

Hollybush Primary School

Fordwich Rise, Hertford, SG14 2DF

Inspection dates 19–20 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Pupils' achievement requires improvement. Not enough pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teaching is not consistently good. Teachers do not always make sure that work is well matched to the range of ability in the class.
- Pupils are not always clear about what they are working towards and some rely too much on adults to help them with their learning.
- Teaching does not sufficiently motivate all pupils to write or take a real interest in reading.
- There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to use mathematical skills widely.
- Leadership and management require improvement. Leaders do not make close enough links between the information they gather on pupils' progress and pupils' learning.

The school has the following strengths

- All leaders are committed to improvement. Well-chosen priorities are improving the quality of teaching and raising achievement.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils say they feel safe. The school's care of its pupils and their safety are priorities.
- Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and are ready for their learning in Year 1.
- The school promotes pupils' all-round development well. Pupils enjoy new experiences and have a good understanding of others.
- The school does much to maintain good links with parents.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 13 lessons, including four phonics and literacy sessions (letters and sounds, reading and writing). Thirteen teachers or teaching assistants were seen. There were two joint observations, with the headteacher. Inspectors observed one assembly.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, members of the governing body, a representative from the local authority, school leaders and staff.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils during lessons about their work, looked at their books and listened to them read.
- Inspectors took account of 38 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and spoke to parents during the inspection.
- Inspectors analysed responses from 24 questionnaires completed by school staff.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work, looked at achievement and attendance information, improvement plans, systems to check the quality of teaching and documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Vivienne McTiffen, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Liz Kissane

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well below average as is the proportion of those who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and for whom the school receives additional income (the pupil premium) is above average. There are no children looked after by the local authority currently at the school.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage comprises a Nursery class (Foundation 1), which children attend during the mornings only, and a Reception class (Foundation 2).
- The school meets the government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6.
- A privately run pre-school shares the school's site. This was not included in the inspection as it is not managed by the governing body.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to be consistently good or better by:
 - making sure teachers set work that is always well matched to the range of ability in the class so all pupils make the best possible progress
 - helping pupils to develop more fully the skills they need to become independent learners and have a greater understanding of what they are working towards.
- Raise achievement in English and mathematics by:
 - building upon the good start made in the consistent teaching of reading and writing by making sure pupils are motivated and have long enough to write, and develop a real interest in reading
 - ensuring more planned opportunities for problem solving so pupils use mathematical skills more widely.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring a sharper focus and more rigorous approach to monitoring the quality of teaching which links more closely to the information the school has on pupils' progress.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because, although pupils reach average standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6, not enough make good progress from their starting points and achieve to the best of their ability.
- Pupils did not do well enough in the 2012 national screening test for their knowledge of phonics (letters and sounds). More are on track to do well this year because pupils are making better gains in their learning. This is due to recent re-organisation in the teaching of phonics. The new methods have not been in use long enough to have full effect on raising achievement throughout the school.
- There are clear signs of improvement in achievement. The school's information shows that standards in reading are rising and are now average after a dip to below average in the 2012 Y6 tests. This is because of a whole-school drive to improve reading. In reading, writing and mathematics, more pupils are achieving at higher levels than previously due to the school's raised expectations of more-able pupils.
- Pupils achieve most when they are inspired to learn. For example, the good range of interesting activities provided in Foundation 1 and Foundation 2 help children make good progress in reading, writing and number skills. During the inspection, pupils in Year 6 worked well together to discuss the demands made by super stars. The task developed confidence and led to well written letters. Pupils are not always so well motivated. Some say they do not always know what to write about. Others say they do not have enough time to write at length.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make equal progress to their classmates. In line with other pupils, their progress is beginning to speed up because they benefit from extra adult help and working in small groups. There are some good examples of individuals doing well in line with their abilities.
- The school spends its pupil premium funding to meet the needs of individual pupils. The school's information shows that their progress is beginning to accelerate so that the gap is closing. These pupils usually reach similar standards to other pupils, although they lag slightly behind in mathematics. In 2012, attainment at the end of Year 6 for this group of pupils was the same as others in the class, in English, and about half a term behind, in mathematics.
- Pupils from minority ethnic groups and the few who speak English as an additional language make the same levels of progress as their peers. The consistency of progress for all groups demonstrates that the school provides equal opportunities for all pupils to learn without discrimination.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching is not consistently good enough to make sure that all pupils make the best possible progress.
- Work is not always sufficiently well matched to the full range of ability in the class. As a result, some pupils, especially the less able, struggle to do well because the work is too hard for them and they rely too much on adult help.

