

Howard Community Primary School

St Olave's Road, Bury St Edmunds, IP32 6RW

Inspection dates 5–6 June 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	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.

- Children achieve well in the Early Years Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception). They make particularly good progress in developing their communication and social skills.
- Pupils' achievement is rising at Key Stages 1 and 2. School records and work in pupils' books show that those currently in the school have made good progress.
- Teaching is good and some aspects are outstanding. Teaching assistants play an important role in the good progress pupils make, especially those with disabilities.
- The school has improved well since the previous inspection in spite of a change of half the teaching staff. The headteacher, other leaders and governors are working effectively to raise standards and improve the quality of teaching.
- Parents have very positive views of the school and value all the information they receive.
- Pupils behave well and feel safe in school. They have positive attitudes to learning. The outstanding behaviour of the oldest pupils is an excellent role model to the rest of the school.
- Pupils enjoy learning because teachers use themes to make interesting links between different subjects.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching does not always enable pupils to make rapid progress, especially in learning phonics (the sounds that letters make).
- Teachers mark pupils' work well but do not make sure the suggested improvements are made or set the highest of expectations for accurate spelling and presentation of work.
- The headteacher and other leaders check regularly on the quality of teaching. However, they do not always check quickly or rigorously enough to see that areas previously identified to improve have done so. As a consequence, there is inconsistency in teaching and recording pupils' progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 13 lessons some of which were observed jointly with the headteacher. They visited three phonics sessions, attended two assemblies and observed break time and lunchtime arrangements. The inspectors also heard pupils from Reception, Year 1 and Year 4 read.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders and the Chair of the Governing Body and other governors and occupational therapists. Inspectors met with representatives of the school council, Year 2 and Year 4. A telephone discussion took place with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took into account the 10 responses to the online questionnaire Parent View, the outcomes of the school's own questionnaire for parents, and discussions with parents at the start and end of the school day. The views of 17 staff who completed the staff questionnaire were also taken into account.
- Inspectors looked at the school's work and at documentation including: leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness; the school development plan; information relating to safeguarding; and records of pupils' attainment and progress. Inspectors sampled pupils' books in each class.

Inspection team

Cheryl Thompson, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Lynn Lowery

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than the average-sized primary school. Pupils leave the school at the end of Year 4 and attend a middle school. There are six classes and a morning and afternoon Nursery class. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium is above average. This funding is for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those supported through school action is above average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well above average.
- Since the previous inspection, there has been a change of half the teaching staff, including a deputy headteacher.
- The school is awaiting the local authority's imminent decision regarding school reorganisation in the area.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Move teaching to outstanding so that pupils make more rapid progress by:
 - keeping a more rigorous check on the group teaching of phonics to make sure that the pace of learning is effective
 - the headteacher and senior leaders checking promptly and rigorously that teachers have taken steps to improve their practice in areas noted for development
 - making sure that pupils make the suggested improvements to their work following marking
 - teachers setting high expectations for pupils to spell and punctuate their writing to the best of their ability.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are below those typical of the age group, particularly in speech, language, communication and social skills. Children make good progress in these areas and by the time they start in Reception, they are a little below the levels typical of the age group.
- Children continue to make good progress in their Reception year and the most-able children in particular make good progress in learning and using letter sounds to help them read and spell. When they start in September, few children know many letter sounds but by the end of October, the majority know all the letter sounds and are beginning to use them to help write the words they want to write.
- Since the previous inspection, there has been a gradual improvement in standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 4. The most noticeable improvement is in writing; in Year 2, standards have moved from below average to average. The school has made considerable changes to the way writing is taught and practised. As a result, pupils are very keen to write, enjoy planning their work and write at length.
- Disabled pupils make outstanding progress as a result of teachers and highly proficient teaching assistants working in partnership with parents and outside professionals such as occupational therapists. Parents speak very positively about the excellent care their children receive. They are confident that their children are safe and should there be any concerns, they would be told immediately.
- Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in response to well-focused support and working closely with parents. The most-able pupils make good progress because work stretches them and challenges them to learn at their level.
- Standards at the end of Year 4 have improved since the previous inspection as a result of the headteacher's improved use of data to hold teachers to account for pupils' progress. Attainment of the current Year 4 is above average in reading with almost a half the class reading at the level expected at Year 6. In writing and mathematics, only a very small number of pupils are working at a level a little below that expected. The remainder of the class are attaining as well or better than is expected for their age with a quarter working at the level expected at Year 6. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium achieve as well as their classmates. The gaps between the two groups have closed considerably in the past two years because their progress is carefully tracked and changes made if there is any slowing of progress. Gaps, where there are any, in standards are now less than half a term's progress.
- The reason that achievement is not yet outstanding is that children in the Reception year who find learning letter sounds hard do not consistently make good progress. Also, although time is provided for pupils to practise their handwriting style, teachers do not always expect the highest standards of presentation, spelling and punctuation. Consequently, the presentation of some pupils' work does not reflect the interesting content nor do pupils routinely check to correct spelling and punctuation mistakes.

