

Halifax Primary School

Prince of Wales Drive, Ipswich, IP2 8PY

Inspection dates

17–18 September 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	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

- Teaching requires improvement. It does not consistently help all pupils to make good progress in every subject or year group.
- Teachers' expectations of all pupils are too similar and are not always high enough, particularly for the most able pupils.
- Teachers do not help all pupils to become independent learners. They sometimes encourage pupils to rely too heavily on adults.
- Teachers do not provide enough opportunities for all pupils to develop their basic skills across a range of subjects.
- Teachers do not help all pupils to apply their good phonic knowledge (the sounds letters make) to accelerate progress in reading.
- Leaders' evaluations of the quality of teaching are sometimes too generous.
- A minority of pupils do not have access to a broad and balanced curriculum. They do not have enough opportunities to learn in wide range of subjects.
- Senior leaders do not share responsibilities well enough to enable other staff to contribute fully to improve teaching and pupils' progress.
- Attendance is not high enough.

The school has the following strengths

- Children get off to a good start in the Reception classes. They enjoy a range of opportunities to develop their communication and social skills.
- The teaching of phonics is effective. Younger pupils are able to use their knowledge to read unfamiliar words and teachers help them to write letters correctly.
- Teaching assistants often support pupils well in lessons and help them to make progress.
- Pupils are polite and friendly. They cooperate willingly and encourage each other to behave well, and have good attitudes to learning.
- Senior leaders are determined to improve matters. They develop links with successful schools to learn from their practice.
- The headteacher receives good support from governors, parents and pupils who are keen for the school to do well. Staff morale is high.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 23 lessons. The headteacher and the deputy headteacher observed five lessons jointly with members of the inspection team. Inspectors observed small group teaching led by teaching assistants and a teacher.
- Inspectors looked at pupils’ workbooks and spoke to pupils about their work. They listened to some pupils reading and met with three groups of pupils. They also talked to pupils informally.
- An inspector met with five members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. They also met with senior staff, subject leaders, teachers and teaching assistants. They considered the 34 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors took account of the 19 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and spoke informally to parents and carers.
- The inspection team looked at a number of documents, including the school’s reports on pupils’ progress and attainment. The team checked records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding. Inspectors also considered the school’s records of checks made on the quality of teaching.

Inspection team

Michelle Winter, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Edwin Powell