- Problem solving and the use of mathematics in a range of subjects are not sufficiently planned in all classes. Some good examples were seen during mathematics lessons. Pupils in Year 4 weighed ingredients to make tortillas, while pupils in Year 6 used number facts to break codes.
- Teachers' marking in books is consistent and provides helpful tips on how to improve. However, not enough emphasis is placed on helping pupils to understand the level they are working at and what they are working towards so they judge for themselves how well they are doing.
- In most of the lessons seen during the inspection, the teaching was good. A good start has been made in ensuring a consistent approach to the teaching of reading but there is some way to go to ensure all pupils develop a zest for reading. Pupils are beginning to make better progress because they work in small groups that are well matched to their ability. They benefit from regular reading sessions.
- Teaching assistants are fully involved during lessons. They play a major role in developing pupils' personal and academic skills. They often work with individuals and small groups of pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, helping them to make small steps towards their learning goals.
- Good teaching in the Foundation 1 and Foundation 2 classes ensures a suitable balance between tasks that are adult led and those children choose for themselves. Staff select topics based upon children's own interests to promote their enthusiasm for learning. Well-chosen activities, indoors and out, give children plenty of scope to develop and practise their skills.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils are keen to learn and say they enjoy school. They have good relationships with each other and staff. One commented, 'Teachers are really nice and kind but can be strict.' They talk keenly about the range of trips and clubs which enhance their learning.
- Pupils say they feel safe, a view that is strongly supported by parents. The school's clear guidance helps pupils to know how to stay safe and recognise different forms of bullying. Pupils feel the school cares for them well and helps them to deal with any concerns they may have. Incidents of bullying are rare but any that do arise are stringently recorded and followed up.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils are attentive in lessons. They listen well to their teachers and to each other. They are polite and respond well to visitors. They know the school's rules because leaders ensure there is a consistent approach to promoting and maintaining good behaviour. The school's logs show clear systems for handling any unacceptable behaviour, leading to improvement.
- Pupils happily take on responsibility and often help those younger than themselves. They like being part of the school council or the 'Green Hand Gang' to help improve the school environment. They fund raise and take an interest in pupils from further afield with backgrounds different to their own.
- Attendance is average and improving due to the school's concerted efforts. There are some good examples of how the school's work has improved the attendance of individuals. Leaders are making inroads into helping parents understand how poor attendance affects their children's achievement.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because pupils' achievement is not yet good.
- The school is not sufficiently rigorous in getting to the root of why pupils are not doing their very best. Systems to monitor the quality of teaching do not focus sharply enough on making links between how well pupils are learning in lessons and the information leaders collect on pupils' progress. As a result, any underachievement that is detected is not addressed quickly enough.
- The headteacher and leaders have rightly identified how well the school is doing and what it needs to do to improve. Consequently, teaching is improving and pupils' progress is speeding up, and pupils' behaviour and safety are managed well.
- The local authority carries out regular review of the school and its performance. It has helped in identifying priorities and improving teaching. The school makes the most of external help and shares expertise with local schools. Training for staff to improve their work, for example in the teaching of reading and writing, results in a common sense of purpose. Staff performance is checked and targets set regularly.
- The school is a happy place where everyone is valued. Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated. Leaders check pupils' progress regularly in a bid to ensure all pupils do equally well. In the Foundation classes, children's work is collated in Learning Journeys which are shared with parents and clearly show the progress children make.
- Leaders make sure that the school offers a range of subjects and experiences, enhanced by clubs, trips and visitors which promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Staff do all they can to encourage talents to flourish, often through partnership with other schools and providers. Since the last inspection, the school has made good improvements in strengthening its links with parents and involving them in their children's learning.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are committed to improvement. They are keen to develop their skills as fully as possible to move the school forward. They share their expertise well and undergo relevant training. Governors know how well the school is doing and what it needs to do to improve. They increasingly hold the school to account and raise questions over pupils' achievement. They check progress data and know the school is on an upward trend. Governors recognise their evaluation of the effect of the pupil premium spending on achievement is not yet sufficiently rigorous. They know about the link between good teaching and good achievement and how decisions are made about teachers' pay. Governors visit the school regularly and make decisions about staff training. They have an on-going focus on maintaining good links with parents. Governors fulfil their responsibilities and ensure safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.

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	117263
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	411765

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	208
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Chris Martin
Headteacher	Alan Brown
Date of previous school inspection	25 February 2010
Telephone number	01992 581454
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