

Highwood Primary School

Loves Green, Highwood, Chelmsford, CM1 3QH

Inspection dates 9–10 January 2014

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		Requires improvement	3
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

- In Key Stage 1 most pupils' progress in reading is too slow and the standards they achieve at the end of Year 2 are lower than in writing and mathematics.
- In Key Stage 2 it is mathematics that is the weaker area, with slower progress leading to standards at the end of Year 6 that are consistently below those in reading and writing.
- Some pupils do not get on with their work fast enough. Work is often untidily presented.
- The quality of teaching is not consistently good. Teachers' expectations of what some pupils can achieve are too low. Questioning strategies are not used well enough to challenge pupils' thinking and extend their knowledge.
- The English and mathematics coordinators have yet to make a significant contribution to improving the quality of teaching and raising standards.
- The school website does not meet current requirements.

The school has the following strengths

- This is an inclusive school. All pupils are made welcome. Relationships between pupils and staff are good.
- School data shows that pupils are beginning to make faster progress.
- In Key Stage 2, pupils make good progress in developing their reading skills.
- Teachers set pupils clear targets for improvement and mark their work well.
- Pupils have a good understanding of personal safety.
- The headteacher has high expectations and has managed the staffing situation well.
- The governing body checks on the work of the school and is working closely with the headteacher to improve outcomes for pupils.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed seven lessons, of which five were joint observations with the headteacher. In addition, the inspector made a number of shorter visits to lessons and attended an assembly. He heard all of the pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 read.
- Meetings were held with members of the governing body, staff, groups of pupils and the local authority representatives.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation, including the data the school has collected on pupils' attainment and progress, procedures for keeping pupils safe and the school development plan.
- The inspector took account of the 19 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and eight questionnaires returned by members of staff.

Inspection team

David Wynford-Jones, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. The remaining pupils come from a number of different minority ethnic backgrounds. None speak English as an additional language.
- Pupils are taught in three mixed-age classes, Reception to Year 2, Years 3 and 4, and Years 5 and 6.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is broadly average. The proportion identified for additional support at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well above average.
- Very few pupils are supported through the pupil premium. This is additional government funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, those who are looked after by the local authority and other eligible groups.
- The school runs a pre-school ('Bunnies') two afternoons a week for children aged 1-5. It was not visited during this inspection.
- Since the last inspection there have been some changes in staff and continuing staffing difficulties.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make teaching consistently good or better by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - making certain that lessons engage the pupils and proceed at a quick pace
 - ensuring all pupils settle quickly to their tasks, work with sustained concentration and take a greater pride in the presentation of their work
 - developing teachers' skills in asking questions which challenge pupils working at different levels.
- Accelerate pupils' progress in reading in Key Stage 1 and in mathematics in Key Stage 2 by:
 - ensuring that more pupils reach the expected standard in the end of Year 1 phonics check
 - providing pupils with more opportunities to practise their reading skills
 - making certain that pupils understand and use a wider range of mathematical terminology
 - challenging all pupils, especially the more-able, to reach higher standards.
- Improve the leadership of the school by:
 - developing the skills of the English and mathematics coordinators in analysing attainment and progress data to help raise expectations and to challenge their colleagues to teach consistently well
 - ensuring the school website meets current requirements.
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Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Standards at the end of Year 2 and 6 fluctuate from year to year. Although they are average overall, most pupils in these very small cohorts do not make enough progress in reading in Key Stage 1 and in mathematics in Key Stage 2.
- Standards in reading at the end of Year 2 have been lower over the last three years than at the time of the last inspection. Too few pupils reach the expected standard in the Year 1 checks of pupils' knowledge of phonics (the sounds that letters make). As a result, they do not acquire the necessary skills to help them read confidently. Pupils do not get sufficient opportunities to practise their reading skills. The school has recently changed the way in which phonics are taught. This is beginning to have a positive impact and pupils are now developing their understanding and use of phonics.
- At the end of Year 6 standards in mathematics have been consistently below those in reading and writing. This is in marked contrast to the end of Year 2, when standards in mathematics have been higher than those in reading and writing. Pupils are not making as rapid progress in developing their mathematical skills in Key Stage 2 because the teachers' expectations of some pupils, especially the more-able, are not high enough. Many pupils do not understand and use a wide range of mathematical terminology.
- The 2013 Year 6 test results show an improvement on the outcomes for 2012. This supports the school's own data showing that pupils' progress is accelerating. This is as a result of improved teaching and better use of assessment information to pitch the work at a level which is appropriate for the pupils.
- Pupils' writing skills are improving. For example, pupils in Year 6 use adjectives, metaphors and similes well to help bring their writing to life and to stimulate interest. However, in all year groups there are too many pupils whose handwriting skills are not sufficiently well developed. Too many pieces of work are untidily presented.
- In Key Stage 2, pupils make good progress in developing their reading skills. By the time pupils reach Year 6 they read with confidence. For the last three years, standards in reading have been higher than those in writing and mathematics.
- The majority of the children enter the Reception class with levels of skills and knowledge broadly in line with those expected for their age. However, a significant minority are below the level expected. All children make at least the expected progress and, by the end of the year, most have acquired the skills, knowledge and understanding expected of a typical five-year-old.
- Pupil premium money is used appropriately to support individual pupils and helps them to be fully included in school and class activities. For example funding has been used to employ additional teaching assistants and to subsidise educational visits and after-school clubs.
- From their various starting points, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make the expected progress. Their progress is checked carefully by the headteacher and, if necessary, additional support is provided.
- The primary school sports funding has been allocated appropriately. Sports coaches encourage pupils to become involved in sporting activities and to take part in competitions with other

