

Highfield Primary School

Wright Street, Chorley, Lancashire, PR6 0SP

Inspection dates 26–27 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	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 because it is not consistently good across all classes and year groups, so that rates of progress vary and some gaps in learning remain.
- Pupils do not achieve as well in writing as in reading and mathematics.
- The senior leadership team is newly formed and includes posts currently filled by temporary appointments.
- Strategies to develop subjects other than English and mathematics are at an early stage of development.
- The leadership of teaching is not focused enough on developing all teachers' skills so that as well as moving lessons from 'requires improvement' to 'good', there is also an emphasis on moving from 'good' to 'outstanding'.

The school has the following strengths

- The governing body provides strong strategic leadership and a high degree of challenge to senior leaders.
- Standards of attainment by the end of Key Stage 2 have improved significantly, especially in reading and mathematics.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are good. They feel happy and safe.
- Staff have successfully created a positive, climate for learning that is raising expectations and aspirations.
- Pupils are increasingly resilient and independent and this is contributing to rising standards of attainment.
- Effective assessment and tracking systems are helping to accelerate progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 14 lessons taught by 10 teachers and also made brief visits to other lessons. One joint lesson observation was undertaken with the headteacher. The inspection team also listened to pupils from Year 1 and Year 2 read and examined the books of pupils from across the school.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils and discussed their experiences of school. They looked at a range of pupils' work and took account of the school's data on pupils' attainment and progress.
- There were insufficient responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) to allow results to be shown. The inspection team took account of the results of the school's own questionnaire to parents.
- Meetings were held with school leaders and other staff, two members of the governing body and two representatives from the local authority.
- The inspection team looked at a range of evidence relating to the school's view of its own performance and plans for improvement. Planning and monitoring documentation, the school website, records relating to behaviour and attendance and information relating to safeguarding arrangements were also examined.

Inspection team

Ruth James, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

John Nixon

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Information about this school

- Highfield is slightly smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Around 40% of pupils are currently known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those in the care of the local authority and those from forces families. The proportion entitled to additional support through this funding is higher than the national average.
- Around one third of pupils come from a range of minority ethnic heritages, and this proportion is slightly higher than average. The largest group is pupils of Pakistani heritage. A similar proportion speaks English as an additional language, and again this is above average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported at school action is a little lower than average, while the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is a little higher than average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further develop the quality of teaching and learning so that more lessons are good or outstanding by:
 - refining and enhancing strategies to match work to pupils' abilities to accelerate progress further
 - increasing the focus on writing across the curriculum, including an appropriate emphasis on developing vocabulary, and on spelling, punctuation and grammar
 - continuing to develop teachers' skills in explaining how pupils can improve their work.
- Develop the leadership and management of the school by:
 - securing a permanent senior leadership team to ensure that recent improvements are sustained over time
 - improving the support and professional development arrangements to develop teachers' skills further and increase the proportion of lessons that are good and outstanding
 - developing the skills of middle leaders to enable them to evaluate the impact of their work more effectively.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Children join the school with social, language and number skills that are below those expected for children of their age. They settle quickly and become familiar with routines set by staff. A wide range of activities both inside and outside engage children well and they make expected progress and enter Year 1 with skills and knowledge which remain below those expected nationally.
- Pupils continue to make expected progress during Key Stage 1 so that levels of attainment are below average by the end of Year 2. Improved teaching in Key Stage 1 is now beginning to accelerate the progress of younger pupils. In the 2013 phonics screening check, three-quarters of pupils reached the national average standard for six-year-olds, a considerable improvement on the previous year.
- In Key Stage 2, rates of progress vary, with slower progress in lower Key Stage 2. School data show that this is improving but not uniformly. In upper Key Stage 2, especially in Year 6, progress accelerates.
- Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 rose significantly in 2013. After several years of well-below average results, standards rose to above average in reading and mathematics, and were average in writing. Almost half the pupils gained a higher level in mathematics than expected for eleven year-olds, and four pupils gained the highest Level 6. Overall this cohort of pupils made good progress, as a result of the improved quality of teaching, raised expectations, more stimulating curriculum and positive attitudes to learning, especially in their final two years at Highfield.
- Most groups made good progress including those of minority ethnic heritage and those for whom English is an additional language.
- Although pupils eligible for pupil premium funding did well when compared with their peers nationally, within the school there was a gap between their attainment and those not eligible that was equivalent to about four terms in mathematics and writing, and two and a half terms in reading. Nevertheless, progress measures for those eligible for the pupil premium show that almost all made at least expected progress during Key Stage 2 and over half made more than expected progress in reading and mathematics. Pupil premium funding is appropriately deployed and includes additional teaching to support groups of eligible pupils.
- Due to effective support, both within lessons and during small group interventions, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similar progress to their peers.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching has improved and inspectors saw no inadequate teaching. Teaching requires improvement because it is not consistently good across all classes and year groups and so rates of progress vary.
- Teachers' expectations of pupils have been raised and teachers create a positive climate for learning. Pupils are attentive and conscientious and display a good work ethic. They settle to tasks set quickly and usually persevere when faced with difficulties. Explanations are clear. Information and communication technology is used effectively in some lessons. Lessons are interesting and engaging and, as a result, motivate pupils to succeed.
- Teachers' planning takes account of pupils' differing abilities and much work is broadly appropriate but it sometimes lacks refinement. For example, questions are not always sequenced in difficulty to build confidence. The work set is typically suitably challenging but there is scope for more-challenging work for the more-able pupils at times, for example, in mathematics.
- Teachers' skills in monitoring individual progress in lessons and adapting the work as the lesson progresses, varies. Historic gaps in pupils' learning are being addressed, with some teachers