Additional Inspector

Susan Cox

Additional Inspector

Joanna Jones

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger-than-average-sized primary school with two classes in each year group from Reception to Year 6.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium (extra funding provided by the government for particular groups such as children in care and those known to be eligible for free school meals) is broadly average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below that found nationally. The proportion supported through school action plus or a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- A higher proportion of pupils than usual join or leave partway through their primary school education.
- The school currently meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expected levels for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that teachers:
 - provide work which builds on pupils' skills and is at the right level of difficulty for all pupils so that they can work more independently
 - provide work which challenges the most able pupils
 - give pupils clear targets for improvement and information about their progress
 - share good practice.
- Raise the achievement of all pupils by ensuring that:
 - teachers have high expectations for the quality of work in all subjects
 - all pupils have regular opportunities to investigate and develop their basic skills in a range of subjects
 - teachers provide pupils with reading books that are at the right level of difficulty
 - staff renew their efforts to encourage pupils to attend school regularly.
- Improve leadership and management at all levels by:
 - improving the rigour of checks on the quality of teaching
 - reviewing the frequency and timing of small group teaching and support
 - ensuring that all pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum
 - further developing the role of subject and phase leaders so that they can contribute more fully to improving teaching and achievement.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Pupils' progress is not yet good because it is uneven across year groups. Pupils make good progress in the Reception classes and in Year 6 but in some other year groups, progress is slower. Pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics has improved over three years and is close to average. However, not enough pupils reach the higher levels of attainment. Teachers do not always plan work that challenges and stretches the most able pupils. In too many lessons, teachers' expectations of all pupils are similar despite their different ability levels.
- Although attainment is broadly average by the end of Year 6, progress is uneven across year groups. Progress often accelerates for older pupils but is slower in other year groups. A significant minority of pupils fall behind and are supported in catch-up groups.
- Pupils' knowledge of the sounds letters represent (phonics) is good. Younger pupils can use their phonic knowledge to read unfamiliar words. Sometimes, though, teachers do not capitalise on this good progress when they give pupils books that are too easy for them to read. Older pupils enjoy reading a wide range of books.
- Children enter the school with skills below those expected for their age. Good teaching in the Reception classes ensures that children have varied opportunities to develop their independent skills.
- Many pupils are able to write for a variety of purposes because they have many opportunities to write at length. Their spelling is improving because of good phonics teaching. Pupils' use of language and grammar is not improving quickly enough, however, because teachers do not always set appropriate tasks that build on prior learning. For instance, teachers do not always vary writing tasks and expectations for the different abilities in the classroom.
- Older pupils can add, subtract, divide and multiply numbers but they do not have enough opportunities to apply these skills to real-life situations or complex problems and investigations.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs often make good progress because teachers and skilled teaching assistants support them well in lessons.
- Pupils who are falling behind and some of the more-able pupils have additional lessons in small groups in order to help them catch up or accelerate progress in English and mathematics. However, the timing of this support means that some pupils do not have enough opportunities to learn in a wide variety of subjects. They miss science lessons, for instance, in order to practise and develop their writing or mathematical skills.
- Support provided through pupil premium funding is helping eligible pupils to catch up with other pupils, so their progress is at least as good and gaps in attainment are closing. In 2012, for example, the Year 6 results in English and mathematics showed that on average the attainment of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals was in line with that of their classmates, reflecting good progress.
- Effective teaching and many opportunities to play sports and swim help to develop pupils' stamina and fitness.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- The quality of teaching varies too much between subjects and year groups. The good teaching that exists in some classes is not consistent across the school. Teachers' expectations are not high enough in some subjects. For example, the quality of written work and presentation in science does not routinely match work in literacy books.
- Enthusiastic teaching in some year groups engages pupils' interest well and pupils have consistently good attitudes to learning. Teachers often use stimulating starting points for lessons, for example, boys were stimulated to write about the book *Stormbreaker*.
- Pupils have many opportunities to discuss their work with a friend. They co-operate well in groups and pairs. Teaching develops pupils' social and moral skills well.
- In the best lessons, teachers tailor their questions to the various abilities within the classroom. They skilfully ensure that questions challenge pupils of different abilities to think hard. This is not always the case.
- In some lessons, teachers do not use assessment information to set appropriately challenging work. Teachers do not always adapt their plans to build on what pupils already know or can do. They do not tailor activities to ensure that all pupils are making the important next steps in learning. This is more often the case in literacy lessons. Work in mathematics more often matches pupils' needs although it is sometimes not challenging enough.
- Teachers' marking gives pupils useful feedback in mathematics and literacy books but not in all other subjects. Teachers do not always help pupils to become independent learners. They do not use individual targets well enough to guide pupils or to show them how well they are doing over time. Pupils do not know their targets or how to use them.
- Some pupils are regularly withdrawn from lessons for small group teaching. This does not help some of them to develop their independent skills when they rely too heavily on adults. Furthermore, some pupils miss learning in other subjects while this additional support takes place.
- Phonics teaching has improved with the introduction of new teaching methods. Pupils enjoy learning the sounds letters make and the actions that go with them. Sometimes teachers do not change pupils' reading books often enough or check that reading books are at the right level.
- Science teaching often fails to meet pupils' needs because they have too few opportunities to plan investigations. Older pupils follow a template to write about their findings and are not encouraged to decide for themselves how to present their work.
- Physical education teaching is good and helps pupils develop their fitness and resilience. In one lesson, younger pupils made good progress in developing hand/eye coordination. Pupils were highly enthusiastic because the teaching kept them actively engaged.
- Skilled teaching assistants often work well with pupils in lessons to support good learning. The support they give to disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs in lessons is often effective. The school ensures that pupils with physical needs take a full part in all aspects of school life.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils behave well in lessons and have good attitudes to learning. Teachers develop positive relationships with pupils and often teach with good humour and enthusiasm. Teachers do their best to make lessons interesting and consequently pupils usually listen well.
- Pupils appreciate the rewards they receive for good behaviour. Teachers and other adults apply the behaviour policy consistently and fairly.
- The learning mentor monitors any incidents of poor behaviour to ensure that parents are quickly involved if problems persist. This work and that of the family support worker have been effective in improving the behaviour of some pupils. The school acts swiftly if bullying is reported.
- Pupils say they enjoy school and that behaviour is usually good, and parents agree. Pupils understand the difference between one-off incidents and bullying. They know about the main forms of bullying. Pupils say there is sometimes some name-calling, but none that is racist or homophobic.
- The school's efforts to improve the attendance of a minority of pupils have not had sufficient impact. Attendance is below average.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leaders' systems to monitor and improve teaching are appropriate but not always rigorous enough. The headteacher and deputy headteacher observe teaching regularly and provide useful feedback to teachers. However, their evaluations are sometimes too generous when they do not take enough account of the slow progress of some pupils.
- Senior leaders hold teachers to account for the attainment and progress of pupils. However, when pupils fall behind there is too much reliance on catch-up teaching and not enough on ensuring that all pupils make good progress in their lessons.
- Leaders do not ensure that all pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum. Some pupils spend too long working in additional small group lessons and miss other important lessons such as science. Some pupils spend too long in literacy and mathematics lessons and not enough time developing these skills through learning in other subjects.
- Phase and subject leaders are beginning to take more responsibility for progress, attainment and the quality of teaching but the headteacher and deputy headteacher have not yet delegated enough responsibility to others.
- The headteacher and her deputy are determined to improve matters. They have the confidence of staff and governors.
- The school provides coaching and training for teachers and teaching assistants. Leaders and governors have formed useful links with successful schools to learn from good practice. Elements of teaching have improved, including strategies to engage pupils in lessons.
- The school is a harmonious community. Relationships are based on mutual respect. However, the school's commitment to provide equality of opportunity does not fully translate into practice. The curriculum does not meet the needs of all learners.

