

Hollybush Primary School

Fordwich Rise, Hertford, SG14 2DF

Inspection dates 3–4 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils' achievement has improved since the previous inspection. They are making particularly good progress, in reading and mathematics.
- Teaching is good. Lessons are well planned and pupils know what they are expected to achieve.
- The teaching of skills in reading and mathematics is good. Pupils are able to apply their mathematical skills they have learned particularly well to their work in other subjects with confidence.
- The curriculum is varied and interesting. It is effective in promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are good throughout the school, contributing significantly to their good achievement.
- The school's arrangements to keep pupils safe and secure are good. Consequently, pupils feel safe and well looked after.
- Children in the early years make a good start to their education. They have a thirst and love for learning. Well-planned activities ensure children make good progress and develop the skills and knowledge they need to be confident learners.
- Governors have a clear understanding of the school's needs and offer good levels of support and challenge to the headteacher.
- School leaders know the school's strengths and what could be still better. This is because robust procedures to monitor the school's work have been developed and implemented. These make a strong impact on raising the quality of teaching and achievement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils' progress in writing is not quite as good as it is in reading and mathematics.
- Teachers and teaching assistants do not always check regularly enough on pupils' progress in lessons to ensure that it is quick enough.
- Teachers' written feedback to pupils does not always lead to improvements in pupils' work.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 13 lessons or part-lessons across the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with staff and four members of the governing body. The lead inspector had a discussion with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors talked with groups of pupils and individual pupils during lessons and playtimes to find out their views about the school. They also listened to pupils read and talked to them about their enjoyment of reading.
- Inspectors took account of the 34 responses to the Ofsted online parent questionnaire (Parent View). Parents' views were also gathered from informal discussion and the school's own survey.
- The views of staff were gathered through discussions and the 18 returns to the Ofsted staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at documents, including improvement plans, safeguarding documents, records relating to attendance, systems for tracking pupils' progress and the school's data on pupils' attainment and progress.

Inspection team

Richard Blackmore, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Wayne Harris

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a slightly smaller-than-average primary school.
- Children in the early years attend full time in the Reception class and part time in the Nursery.
- The school meets current floor standards set by the government, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is above that found in schools nationally. Pupil premium funding is money provided by the government to provide extra support to pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is broadly similar to the national average.
- Most pupils come from a White British background.
- There is a before- and after-school club for pupils who attend the school. The governing body manages this provision.
- The governing body is led by two governors who share the role of Chair of the Governing Body.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' achievement in writing by:
 - enabling pupils to write at length more often
 - ensuring that pupils frequently use their writing skills across different subjects.
- Improve teaching by:
 - ensuring that teachers and support staff regularly check on pupils' work in lessons to identify opportunities to extend and deepen pupils' learning
 - making sure that marking gives pupils advice on how they can improve their work, and that teachers ensure that pupils are given sufficient opportunity to respond to their comments.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher provides good leadership and has created a supportive culture in which teaching and good behaviour flourish. He has set clear priorities to improve further the good quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. He has accurately identified where improvements need to be made. With support from the effective governing body, he has taken action to address areas of weakness. For example, the tracking of pupils' progress, based on secure assessments, has greatly improved.
- Subject leaders manage their subjects well and lead teaching effectively. They check the quality of teaching and its impact on the progress pupils make. Subject leaders also provide training for staff in areas which need to improve and identify where further improvements can be made. They have been successful in raising the achievement of pupils across the school, particularly in reading and mathematics.
- Leaders have a strong commitment to equal opportunities. They ensure that all of the school's resources, including its finances, are used to support the progress of all pupils. Leaders work hard and successfully to eliminate any form of discrimination.
- The school's curriculum is broad and provides many stimulating experiences for pupils. It is enhanced by a wide range of clubs and visitors to school, including authors. Pupils successfully participate in competitive sporting events against other local schools.
- Fundamental British values of democracy, the law, liberty, respect and tolerance of faiths and beliefs are actively promoted. Pupils are strongly encouraged to show tolerance and respect to people from all backgrounds and they respond very well. Pupils understand the importance of everyone being able to express their opinions freely. They appreciate that the school rules are there to make sure the school is a happy and safe place. The school council is democratic. Potential members have to persuade their classmates that they will represent their interests and are expected to deliver on their election ideas. In this way, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Funds to support disadvantaged pupils, and disabled pupils or those with special educational needs are spent appropriately on extra lessons beyond the school day, one to one support in lessons and small group teaching. This, together with the careful monitoring of progress, enables all pupils to have an equal opportunity to achieve well.
- The primary school physical education and sport funding is used to provide sports coaching and to develop the quality of physical education lessons within school time. It also enables pupils to take part in a wide range of competitions with other local schools and to experience residential trips that, for example in Year 6, provide opportunities for canoeing and archery. As a result, pupils develop new skills and experience a wider range of sports that they have not tried before.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements and are effectively implemented. Risk assessments for the many exciting trips are robust and other records rigorously maintained.
- The local authority has worked very closely with the school. Its good challenge and support have contributed to the significant improvements since the previous inspection.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are effective and are led well by the joint chairs. They have a good understanding of the quality of teaching, and the school's overall effectiveness. They have attended training to improve their skills in analysing information about the school's performance, including data on pupils' achievement. Governors are well informed about many aspects of the school. This enables them to offer good levels of support and challenge. Governors have specific areas of expertise, including financial and educational backgrounds. These skills and expertise greatly enhance the capacity of the governing body to support the overall leadership of the school and ensure that processes such as performance management are