becoming quite adept at spotting needs quickly.

- Most teachers use questions well, giving pupils time to think and work things out or asking supplementary questions to encourage further exploration. In most lessons the balance between teacher instruction to the class and independent work is about right.
- Plenaries are usually effective. Although often involving the whole class, some teachers do carefully plan which groups to involve in plenaries part way through lessons so that those capable of continuing their work without further input do so. Nevertheless, there are occasions when teachers leave too little time for independent work, or when they interrupt the flow of work with mini-plenaries that are not needed by all the pupils.
- The teaching of writing has improved well and spelling, punctuation and grammar are given suitable emphasis but remain a weakness, including for some older pupils. Pupils are increasingly practising their writing skills in subjects across the curriculum and are beginning to be given more opportunities to produce longer pieces of writing. During the inspection, Year 1 pupils proudly showed off their *Cinderella* stories spanning two or more pages.
- Reading is taught effectively. Pupils develop a sound understanding of letters and sounds and apply the strategies they have learned to unfamiliar words when reading. Appropriate strategies are in place to support those with fewer opportunities to practise reading outside school. Pupils enjoy reading and most concentrate well during the regular guided reading lessons.
- Teaching assistants usually make an effective contribution to lessons, supporting individuals and groups of pupils. Occasionally, teachers' management of teaching assistants does not make best use of their time, for example, during teacher expositions. There are occasional instances where questioning and interventions by teaching assistants are less effective.
- Marking of pupils work is effective and teachers routinely write comments to help pupils improve. These are often followed up in 'fixit time' set aside for this purpose, although this is not totally consistent in all classes. A few teacher comments are not specific enough or directive enough to ensure that pupils do act on them.
- Frequent and regular assessments and thorough progress tracking help to ensure that pupils who are underachieving are identified. Pupil progress meetings explore ways to support these pupils so that they can catch up, which they are increasingly doing.
- Pupils know their targets and work hard to achieve them, they are reviewed regularly. Presentation in books is typically neat and tidy and the many displays around school encourage pupils to take pride in their work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils show good attitudes to learning and this impacts well on their learning and progress. Highfield is an inclusive school where staff treat pupils with respect and courtesy and in return pupils behave well and cooperate with each other.
- Teaching fosters positive attitudes and mutual respect. For example, in a Year 2 lesson, pupils were encouraged to be reflective and think about how they could be better friends. Similarly, an assembly focusing on role models helped raise aspirations and promote good behaviour.
- In lessons and around the school, pupils are calm and considerate in their movements. Orderly lines of pupils are a common sight at the end of break times. Staff supervise vigilantly and model good behaviours through their active involvement in play at break times.
- Pupils say they feel safe and are able to approach staff with any problems they may have. They know about the different forms of bullying and say that cases are rare and quickly followed up. Pupils spoken with say there is very little inappropriate behaviour in the school and that any incidents are quickly and fairly dealt with, including the use of 'time out' from the playground.
- The school maintains a detailed log of behaviour-related incidents, which includes details of any action taken. There have been no racist incidents recorded in the school and this has been reported to governors. There have been no recent exclusions.
- Pupils learn about healthy eating, the dangers of drugs and alcohol and about internet and e-safety. There are a number of opportunities for pupils to play different sports, which has risen

