

Howe Dell Primary School

The Runway, Hatfield, Hertfordshire, AL10 9AH

Inspection dates 31 January – 1 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- School leaders and governors work effectively to ensure teaching and achievement are good.
- The school's focus on making learning enjoyable ensures that pupils make good progress, with a few making excellent progress in literacy and numeracy.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress because of the well-planned teaching as well as the support provided by teaching assistants.
- School leaders work closely with parents, involving them in the learning and progress of their children. Parents are extremely complimentary about the school.
- Pupils are provided with creative ways of learning and have regular opportunities to improve their skills through activities linked to sports, science, art, music and technology.
- Pupils have a good understanding of other societies and cultures, and contribute regularly to community activities.
- The behaviour of pupils in lessons and around the school is exemplary. Pupils are confident, kind to each other, and respectful to their teachers. Pupils say that they feel safe in school, and most parents and all staff think that bullying is rare.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not outstanding. Some teachers do not always make pupils talk to each other about their learning so they clarify for themselves what they do not understand. Able pupils are not given demanding work in all lessons.
- The data on pupils' progress and attainment is not yet analysed closely enough and used to full effect to direct further improvement in achievement. Not all school leaders or new managers have a clear understanding of the rates of progress of different groups of pupils, and how this information can be applied to improving the school further.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 26 lessons. In addition, the inspection team made nine shorter visits to lessons to focus on specific aspects, jointly seen with the headteacher and the deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and visited two assemblies.
- Meetings were held with a group of pupils, the headteacher, senior and subject leaders, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 88 responses from the Parent View online questionnaire. Members of the inspection team also spoke to parents as they brought their children to school.
- The inspection team observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including: school improvement plans, data on pupils' current progress, pupils' written work, the governing body's minutes of meetings and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Janev Mehmet-Christofides, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Christine Newell	Additional inspector
Mehar Brar	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is a larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium (extra government funding for pupils eligible for free school meals, those in care and those with a parent in the armed services) is above average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs who are supported at school action is below the national average; the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is low.
- The majority of pupils are from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils that speak English as an additional language is higher than the national average.
- The Howe Dell Children's Centre is on the same site as the school and is managed by the governing body, but is subject to a separate inspection.
- The school does not provide alternative provision for pupils offsite.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Some middle leaders are newly appointed.
- This is a newly built eco-school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it becomes outstanding by:
 - ensuring that all teachers frequently require pupils to talk over activities linked to their learning so learners help themselves towards a better understanding of the subject
 - making sure that all teachers always set demanding work for pupils of all levels of ability, especially the more able, so all make the best progress possible.
- Strengthen the impact of leadership and management by:
 - analysing the data on pupils' progress and attainment more closely, and share findings with all leaders, new managers and teachers so that all have a clear understanding of the current levels of pupils' progress and where these can be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils from all ethnic heritages make good progress in their learning. Most children start the school with skills below those typical for their age. They make good progress through the school and, by the end of Year 6, standards in English and mathematics rise to be in line with those of pupils nationally.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress. Learning is well planned for them and pupils are involved in tracking their own success and know how well they are doing.
- Children in the Early Years and Foundation Stage make good progress in all areas of their learning, because of the rich variety of learning experiences they are provided with.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs achieve well from their starting points. School leaders arrange individualised support and care programmes which enhance these pupils' well-being as well as their learning.
- Those who are eligible for support through the pupil premium funding achieve well from the extra help they receive. For example, in 2012, Year 6 pupils eligible for free school meals attained standards in both English and mathematics similar to those of other pupils in the school. The school is active in ensuring all its pupils have equality opportunity to learn and achieve well.
- In lessons, pupils make good progress because they are interested in learning and behave extremely well. They are confident learners who are able to evaluate how well they are doing through their understanding of what they are intended to learn and how well they have done so.
- Teachers have a good understanding of pupils' abilities and in most cases provide work that is well matched to all pupils' range of abilities. However, more-able pupils are not always given work that is demanding enough to help them make the best progress possible.
- Pupils have a good knowledge of what constitutes eco-friendly living. Their school building lends itself well to learning about natural resources, growing and consuming vegetables, healthy eating and saving energy.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching is consistently good across the school. The teaching of literacy and mathematics is equally good. Teachers enable pupils to be confident learners. Their questioning techniques enable pupils to develop their ability to think. Lessons are fun, engaging and develop pupils' skills in literacy, numeracy and communication.
- In most lessons, tasks are pitched at the right level for pupils to make good progress while they work in small groups or individually. However, in a few lessons, tasks are not demanding enough for more-able pupils.
- In general, pupils get the chance to share their ideas with other pupils and do so well. However, some teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to talk over among themselves the

learning activities they are set so that their learning is reinforced and their progress improves.

