

Downham Market, Hillcrest Primary School

Hillcrest, Bexwell Road, Downham Market, PE38 9ND

Inspection dates 12–10 September 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		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Hillcrest is a happy, welcoming, well led school where pupils feel very safe and secure.
- Pupils' make good progress and most reach above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Pupils' attainment in reading is a particular strength.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent. They listen carefully and are keen to improve their work.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and high expectations of pupils. Lessons are well planned and provide stimulating learning opportunities.
- Behaviour in lessons and around school is excellent. Pupils are considerate and polite to adults and one another.
- Well thought out exciting topics provide a comprehensive academic, creative and personal education. Pupils' experiences are further extended by visits, visitors and events.
- An extensive out of school activity programme provides a wide range of creative and sporting opportunities for all age groups.
- The knowledgeable governing body provides good support and challenge and is clear about what the school needs to do to continue to further improve.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils' progress and achievements in writing in Key Stage 1 is not as good as in reading.
- Marking gives clear guidance to pupils on how to improve their work but they are not always given the opportunity to respond.
- Some more able pupils require work which is more challenging.
- The newly appointed subject leaders are not yet monitoring pupils' achievement and sharing best practice with all staff. Work is not always set at the correct level for all pupils to reach their full potential.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classes. They observed 34 lessons, some of which were joint observations with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- They listened to some Year 1 and 2 pupils reading and observed the teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make). Inspectors also visited school assemblies, observed break times and looked carefully at the work in pupils books.
- Discussions were held with groups of pupils, staff, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents from the 34 online responses to the Parent View questionnaire and talked informally to a number of parents and carers at the beginning of the school day. Staff questionnaires were also considered.
- The inspection team took into account a number of documents, including information about safeguarding, the progress and attainment of pupils, the school's development plan and self-evaluation, minutes of the governing body and records of monitoring in relation to teaching, pupils behaviour and attendance.

Inspection team

Valerie Palmer, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Piers Ranger	Additional Inspector
Susan Heptinstall	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Hillcrest is larger than the average-size primary school.
- The majority of pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language is smaller than that found nationally.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs who are supported through school action is below average, as is the proportion supported at school action plus or through a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding for specific groups that include those believed to be eligible for free school meals, or who are in the care of the local authority) is below average.
- Alternative provision is made for a very small number of pupils to be taught at Terrington St Clements Community School and St Michael's Church of England Primary School for part of the school week.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement in writing by ensuring progress is at least good in all year groups in Key Stage 1 by giving pupils more regular and systematic practice in writing
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that it is always good and is more often outstanding by ensuring that:
 - all work is matched to pupils needs and challenges the more able
 - pupils are given time to respond to teachers written comments about their work and progress.
- Develop the role of subject leaders by giving them opportunities to:
 - share their subject skills and expertise with all members of school staff
 - check pupils' progress and achievement, set targets and be held accountable for the outcomes.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Children settle quickly into the Early Years Foundation Stage, becoming articulate and confident in making choices from a variety of stimulating and engaging activities. From skills broadly expected for their age they make good progress and are well prepared for their start in Key Stage 1.
- By the time they reach the end of their primary schooling the standards achieved by the majority of Year 6 pupils' are above the national average. They are well-prepared for the next phase of their education. The most able students are well supported, helping them to gain good outcomes, reflected in success in the Level 6 mathematics test, which is a standard much higher than that ordinarily expected for primary school pupils.
- Pupils gain knowledge and understanding across a range of skills in reading, writing, communication and mathematics across all year groups. Their enthusiasm for reading is clear from the start, supported by effective teaching that links letters to their sounds (phonics). Results in the Year 1 phonics screening test in 2013 were similar to the national average. Progress accelerates in Year 2 where the proportion of pupils achieving the higher level is significantly above the national average.
- Standards in writing in Key Stage 1 declined in 2012 and are lower than reading and mathematics. Pupils' progress is slower in Key Stage 1 as they do not always have access to resources which would help them to be confident, independent writers. In Key Stage 2 there are more opportunities for pupils to write regularly, at length in other subjects and for different purposes and by the end of Year 6 pupils are confident and prolific writers.
- Pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs receive effective and appropriate targeted support within the classroom and in small groups. Occasionally, progress slows when work is not so engaging or well matched, but generally they are reducing the gap in their attainment compared to the rest.
- The attainment of those pupils who receive additional support from the pupil premium for English and mathematics is still behind that of other pupils, although the gap is narrowing across the school as result of the focused help they are receiving.
- Planning for the new funding to support primary school sport is well advanced and focused on extra specialist teaching and additional after-school clubs.
- The alternative provision provided at nearby schools is effective in meeting the needs of the very small number of pupils who benefit, supporting their learning and progress.

The quality of teaching

is good

- The quality of teaching is good and some is outstanding. Teachers have good subject knowledge and high expectations of their pupils. They build on pupils' prior learning, skills and knowledge and ask probing questions to check pupils understanding and to make them think. This was reflected in a geography lesson where pupils were asked to draw a map tracing their journey from home to school. Pupils used previous mathematical, design and art skills as well as new knowledge relating to keys and symbols in order to create their map.

