prince of Wales Drive Ipswich IP2 8PY
Telephone number	01473 683932
Fax number	01473 683929
Email address	Ad.halifax.p@talk21.com

Age group	4–11
Inspection date(s)	11–12 October 2011
Inspection number	380953

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2011



Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors, who visited 25 lessons taught by 14 teachers. Inspectors spoke with staff, parents and carers, members of the governing body and groups of pupils. Inspectors looked at samples of pupils' work, the analysis of the tracking of pupils' progress, attendance records, school policies and procedures, school leaders' monitoring records, school planning and risk assessments. They also analysed the questionnaires received from 101 pupils, 32 staff, and 164 parents and carers.

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

- Is progress for boys and girls of all abilities consistent across the school and what accounts for any variation?
- To what extent have pupils' literacy, and particularly writing, skills progressed more slowly than those in numeracy?
- Do leaders and the governing body have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development, and how effective have been the measures they have taken to drive improvements?

Information about the school

The school is larger than average, and the number on roll has been rising steadily year on year. Most pupils are White British, with small numbers coming from minority ethnic backgrounds. An increasing proportion of pupils join the school from Eastern Europe, and the proportion of pupils speaking English as an additional language, though still low, is rising. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is average. The proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average, particularly for moderate learning difficulties, speech and language needs, and behavioural and emotional difficulties. The proportion with statements of special educational needs and/or disabilities is twice the national average, and the school caters for a number of pupils with autism. There have been many changes of teaching staff since the last inspection. Halifax Primary has an Activemark award and Healthy Schools status.

Up until this year, children have been admitted to the Reception Year in the term in which their fifth birthday falls. This has meant that summer-born children have had only one term in the Reception Year. This has changed this year with all children having the option to start school in September.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Halifax Primary provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. Standards have risen steadily since the time of the previous inspection and are now average at the end of Year 6. This represents satisfactory achievement for both boys and girls. Progress in some year groups is good, reflecting the quality of teaching in those classes, but it remains uneven through the school, from Reception to Year 6, due to variations in the quality of teaching. Although leaders' monitoring of teaching and learning is sharply focused, with clear feedback to staff that has helped to improve practice, the many changes of staff have blunted its impact. Rates of progress are nevertheless improving, as is evident from the school's termly tracking of the number of pupils reaching age-related expectations. An initiative by leaders last term to raise the quality of marking and feedback to pupils has greatly improved the quality of marking this term, though here too variations remain. In most classes, marking gives notably clearer guidance to pupils in English than in other subjects.

Writing has traditionally lagged behind reading and mathematics at this school. Initiatives since the previous inspection to boost the quality of writing have eliminated this gap. In particular, pupils' writing has improved because it is systematically taught and because teachers have succeeded in finding imaginative ways of stimulating pupils to write in subjects other than English. Fewer cross-curricular opportunities are found for pupils to give practical application to their numeracy skills.

The school takes a particular pride in the quality of care and support for its pupils, and especially those whose circumstances may make them vulnerable. Parents and carers see the impact of this in their children's good personal development, and they particularly value this feature of the school. As one, typically, explained, 'The staff are approachable, caring and keen to do that little bit extra.' There is tailored support not just for pupils but for their families too. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities benefit from individual educational plans with very clear targets to which they themselves contribute. As a result, the progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is good overall, especially for those with language and communication needs and those with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The impact of the school's welfare arrangements and its close partnership working with parents and carers is also evident in the rise in attendance rates. In the past, these were average but they are now above average.

Although self-assessment grades have been too high, leaders' detailed analysis of how well the school is doing, and of its areas for development, has been sharp and

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

accurate. Leaders and the governing body can point to significant improvements since the time of the last inspection, with 2011 yielding the school's best ever Year 6 national test results. These show Halifax Primary's good capacity for continued improvement.

Up to 40% of the 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?