The quality of teaching**is good**

- In all classes there are good relationships between adults and pupils and among pupils themselves. Teaching assistants are proficient and are a valued part of the team as they contribute significantly to the purposeful learning in classes.
- Teaching over time is typically good. In the Nursery and Reception classes, all staff ensure that children are guided well to develop good learning habits and behaviour. Interesting activities are planned for inside and outside the classrooms. Children's speaking skills are developed well by all adults using a wide vocabulary and encouraging children to speak clearly.
- Teachers mark pupils' work well. However, teachers do not set the expectation that work will be improved in response to the detailed marking. As a result, pupils often continue to make the same mistakes, for example, forgetting to check that basic spellings and punctuation are correct.
- The funding allocated for those pupils supported by the pupil premium is spent well. It helps to provide additional adult support so that pupils are taught in smaller groups and ensures full access to all learning opportunities. A particular feature is the employment of a speech and language therapist for one day per week. As a consequence, pupils have expert help and staff have opportunities to develop their skills so that they can continue with specific teaching with individuals.
- Teaching for the most-able pupils is good overall with outstanding aspects in parts of Year 2 and in all of Year 4. Pupils have challenging work and are expected to persevere. As a result, pupils try hard to develop good work habits.
- Teaching for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is good; as a result they make good progress from their different starting points. The school employs a considerable number of teaching assistants who are deployed effectively to work with small groups under the guidance of class teachers. Disabled pupils receive outstanding support to make sure they not only follow specific programmes set by outside agencies but are also fully included in lessons and do well.
- Teaching is not yet outstanding because the teaching of phonics for groups of pupils in Reception and Year 1 sometimes lacks pace. As a consequence, on occasions pupils do not make rapid progress.

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

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They are very polite, well-mannered and friendly. School records show that behaviour is typically good. Pupils, staff and parents are most positive about behaviour in the school.
- Children develop good work habits and social skills from their start in the school. For children who find it very difficult to manage their own behaviour, staff set firm guidelines and involve parents and outside professionals, if needed. Records show that the school is very successful in helping children to moderate their behaviour. Exclusions are rare and correct procedures are always followed.
- In Year 4, pupils' behaviour is outstanding. Pupils take on responsibilities around the school willingly and are kind and considerate to others. School councillors take note of other pupils' views and know that their ideas will be valued and, if appropriate, acted upon.

- The way that the school links subjects together in themes promotes pupils' eagerness to learn. They are enthusiastic about their tasks and work very well together, for example, to create art work to exhibit in the town.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils develop a clear understanding of how to keep themselves safe, including when using computers and mobile phones. Parents express confidence that their children are well looked after and kept safe. For their age, pupils have a good understanding of different types of bullying. They say that if they have any concerns they are very confident that staff will deal with them to their satisfaction.
- The headteacher's success in improving links with parents has had a very good impact on the level of attendance. In the past two years, the attendance rate has risen from a below average level and is now average. The proportion of persistent absenteeism has also dropped considerably.
- Behaviour is not yet outstanding as, on occasions, teaching does not fully capture pupils' interests and pupils become distracted as their concentration dips.

The leadership and management are good

- In spite of a change to half the teaching staff, the headteacher has brought about good improvements in pupils' progress in writing and in the quality of teaching since the previous inspection. She provides strong and determined leadership. Senior leaders have developed their roles well and work effectively as a team. The governing body has a clearer understanding of how teachers' performance is linked to their pay.
- The school knows itself well and uses this understanding to identify priorities to be tackled to bring about further improvement. The school is making good use of its primary sports funding to raise pupils' achievement, increase their participation in a wider range of sports and promote their health and well-being. Pupils like the range of clubs on offer and a high proportion of pupils take part in at least one sports club.
- The school's success in achieving equality of opportunity is seen by the minimal differences in achievement between different groups of pupils. Special programmes for individuals enable them all to make at least good progress. This includes extending the most-able pupils and meeting the targets for disabled pupils or those who have special educational needs.
- The headteacher tracks pupils' progress rigorously and, with senior leaders, uses this information in regular meetings with teachers. Here there are discussions about pupils who are not making the progress expected of them. They set and review targets as a result of these discussions, and arrange suitable work or support to ensure better progress.
- All teachers have challenging targets to meet that are linked to pupils' achievement. Only teaching that leads to pupils making good or better progress is rewarded financially.
- The quality of teaching is checked on very regularly so that there is a clear picture of what is needed for each teacher to improve his or her performance. From this, individual programmes of support are arranged. Senior leaders provide good support for their colleagues through teaching alongside them or helping with lesson planning.
- Themes link learning well between subjects. These fire the pupils' enthusiasm and are supported by visits to places of interest or having visitors to school. The school takes advantage of extra

funding available for pupils to learn to play different musical instruments.

■ The local authority provides good support for the school.

■ The reason that leadership and management are not outstanding is that the headteacher and senior leaders do not always check rigorously enough to see if teachers have taken prompt action on the areas identified for improvement. As a result, there are a few inconsistencies in the pace of pupils' learning in phonics.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Since the previous inspection, governors have undertaken a review of their work and training to develop their roles further. They visit the school frequently and involve themselves in parents' evenings and consult with parents both formally and informally.
- Governors check on the school's work through their visits and meetings with staff. Governors' understanding of data on pupils' progress and attainment has improved and they are aware of strengths and weaknesses. They have a good understanding of how targets are set for teachers and of appraisal systems. Decisions about teachers' pay are closely and appropriately linked to performance and responsibilities.
- Governors manage finances well. They check on the impact of the spending to support pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium to ensure best value. In the climate of uncertainty about the school's future being in the present building, they have spent finances on resources that are portable, rather than refurbishment or building projects.
- The governing body makes sure that arrangements for pupils' safeguarding meet the current national 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	124555
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	442069

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	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	216
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Marie Bennett
Headteacher	Bernadette Higgins
Date of previous school inspection	18 October 2012
Telephone number	01284 754450
Email address	admin@howard-pri.suffolk.sch.uk

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