- Throughout the school, teachers and teaching assistants work together effectively. This is especially the case in supporting the work of those pupils who receive additional provision of some kind.
- Teaching in Reception is good. The staff work well together and plan an exciting range of activities to stimulate children's interests both in the outdoor area and in the classrooms. Learning is fun and accompanied by laughter. "Stinky Soup" was made with "smelly socks", boxes and rocks whilst children studied the "s" sound.
- Pupils comment on how teachers make learning interesting and fun. Subjects are captivatingly woven together into the individual topics that are studied. The artistic style of Van Gogh was used to create a diagram explaining the water cycle. Whilst learning the scientific knowledge behind the cycle pupils were also able to discuss the merits of "The Starry Night" and what feelings this painting evoked.
- The best lessons are very well planned, consistently match pupils' needs and fully challenge the more able. In a Year 6 English lesson pupils had to use language and sentence structure to create tension and drama within a story. More able pupils were able to use higher level grammar and punctuation correctly to entertain their readers and could explain how they had used them.
- On a few occasions teachers set work which is not well matched to pupils' individual needs and pupils are not sure what to do. Learning time is lost and progress is limited.
- Reading is very well taught and parents are invited to attend meetings which explain how they can help with reading and other subjects at home. This partnership is further strengthened by weekly open morning when parents have the opportunity to look at their child's work and discuss any concerns they have with the class teacher.
- Teachers mark pupils work thoroughly so they can monitor individual progress over time. Clear guidance is given on how pupils can improve their work and pupils say this is helpful however, they are not always given the time to respond. It also helps teachers measure the impact of specific support given to promote the progress of the most and least able.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour is exemplary both inside and outside the classroom, supporting good progress. Pupils are polite, courteous and well-mannered to each other and adults. They welcome visitors and are proud of their school.
- Reception children settle quickly and have a very positive start to their education. Parents agree with this and say their child is happy to come to school and the transition from pre-school to school is smooth.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent and disruption to lessons is rare because teachers manage behaviour effectively. Pupils listen to their teachers and to each other and do not interrupt. They respect differing opinions and encourage each other to adhere to the behaviour code.
- Pupils say they feel very safe and secure and know how to keep themselves safe in situations such as using the roads. School operates a "zero tolerance" for any form of unacceptable behaviour. Pupils say there are no incidents of bullying or racism but if a difficulty should occur

they are confident that an adult would deal with it effectively and immediately. Pupils understand the different types of bullying, including cyber bullying.

- Older pupils enjoy the responsibilities that their age brings them. They help look after the younger children, assist in assembly and the dining hall and set a good example throughout the school.
- The majority of parents feel their child is safe and happy at school, behaviour is typically good and they are well looked after. Inspectors agree with this.
- At play times pupils are happy and relaxed. They play safely and make good use of the available space. Key Stage 1 pupils waited their turn to shoot a ball into a basket, shared skipping ropes and were contented to sit and talk to their friends.
- Attendance is broadly average. There have been no fixed or permanent exclusions.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher provides good leadership. She is well supported by the senior leadership team and the governing body. They know the school well and have correctly identified the areas for improvement. Staff morale is high and they are fully committed to achieving high academic outcomes for all pupils.
- The school's detailed development plan clearly sets out targets with time scales and budgetary commitments. This is monitored by the senior leadership team and the governing body and has a strong emphasis on raising attainment further.
- Leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage and Special Educational Needs in particular are effective because they are supporting rising standards and achievement.
- Performance management is used effectively to hold teachers to account and to set annual objectives to help them develop their expertise. The quality of teaching is monitored through a programme of lesson observations and training requirements are identified and implemented quickly. Teachers are aware of the link between pay progression and pupils' achievements.
- Partnerships with parents are good. Their views are sought and acted upon through the parent panel which has representatives from all year groups. The format for pupils' school reports was restructured and the school website was designed in conjunction with parental help and ideas.
- Subject leaders are relatively new to their roles and have not had the opportunity to share their skills and expertise with other teaching staff or had a significant input into raising standards in their subjects.
- The curriculum, used as an exemplar of good practice by the local authority, is rich and inspirational. It provides pupils' with a range of well-planned opportunities to develop their skills across a range of subjects. Effective links between subjects makes pupils' learning meaningful. Pupils' imaginations are stimulated because exciting themes take account of their interests and work is based on first hand experiences as far as possible.
- The wide range of after school activities, residential and day visits, visitors and events enhances the learning experiences of all pupils. Community links are strong with pupils attending the town

council, writing letters to military personnel serving abroad and taking part in local events. There are many opportunities for pupils to demonstrate their musical and sporting talent which makes a strong contribution to pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

- The local authority provides light-touch support to the school because it is pleased with the standards that are being achieved.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors are ambitious for the school. They undertake regular training, are actively involved and are fully aware of the school's strengths and areas that require improvement. Their extensive skills provide good support but also challenge and rigorously hold the school to account. Their regular analysis of the quality of teaching and learning and the progress and attainment of pupils enables them to set well informed targets through a comprehensive development plan. The budget is spent wisely. Governors, through pupil premium funding, have provided additional support in literacy and numeracy and regularly monitor the impact on standards and progress. They are fully aware of the relationship between standards and performance related pay and encourage all staff to improve their skills in teaching and leadership and management through well focused professional development. Safeguarding meets statutory 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	121013
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	425385

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	5-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	405
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Doyle
Headteacher	Linda Howling
Date of previous school inspection	16 th September 2008
Telephone number	01366 388191
Fax number	01366 384286
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