- Further raise attainment in English and mathematics by ensuring that pupils make consistently good progress in all year groups from Reception to Year 6 through:
 - always matching work to pupils' different capabilities
 - making sure that the success criteria set out in lessons are sharply focused and understood by all the pupils
 - identifying opportunities for pupils to develop and give practical application to their numeracy skills in subjects other than mathematics.
- Consolidate the recent improvements in assessment arrangements by:
 - ensuring that marking in all subjects and in every class gives pupils clear guidance on what they need to do to improve their work
 - routinely giving pupils time in every class to read and respond to the comments teachers write when they mark their work.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Children join the Reception Year with skills and capabilities that are generally below those expected for their ages. In most years, they are still below average when they join Year 1. Progress has often been good in Key Stage 1, with Year 2 assessments having been consistently in line with the national average for several years. Progress has been more uneven over Key Stage 2. This has meant that, in previous years, attainment at the end of Year 6 has been below average. It has been rising each year, however, and was average in both English and mathematics in 2011. Pupils speaking English as an additional language make broadly similar progress to their peers, although their progress is better in English than in mathematics. The progress of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals also matches that of others in the school. Among pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, those with moderate learning difficulties and those with autism also make similar progress to their peers, with faster progress for those with speech and language delay and the pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Although progress through the school remains uneven, it is accelerating. This is especially the case in lessons where teachers make their high expectations clear to the pupils. In a Year 4 lesson, for example, pupils were challenged to use 'speech punctuation' in their writing. The teacher had made it clear that he was not simply

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

expecting the use of speech marks and so, by the end of the lesson, pupils of a wide range of abilities were accurately paragraphing speech and making correct use of commas.

Parents and carers comment positively on the improvements in pupils’ behaviour. Inspectors saw few incidents of misbehaviour in school, although pupils do not all display good self-discipline and so their behaviour is dependant on teachers’ management. Where behaviour is otherwise good, some pupils are let down by their loss of concentration and sometimes weak listening skills. Among the positive features of teaching are the successful strategies teachers deploy to tackle this and encourage careful listening, including through the use of ‘talk partners’. Pupils enjoy the opportunities to take responsibility within the school, for example as play leaders. They also take a growing interest in the wider community, campaigning, for example, on the local environment. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep safe and healthy, and many take part enthusiastically in the extra-curricular sports on offer. Pupils’ good attendance, their good relationships and team working, along with their improved basic skills, help to prepare them well for the next stage of their education.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils’ learning and their progress	3
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	3
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	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Pupils like their teachers, and the good relationships throughout the school contribute to pupils’ generally good motivation. Teachers routinely set out learning objectives and success criteria at the start of each lesson. These are aimed at ensuring that pupils know what they are expected to learn. In some cases, however,

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

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

learning objectives lack precision. Leaders have identified in their monitoring that success criteria are not always understood by pupils, particularly when they are not written in pupil-friendly language. During the inspection, there were lessons where the pace of learning slowed because pupils were not all clear about what they were expected to do. Pace also slows in those lessons where the work is not matched carefully enough to pupils’ widely different capabilities. Teachers often make effective use of questioning to encourage pupils to extend their answers. They make very good use of ‘talk partners’ to cultivate pupils’ listening skills by generally asking pupils to report back what their partner told them rather than merely repeating what they told their partner. Marking has greatly improved this year, with much more setting out for pupils the next steps in their learning, especially in English. There is an increasing expectation that when the teacher poses a question as part of their marking, the pupil will respond. However, this is still not a consistent feature of marking in all subjects or in all classes.

‘The curriculum offered gives great opportunities for learning within school and some fantastic trips away.’ This comment from a parent summed up the views expressed by both pupils and their parents and carers about a curriculum that makes learning fun. Links are developed between subjects, so that science and literacy are reinforced while learning, for example, history and geography. The opportunities that pupils have to develop their writing across a wide range of subjects has contributed strongly to the notable improvements in writing. Teachers have been less adept at identifying similar opportunities to promote cross-curricular numeracy. The school has a strong musical tradition with, for example, all Year 5 pupils learning to play an orchestral instrument as part of the curriculum. There is also strong extra-curricular provision, including for both music and sports.

Pupils are made to feel safe and secure at school. Their transition from year to year and preparation for moving on to the secondary schools is well managed so that pupils feel able to embrace changes with confidence. Close partnership working with outside agencies and with parents and carers enables the school to cater for individual pupils’ specific learning needs. The effectiveness of the school’s systems to promote improved behaviour, for example, is especially evident in the good progress made by pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
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?

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

The headteacher, leadership team, governing body and staff all show a shared commitment to drive forward improvements in provision and outcomes for pupils, as summed up in the school motto: 'Proud to do our best'. They take a justifiable pride in the steady year-on-year rise in Year 6 test scores, and especially the considerable improvements in writing. Equal opportunities are promoted well throughout the school, so that pupils with additional learning needs are helped to do at least as well as their peers. Where there has been a difference between the performance of boys and girls, swift action has been taken to eliminate the gender gap. For example, teachers' targeted questioning in lessons has helped to tackle the issue of some girls being quietly inattentive and so making, in the past, slower progress than boys. Leaders' monitoring of lessons is thorough and has an appropriately sharp focus on pupils' learning and progress. Points for development are followed up so that monitoring drives improvement. Staff turnover has meant that, despite this well-focused monitoring, there is still some inconsistent practice across the school.