carried out effectively. Decisions about pay rises for teachers are based on how well their pupils are performing. Governors are knowledgeable about how the school's budget is used, including any additional funding, and carefully check that it is making a positive difference to pupils' progress. They ensure all statutory requirements relating to safeguarding are fully in place.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They behave well around the school and in lessons throughout the school. Pupils listen carefully to instructions and are eager to do well. This allows lessons and learning to move along without interruption.
- The before- and after-school club provides pupils with a good start and end to the day. They enjoy the club in which they also behave well.
- A large majority of parents, agree that pupils behave well. The school's behaviour logs show that when incidents do happen, they are explored and dealt with appropriately.
- Pupils enjoy school and their attendance is broadly average. The number of pupils who are persistently absent has decreased due to leaders' effective efforts to encourage attendance. Pupils' positive attitudes towards learning have made an important contribution to their improved achievement since the previous inspection.
- Pupils enjoy taking responsibilities. The members of the school council have a very high profile within the school. They are involved in deciding on aspects of curriculum planning and consult with other pupils on how the school can be improved. Attitudes to learning are good and pupils focus well on the work they are set. Very occasionally, when learning is not as challenging as it is in most lessons, a few pupils lose concentration.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and secure in a wide range of situations, including the possible dangers when using computers, mobile phones and tablets. They are fully aware that some internet sites are inappropriate and that contact by others through messaging may not always be well intentioned.
- Staff are trained effectively and know how to keep pupils safe in school and when out on visits. They know the procedures to follow if they are worried about the personal well-being or safety of any of the pupils. The school's recruitment procedures to ensure that staff are suitable to work with children are robust.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school because teachers and all other adults look after them. Most parents who responded to Parent View agreed that the school keeps their children safe and looks after them well. Inspectors found the school to be a safe and secure environment in which pupils are valued.
- The school's records confirm pupils' views that incidents of bullying are few and pupils are taught how to share quickly any concerns they have. Pupils say, 'There is always someone to talk to here and our headteacher always understands.' This helps them to feel safe and valued.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching has improved. It is now typically good because teachers have higher expectations of what pupils can achieve. Good relationships give pupils the confidence to succeed.
- Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' progress by supporting groups or individuals to practise skills taught in the main lesson. They establish a good focus on learning and have built good

relationships. Pupils appreciate the praise and rewards they receive for their hard work.

