

# Holly Meadows School

Vong Lane, Pott Row, King's Lynn, PE32 1BW

**Inspection dates** 3–4 July 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b> <b>3</b>
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

- The progress that pupils make is variable, and not all pupils make good enough progress.
- Not enough teaching is good or better, and some teaching does not provide sufficient challenge for older pupils of a higher ability in years 3 to 6.
- Pupils make less progress in English compared to mathematics, because progress in reading is slower, and pupils do not have enough opportunity to present their thinking in writing.
- Not all pupils know how to improve their work. While marking in books helps teachers to understand how well individual pupils are doing, it does not provide enough helpful written feedback to pupils.
- While the curriculum is well planned, teaching does not always cover the areas of learning described to pupils at the beginning of the lesson.
- Senior and subject leaders do not consistently check how different groups of pupils are doing or the quality of the teaching they receive.
- Governors do not have a good enough grasp of the school's overall effectiveness in terms of pupils' achievement, and do not fully understand how the school's performance compares with others nationally.

### The school has the following strengths

- Standards reached by the end of Key Stage 2 are improving, especially for those pupils who are entitled to support through the pupil premium.
- The progress that pupils make has recently improved, particularly in mathematics, because the school has devised better ways to identify gaps in pupils' learning.
- Pupils are proud of their new school, and feel safe when in it.
- The school has good relationships with parents, who think that communication between home and school is good.
- The headteacher has effectively managed a period of significant change, creating a close-knit learning community in a short period of time.
- Leaders and managers, including governors, manage school resources well, and have created a stimulating learning environment.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 18 lessons. Three joint lesson observations were undertaken with the headteacher. In addition, the inspectors made other visits to classes, looked at pupils' books, listened to pupils read and examined pupils' work on display.
- Meetings were held with pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and other governors, and a telephone discussion was undertaken with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector took account of the 31 responses to the online questionnaire for parents provided by Ofsted (Parent View) and talked directly to numerous parents during the inspection. In addition, 21 responses to a staff questionnaire were considered.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school's own information on pupils' progress, planning and monitoring documentation, and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

## Inspection team

Andrew Read, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Mike Williams

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school was created in 2011, following the amalgamation of three other schools. It is smaller than the average-sized primary school, and led by a recently appointed headteacher.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds, and no current pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who are supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also below average.
- A below-average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for the pupil premium (the additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, for children looked after by the local authority and for pupils with a parent in the armed forces).
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum standards for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the amount of good or better teaching in order to raise the achievement of all pupils, by:
  - improving the usefulness of marking, to include advice for pupils on how to improve their work
  - providing better opportunities in all subjects for pupils to develop their own thinking through writing
  - accelerating the pace of progress made in reading, such that progress matches that achieved in other subjects
  - ensuring that all pupils, particularly older pupils of a higher ability, receive a good level of challenge.
- Increase the capacity of subject leaders to make improvements by;
  - Developing more effective systems to analyse and report on the progress that all pupils, and groups of pupils, are making, in order to better identify whole school strengths and weaknesses
  - improving the rigour of the monitoring of teaching and learning, to ensure that all pupils have access to a high quality programme of teaching.
- Increase the capacity of governors to make improvements by;
  - ensuring that they have a good grasp of the school's overall effectiveness in relation to pupils' achievement, and that they understand how well the school's performance compares with other schools nationally.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Children enter the Reception class with skills and abilities that are lower than those typically expected for their age, and make adequate progress. However, inconsistencies exist in the rate of progress made by Reception and Year 1 pupils in developing early reading skills.
- In 2012, when compared to national averages, a more than expected number of pupils fell short of the minimum expected standards for recognising the sounds that letters make. This year the school's own assessment data shows that there has been some improvement, and more pupils have reached expected levels. Most of the pupils that failed to meet expected standards last year, have since attained the expected standard, however a few have not. This is because over time the teaching of early reading has been variable in quality.
- Progress in writing and mathematics in years 1 and 2 has improved in the last year. In particular, the progress made by more able pupils has got better. Last year no pupils achieved at a high level by the end of Year 2, in English or mathematics. This year, the majority of more able Year 2 pupils are working at a higher level in both areas. This is because pupils have received more challenging teaching.
- Standards reached in reading, writing and mathematics in Year 6 are broadly average.
- In years 3 to 6, the proportions of pupils making and exceeding expected progress in English and mathematics is variable across different classes, gender and ability groups. For example, given their starting points, boys do better than girls in writing and mathematics, and higher ability pupils do not make enough progress.
- Standards in reading for older pupils are around national average by the end of Year 6. However, the school's own assessment data shows that progress over time is slower than that made in writing and mathematics.
- Pupils eligible for the pupil premium make very good progress. While their attainment is still typically one term behind in English and mathematics, this gap is closing fast. This is an improvement on last year.
- Pupils develop and apply a wide range of skills in English and mathematics. However, although higher level thinking skills are well developed in all subjects, the recording, editing and development of ideas in writing is under-developed. The school recognises that pupils need to be given more opportunities to write at length in subjects other than English.
- Given their starting points, the learning and progress of disabled pupils, and those who have special educational needs, is variable, and reflects the inconsistencies in the progress made by all pupils in the school.