- Teaching engages and motivates pupils because teachers and teaching assistants make the learning exciting through resources such as games and information and communication technology. For example, in an Early Years Foundation Stage class, children developed their coordination, counting and listening skills through playing a game with each other – after their teacher had shown them how to play it.
- Teachers constantly praise and provide feedback to pupils on how well they are doing in lessons. Books are regularly marked with informative comments which pupils use in their next stages of learning. Learning objectives are always shared with pupils at the beginning of each lesson so they have a clear understanding of what they must do to achieve the objectives set. Pupils find this practice helpful and refer back to the guidance throughout the lesson.
- Teaching promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well. For example, displays around the school, which stimulate interest and inspire vibrant learning, show how pupils learn about art, music, and an appreciation of other people's feelings and beliefs. All classrooms have learning displays that are multicultural and support learning of key vocabulary and numeracy skills.
- Subject leaders work closely with link governors and school leaders to ensure lessons provide pupils with valuable learning experiences. For example in Key Stage 1, pupils learn successfully how to subtract using measurement of weather forecasts in different environments. As well as practising their mathematical skills, pupils learn to understand that temperatures are different in various climates, and also learn to recognise names and monuments of cities around the world.
- The environment for teaching and learning provides varied and diverse learning opportunities. Pupils often learn in an outside environment offered by their eco-friendly school. For example, they develop their science skills well using the area they call the 'Kingfisher Island', which has a pond and natural habitat.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils' behaviour in class and around the school is exemplary. Teachers, who are keen to praise and encourage pupils, manage behaviour very well. As a result, pupils are kind, mature and confident in dealing with each other and with adults. Pupils talk about their school with great enthusiasm, and describe it as a 'kind place'.
 - Pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent. They are always keen to do their best and they are able to use a variety of skills, which help them to further their learning. For example, pupils at all levels of ability are able to say what they are learning about and how well they are doing.
 - Attendance is above average, and pupils are punctual to lessons. They enjoy being in school and talk about it as a 'fun place to be' because they enjoy learning.
 - Pupils say that bullying is very rare, and demonstrate that they know how to keep themselves safe from bullying. They have a very good understanding of the different forms of bullying and treat each other with respect. They have an excellent awareness of the rules for e-safety when using computers.
 - Pupils are very proud of their school and conscientiously support their peers where they can. For
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example, they are keen to take up roles as playground 'buddies' or assembly monitors. The school council is active in contributing to decisions about school life and pupils express themselves confidently.

- Pupils are provided with opportunities to deepen their knowledge about other cultures, locally, nationally and globally. They go on visits to other schools to share their experiences as well as study art, music, technology and cultures from around the world. Pupils regularly celebrate each other's achievements in assemblies, which are also shared by parents and members of the community.
- Regular opportunities to celebrate and take part in many activities in sports, the arts, music and team-building make the school a popular place. Pupils contribute to their community by raising money for charities through events such as 'Wonder Days'. These are fun-packed with learning experiences that involve lots of different topics.
- Parents, carers and staff rightly believe that pupils behave exceptionally well. The school works closely with parents and carers, who praise the school and are happy that their children are safe and making good progress.

The leadership and management are good

- Senior leaders are accurate in their evaluation of how much the school is improving and what they need to do next to ensure there is further improvement. They give teachers, parents and pupils confidence and pride in the school through regular communication of high expectations for what pupils can achieve in their learning and the progress they can make.
 - The drive for improvement is central to what the school does and all staff are motivated by school leaders to constantly better their teaching skills. Teachers and learning-support assistants are provided with a range of good-quality training, which has a positive impact on learning for all pupils.
 - The range of subjects and topics taught gives pupils many valuable and varied learning opportunities. Developing pupils' emotional and social skills is at the heart of the school's values. This ensures that children are well prepared to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding as well as their academic knowledge and skills. Consequently all pupils make good progress from their starting points.
 - Pupils enjoy reading, and literacy is celebrated through activities, displays and assemblies. Pupils learn a lot about other cultures, religions and parts of the world. For example, the celebration of the recent royal wedding was developed into a study about weddings around the world. Vibrant displays celebrate and capture experiences of pupils from different backgrounds.
 - Most parents are extremely happy with the drive and impact of leaders to take the school forward. Parents are right to believe their children are making good progress.
 - The school works closely with the Children's Centre on site to ensure continuity of learning for the children of the local community.
 - The local authority provides support for the school through occasional visits by a consultant, and training programmes for staff. These programmes have supported new teachers very well, as
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demonstrated by excellent practice seen during the inspection.

- Senior leaders regularly check how good teaching is in lessons, and provide extensive support for teachers to develop their practice to make sure pupils' progress is good. They involve all staff in the planning of learning, and diligently track the progress of individual pupils.
- There is insufficient precise analysis of the overall data available on progress and attainment. Therefore, leaders' understanding of whole-school performance is not wholly secure, and they are not sure where improvement in progress rates could be best targeted. Newly appointed middle leaders do not always understand well enough how the overview of progress can be used to speed progress to be outstanding in their departments.
- Safeguarding requirements are met. Systems are very detailed and secure the safety of all pupils at all times.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body supports leaders to carry out their responsibilities effectively. They actively support the priority of pupils making good progress at all levels. They regularly visit the school to check on the quality of teaching so they know its quality. All governors are linked to a subject leader who they support with their own specific skills. Governors' observations of those subjects are regular and they provide feedback to teachers and other governors. This process has helped middle leaders to develop leadership skills and also benefited the achievement of pupils. Governors take part in training provided for them by the local authority, as well as closely liaising with other governing bodies to share good practice. They understand the performance data on progress and attainment that are available. However, their understanding is not helped by the lack of precise analysis of aspects of these data. Governors make sure that teachers' performance is assessed carefully and they check that rewards and pay are justified by each teacher's performance in enabling pupils to make good progress. The governing body allocates pupil premium funding effectively so that pupils eligible make good progress.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	117220
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	403309

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

Primary	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	417
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Glowers
Headteacher	Debra Massey
Date of previous school inspection	11 September 2007
Telephone number	01707 263291
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