through the school's use of additional sports funding and involvement in the local sports partnership.

- Some older pupils work with young ones to help them develop confidence in school. The school's nurture group at lunchtime provides a safe environment for the less-confident pupils.
- The school's own questionnaires from parents and carers show the vast majority are positive about school. There was a small minority of negative responses regarding poor behaviour but inspectors saw no evidence to substantiate these.
- The school's learning mentor is having a positive impact through her robust challenge to pupil absences and her development of positive relationships with parents. Attendance has improved and absence figures continue to fall, closing the gap with the most recent national figures. In particular, the number of pupils with persistent absence has fallen by 50%. Decisive action is taken when necessary including the use of fixed-penalty notices.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement. Although the quality of teaching is improving, there is still more to do to ensure this is sustained so that it becomes consistently good or better across the school. The headteacher, other senior leaders and the governing body recognise that further improvement is needed to sustain the recent rise in standards at the end of Key Stage 2.
- There have been several changes to the composition of the senior leadership team in recent years and, at the time of the inspection; the school did not have a full established permanent senior leadership team. The governing body has a clear strategy to resolve this by Easter 2014.
- Leaders are broadly accurate and honest in their judgements about the school. They undertake a range of actions to check how well the school is doing and use the information well to plan appropriate actions for improvement. They regularly check the quality of teaching and learning and provide specific training and support, which has led to improvements in teaching.
- Senior leaders provide good role models for teachers and pupils. New policies have been developed and senior leaders are increasingly rigorous in ensuring that all teachers follow these. The regular and thorough scrutiny of teachers' planning and pupils' work are contributing well to raising pupils' achievement. Pupil progress meetings have resulted in greater ownership by teachers and a clearer focus on the intervention strategies that need to be implemented to secure accelerated progress where underachievement is identified.
- Leaders' plans identify what needs to improve for teachers to become good but they are not always specific in identifying how this is going to be achieved. Insufficient attention is given to supporting the 'good' practitioners in school to become 'outstanding'.
- The curriculum is carefully planned to meet the needs of the pupils. It provides a range of positive experiences that promote learning and personal development. A range of visits enhances the curriculum and helps to develop pupils' skills.
- Middle leadership of subjects other than English and mathematics requires further development and this is recognised in the school's development planning. Some staff, including the special educational needs coordinator, are new to their roles and/or are temporary appointments. The school has not given sufficient attention to the development of leadership skills for those new to positions of responsibility.
- The local authority has provided much effective support but this has reduced in recent times as leaders and managers demonstrate that they have the capacity to lead and manage improvement from within the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The Governance of the school is strong. The governing body is well led and makes a significant positive contribution to the strategic direction of the school. Governors' work has been intrinsic in helping the school to develop policies and practice that have resulted in significant recent improvement.
 - Governors have a good range of skills and experience and know the school's strengths and

weaknesses. They are aware of how effective teaching is in different parts of the school. They understand the information provided on the tracking of pupils' progress, including those in receipt of pupil premium funding, and are rigorous in holding leaders to account.

- The governing body has utilised expertise within its membership to strengthen performance management ensuring close links between objectives, outcomes and pay progression for staff at all levels.

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	119204
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	427704

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	235
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrew Purcell
Headteacher	Sue Cornall
Date of previous school inspection	2 November 2011
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