### The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Although most teaching is good, some still requires improvement. No outstanding teaching was seen during the inspection. The school's own monitoring records regarding the quality of teaching matches the inspection findings. As a result, pupils make inconsistent progress over time.

- Teachers have high expectations for some, but not all pupils. For example, more able pupils in years 3 to 6 are not always given work that is challenging enough. During the inspection more able pupils were seen completing exactly the same work as pupils of a lower ability.
- The teaching of early reading is variable, because the subject knowledge of some teachers is not good enough. In addition, teachers of older classes do not always encourage pupils to read more demanding books. While teaching has improved recently, not all pupils have caught up to expected levels, given their starting point.
- Where teaching was seen to be strongest during the inspection, it combined group work with an independent activity that required pupils to record their own thinking in a written format. Not all teaching seen required pupils to do this and opportunities to develop pupils' skills in writing in a range of subjects were therefore too often lost.
- While teachers plan lessons that deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding and enable them to develop a range of skills across different subjects, teaching does not always match the learning intentions described to pupils at the beginning of lessons. For example, a potentially exciting science lesson seen during the inspection did not cover the lesson intentions presented to the pupils.
- The use of outdoor areas for learning is particularly good. The school is developing safe learning areas in the woods and in a protected pond area to foster a wide range of activities, many of which are successful in developing the confidence of pupils with lower self esteem.
- In the last year, leaders and managers have made improvements to the quality of teaching in English and mathematics. For example, a strong emphasis has been placed on teachers using charts to record how well pupils are doing, and plan teaching that addresses the gaps identified.
- Teachers make accurate assessments of how well pupils are doing because they question pupils during lessons and mark books regularly, using charts to record the level that pupils are working at. However, marking routinely lacks advice that tells pupils how to improve their work. As a result pupils are not always clear how to make their work better.
- The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are encouraged to express their feelings and discuss moral issues through extensive group discussion. The school has recently focused on diverse nationalities across Europe, Uganda and China, thus widening pupils' awareness of other cultures. The spiritual development of the pupils is strong, and regular assemblies are used effectively to promote the consideration of other belief systems.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- Pupils' attitudes to learning are mainly positive and low-level disruption in lessons is uncommon. Pupils are able to work effectively in groups, and support each other in their learning. During the inspection pupils were seen playing in mixed aged groups, in a caring and inclusive manner.
- There are very few concerns expressed by parents, staff and pupils about behaviour and safety. Year 6 describe the school as "a giant family", and a friendly place to be. Younger pupils say they enjoy the large outdoor play areas, and feel safe when with supervising adults.
- There is a positive atmosphere in the school, and pupils attend regularly, good manners and are punctual to lessons. Visiting teachers say that they enjoy coming into the school because the

pupils are receptive to new ideas.