Governance is good. The governing body is supportive and its members visit regularly and contribute their individual expertise, for example on health and safety. The minutes of governing body meetings show rigorous questioning and a healthy challenge to leaders over standards and improvement. The governing body ensures that all legal requirements for safeguarding are met, and the school goes beyond these, for example in the way in which it works with families of pupils in vulnerable circumstances to ensure their children's welfare and that there is no interruption to their learning.

Halifax Primary works as a harmonious community where pupils from different ethnic backgrounds mix and get on well together. The school has strong ties with the local community which it serves, and its swimming pool, hired out for community use, makes the school an important local hub. Links have been built with schools in Hackney which serve more ethnically diverse communities, and contact with schools in France, Ghana and Uganda has also broadened pupils' horizons.

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	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
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

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

The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money

3

Early Years Foundation Stage

The termly intake to Reception has been reflected in children’s outcomes. Hitherto, children who have the longest time in Reception have made consistently better progress than those who joined later. Although children reached average standards in 2009, year groups since then have remained below average by the start of Year 1.

The inside area is well organised and accessible for all children but the outside area can become congested with insufficient room for the wide range of physical activities on offer. Child-initiated activities are varied, such as planting a flowerpot and finding letters and matching them to the sounds they make. Themes such as *The Three Little Pigs* engage children, and they are beginning to contribute their own ideas about what they could be learning. Discussions with children are sometimes of high quality and promote good learning but this high standard is not uniform across the newly established staff team.

Adults make continuous observations and assessments of the children’s progress, and these are shared with parents and carers. Care is taken to ensure that those children who need extra support are able to access it early. This is effective in helping them to quickly settle into the school’s routines and to learn. The present coordinator is new to role, having only taken up the post in September 2011. She is well informed and has quickly grasped the actions required to improve provision and accelerate the children’s learning so that they reach at least average standards by the end of the Reception Year.

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

The steady growth in pupil numbers is indicative of this school’s popularity with parents and carers, who express overwhelmingly positive views. Although they confirm that the management of behaviour has improved greatly, a number of parents and carers wrote to express a concern over the operation of the school’s system of rewards. They complain that ‘naughty children get rewarded for being good’ while ‘pupils that follow the rules and behave get overlooked’. Inspectors did not see direct evidence of this, but they drew these concerns to the attention of the

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

headteacher, who has offered to review relevant school policies and procedures.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Halifax 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 164 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 394 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	91	55	71	43	2	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	98	60	64	39	2	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	50	30	101	62	10	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	54	33	96	59	7	4	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	54	33	104	63	2	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	63	38	90	55	4	2	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	57	35	100	61	4	2	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)	58	35	83	51	5	3	1	1
The school meets my child’s particular needs	59	36	90	55	5	3	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	50	30	94	57	10	6	4	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	37	23	107	65	7	4	2	1
The school is led and managed effectively	73	45	85	52	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	78	48	79	48	4	2	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 2010 to 08 April 2011 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 2010/11 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.

13 October 2011



Dear Pupils

Inspection of Halifax Primary School, Ipswich, IP2 8PY

I am writing to thank you for making us so welcome when we came to visit your school. Halifax Primary is a satisfactory and improving school. It is well run and standards have risen, especially in writing. You are making satisfactory progress over your time at the school and we could see that this progress is accelerating so that more of you are making good progress. Some of you who have had extra help with your learning have done especially well. We have suggested some ways in which your teachers can help you all to make consistently good progress throughout your time at the school.

Many of you told us how much you enjoy all the interesting things you get to do at school. We were very pleased to see how well you get on together and that you are keen to learn and do your best. It was also good to see that your attendance rates are now above those of other schools. Behaviour is improving, but we noticed that there are still occasions when your attention drifts and that slows learning. Staff are aware of this and trying different ways of keeping you on your toes, including through the use of 'talk partners'. This is already helping you to become better listeners.

Staff take good care of you, and that is a key reason why you feel safe and happy at school. They are increasingly giving you helpful feedback through marking that shows you the next steps you need to take to move your learning on. This is better in English than in other subjects, and it is not as good in every class, so we have asked your teachers to give you all the same detailed feedback in all subjects. You can help too by always taking care to read the comments your teachers write when they mark your work and by doing your very best to follow the advice they give you.

Thank you again for being so helpful on our visit and our very best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Selwyn Ward
Lead inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone **0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.**