- The school's action plans are mainly appropriate and have secured some improvements, including to behaviour, since the last inspection.
- The school works well with its families and provides regular and pertinent information to parents. In their responses and informal discussions, parents were highly supportive of the school and its leaders.
- Leaders are beginning to implement new plans to increase pupils' participation in sport and physical education. These plans include the offer of cheap swimming sessions for parents and their children.
- The local authority monitors the school through analysis of achievement at the end of Key Stage 2. Its involvement in the school over the past year has been limited. It has recently contacted the school to offer further support and inform leaders of its own assessment of the school's effectiveness. The school has looked beyond the local area for much of its support and training. However, local networks with other schools have been fruitful, for instance in moderating teachers' assessment across schools. The local authority supports these networks and encourages schools to form links. Training and clerking for the governing body, provided by the local authority, are valued and effective. The local authority representative has an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors ensure that staff pay rises and promotion link to the quality of teaching. They receive regular reports on teaching and achievement. They have taken action to address inadequacy. They support the headteacher well and appreciate improvements to the school under her tenure. However, they do not always challenge the school rigorously enough to improve achievement. The school meets national requirements for safeguarding pupils. Leaders ensure that staff have regular training and there is clear guidance to follow if there are any concerns about the welfare of pupils. The governors have a clear understanding of the allocation and impact of pupil premium funding.

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	124670
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	425295

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	402
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Roger Fern
Headteacher	Anna Hennell James
Date of previous school inspection	11 October 2011
Telephone number	01473 683932
Fax number	01473 683929
Email address	A.Hennell-James@halifaxprimary.net

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