- Pupils have a good awareness of different forms of bullying. As a result there are few instances of bullying and these are dealt with effectively by the school. Such awareness extends to staying safe on the internet and when in potentially unsafe situations outside school.
- Behaviour is managed consistently well, and is described by pupils as “strict but fair”. Pupils and parents feel that clear expectations have resulted in improvements in behaviour over time for all pupils.
- Individuals or groups with particular behavioural needs are well catered for and behaviour and attitudes to learning improve rapidly through ‘Forest School’ and other additional activities designed to meet their specific emotional needs.

### **The leadership and management** requires improvement

- While the individual assessment practices of classroom teachers are accurate, whole-school tracking processes that quickly identify any emerging under-performance of groups remain under-developed. For example, English and mathematics coordinators are not well enough informed about how well different groups of pupils are doing, and are not in a position to spot year-on-year patterns in whole-school information. However, they do have good subject knowledge that enables them to offer effective support to other teachers to improve their teaching.
- Since the three schools joined together leaders have spent much of their time establishing the necessary administrative processes and procedures required to run a new school. As a result they have not checked the quality of teaching regularly enough. Processes to manage the performance of class teachers have only recently been fully established, and are now being more effectively linked to pupil progress on a whole-class basis.
- The current headteacher has made improvements to the school over the last year, building on the leadership of the previous short-term interim local authority headteacher. All leaders and managers have successfully created a harmonious school community, following the inevitable disruption caused by three schools becoming one. As a result, standards are beginning to rise in English and mathematics, and pupils, staff and most parents are proud of their new school.
- The local authority provided a temporary interim headteacher in the 2011-2012 academic year. An independent professional advisor, arranged by the local authority, also visited the school in November 2012. Since then support has been light-touch, since the authority were confident that the school was moving in the right direction.
- Support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is improving. Better mechanisms for tracking how well pupils are doing have recently been introduced, and are now leading to an improvement in the identification and checking of their needs and progress of pupils with additional needs.
- The school’s teaching programmes are well planned, but inconsistencies in teaching quality mean that some pupils do not benefit from those plans. In addition, subject leaders say that the way subjects are organised is designed to address the fact that boys have not always done as well as girls. Current assessment information shows that boys are now doing better than girls. The content and delivery of subjects across the school therefore requires improvement, to ensure that pupils have equal access to a relevant and well delivered programme of learning.

- The school's arrangements for safeguarding meet statutory requirements. They show that a rigorous approach is taken to the identification and resolution of care issues affecting the pupils. Where necessary support involves the help of other professionals, with all staff ensuring that pupils at risk are well supported.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Aspects of governance require improvement. Over the last two years a newly formed governing body has focused on the amalgamation of three schools, and has successfully created a high quality learning environment with a strong community spirit. However, they do not have a good understanding of how well pupils are doing on a whole school or group basis. For example, while they recognise the need to put in place robust reporting procedures that ensure that the headteacher keeps them informed about the quality of teaching and learning outcomes, systems to collect and present whole school performance information remain undeveloped. As a result, while governors know how the pupil premium funding is being spent, they are less clear how this group of pupils are performing. The lack of whole school performance data also means that decisions regarding teachers' salaries are not adequately linked to the progress of pupils. However, in successfully managing the administrative and social complexities of school amalgamation, and in undertaking to have their own self-evaluation documentation about the school's performance (which accurately recognises the weaknesses identified by inspectors), capacity for improvement is seen to be strong. Through rigorous planning and controls, governors ensure that pupils stay safe, and that the school remains on a secure financial footing.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	136536
<b>Local authority</b>	Norfolk
<b>Inspection number</b>	400280

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	155
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Terry Kivlin
<b>Headteacher</b>	Rachael Williams
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	None
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