schools. Pupils enjoy taking part and have a good understanding of how sport contributes to a healthy lifestyle.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because pupils do not make consistently good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. This is reflected in their uneven achievement.
- Teachers' expectations of some pupils, especially the more-able, are not high enough. Initial questions are posed but these are not routinely followed up with supplementary questions which challenge and extend pupils' thinking.
- In some lessons the pace of pupils' learning is too slow. Teachers do not check that pupils are on task. At times some pupils' attitude toward learning slips as they lose interest and concentration.
- There is evidence that all teachers can teach well. Teachers have liaised with colleagues in other schools, attended courses and regularly discuss with the headteacher their teaching and its impact on pupils' progress. They have responded positively to the suggestions to improve outcomes for pupils. However, scrutiny of pupils' exercise books and assessment records show that teaching is not yet consistently good.
- Where teaching is most effective, teachers have high expectations and are clear what they expect pupils of different abilities to achieve. They set pupils appropriate tasks and provide guidance on how the work should be undertaken. They check during the lesson how well pupils are doing and, if necessary, quickly adapt their planning to suit the pupils' needs. Questioning is used well to ensure the pupils are clear about what they are expected to do and to deepen their knowledge and understanding. Lessons proceed at a good pace and the learning support assistants are deployed effectively to work with individuals and groups.
- There are many examples of good marking. Praise is used effectively and pupils are usually offered guidance as to how to improve their work. Pupils know their targets and teachers make regular reference to them in lessons.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are good. Teachers use a range of strategies to manage and promote pupils' good behaviour. They work closely with teaching assistants and try to ensure that all pupils, including those whose circumstances might make them vulnerable, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, are fully included and have equal access to the same learning opportunities as other pupils.

The behaviour and safety of pupils require improvement

- Pupils' behaviour requires improvement because some pupils are too slow to settle to work and engage in off-task discussions. Some do not take enough pride in the presentation of their work.
- Pupils are polite and well-mannered in the way they move calmly around the school and show respect for each other and for adults. They know about different types of bullying, for example name-calling, fighting, racial, religious or cyber-bullying. Incidents of inappropriate behaviour are rare. There are no reported cases of racist behaviour.
- The school's policy on promoting good behaviour is clear and followed with reasonable

consistency. When action is needed, it is taken: there has been one exclusion since the last inspection.

- The school's work to keep pupils safe is good. Pupils say they feel safe in school because the staff know them well. Pupils know who to turn to if they are worried and are confident they will be listened to.
- Pupils also have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. They understand about the importance of road safety. For example, some raised concerns about speeding traffic outside the school gates. They know about the potential dangers when using computers to access the internet.
- Pupils' attendance has improved steadily and is now average for primary schools. This is helping them to make better progress.

The leadership and management require improvement

- The English and mathematics coordinators have yet to fully develop their skills in analysing and using pupils' performance data to help the headteacher in raising expectations and in supporting their colleagues to consistently teach well. Having recently worked closely with and taken the advice of colleagues in other schools, they know what has to be done and have written appropriate action plans.
- The headteacher has managed staffing difficulties well. The measures taken by the governing body and the headteacher to improve leadership and staff development are beginning to have an impact. The school's more rigorous planning and the quickening rate of progress across the school indicates that it has the capacity to improve.
- In all classes, there is a focus on developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. All subjects of the National Curriculum are taught and, where possible, brought together through a whole-school theme. Good use is made of the extensive grounds to enrich pupils' experiences, for example through the work on 'forest schools'. However, the headteacher has not ensured that best use is made of the Early Years Foundation Stage outdoor area to promote all areas of learning.
- The wide range of activities promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Pupils are given many opportunities to enrich their education, for example through educational visits, undertaking responsibilities and taking part in inter-school sporting activities.
- The local authority has provided the school with reasonable support. Officers have helped the headteacher in checking on the quality of teaching and in analysing data.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is working well with the headteacher to bring about improvements and to promote good relationships within the school and the local community. Governors are keen to ensure that the school has a good reputation; they will not tolerate any discrimination.
 - Governors regularly attend training sessions and are currently undertaking an audit of their skills so that their areas of expertise are put to best use. Governors check on the progress of the actions identified in the school development plan, which are based on an accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governors have a secure understanding of how targets are set for teachers to improve, and the process for rewarding good teaching. Minutes of the governing body meetings show that questions about pupils' progress and the

quality of teaching are being asked. The governing body monitors the school's budget appropriately and makes sure that the primary sports funding and the pupil premium allocation are spent as intended. There are suitable processes in place to monitor and to check on the effectiveness of the expenditure. The governing body ensures that pupils are kept safe and that the school meets the latest requirements for safeguarding. However, governors have not ensured that the school website meets current 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	114869
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	431916

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	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	39
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alan Oddy
Headteacher	Helen Hutchings
Date of previous school inspection	23 March 2011
Telephone number	01245 248200
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