- The teaching of reading is good and pupils read regularly as part of a daily guided session, as well as for research and pleasure. Pupils read with confidence. Most pupils read accurately and, when they are faced with an unfamiliar word, use their knowledge of phonics (letters and their sounds) to help them. High calibre teaching of phonics in the early years and Key Stage 1 resulted in pupils performing higher than national averages in the check of their knowledge of phonics at the end of Year 1, last year.
- The teaching of mathematics is effective and pupils have developed a good range of basic skills and are quick at their mental mathematics too. Where there are gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding good quality teaching has helped them to catch up quickly. Opportunities for pupils to engage in investigative work and problem-solving tasks are used well so their skills in mathematics are carefully extended in lessons in other subjects as well as in mathematics lessons.
- Overall, writing is taught well and, as a result, pupils' achievement and progress are strengthening. Pupils' written work is planned carefully with clear points for development identified from one lesson to the next, which is helping pupils to improve. However, not all teaching ensures that pupils use writing in the full range of subjects to the best effect so that they make outstanding progress.
- Pupils have some good opportunities to write using first-hand experiences and educational visits that they have enjoyed as part of topics they have learned about. However, pupils have too few opportunities to write at length, including in different subjects.
- Typically, pupils persevere with tasks and want to do well. Pupils are very confident in expressing their views in discussions and when responding to questions. Teachers ensure that there are many opportunities to explore what it means to be British and for pupils to experience British values in real-life situations.
- Teaching is effective throughout the school but there are times when staff do not monitor the speed at which pupils learn during the whole lesson and, therefore, they are not able to adjust tasks to extend learning. This prevents some pupils from making the accelerated progress of which they are capable.
- Teachers' marking of pupils' work is frequent and usually enables them to reflect on their learning. However, the school marking policy is not always followed. As a result, pupils do not understand fully how they can improve their work and as a result improvements can take longer for pupils to master. They also do not always have sufficient time to respond to the feedback to help them reach their next steps.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- In 2014, at the end of Key Stage 2, pupils left the school six months ahead of pupils nationally in reading and mathematics. Their attainment in writing was in line with the national average. Pupils made particularly good progress in reading and mathematics. All pupils made the progress expected of them and over half made more progress than is expected between the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Their progress in writing, although good, was not as strong because not quite as many pupils made more progress than expected to reach the higher levels of attainment.
- Scrutiny of pupils' current work and records of their achievements show that they are continuing to make good, and sometimes better, progress. In the 2014 national tests pupils did not achieve well in grammar, punctuation and spelling. The teachers have focused sharply on bringing about rapid improvements. Spelling has improved because pupils are using their knowledge of phonics effectively to ensure they spell words correctly. There are also clear improvements in their use of grammar and punctuation in their writing.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the required level in the Year 1 check of their knowledge of phonics was above average in 2014. This is an improvement from the previous year, when it was similar to the national average. This improvement is seen in the confident and enthusiastic way in which Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 pupils attempt to read unfamiliar words.

- Disadvantaged pupils are making good progress across the school. In national tests at the end of Year 6 in 2014, the attainment of eligible pupils was a little over two terms behind their classmates in reading and writing and over four terms behind in mathematics. When compared to other pupils nationally, they were about two terms behind in reading and three terms behind in mathematics. In writing they attained similar levels to other pupils nationally. Remaining gaps are now closing rapidly in reading and mathematics in most year groups. There is very clear evidence in pupils' books, school data, and work seen in class and in small-group activities that disadvantaged pupils are helped to make accelerated progress to catch up with the others.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similar good progress to others. Their needs are identified early and precisely so that appropriate support can be given to help them make good progress from their various starting points. The school ensures that any barriers to learning do not lower their expectations of what they can achieve.
- The most able pupils are making good progress because they are successfully challenged to achieve high standards in reading and mathematics. In writing, not quite as many pupils reach high standards. Those capable of working at levels usually achieved by pupils in secondary school attend extra sessions, for example in mathematics. This is to ensure they achieve as well as they can, and that they are prepared well for the transfer to secondary school.
- Pupils' progress in writing, although good, is not quite as fast as it is in reading and mathematics because they have too few opportunities to write at length. Pupils are not encouraged strongly enough to use adventurous and more complex vocabulary when writing in different curriculum areas.

The early years provision is good

- Children start school with skills that are typical for their age. Children in the Nursery and Reception classes are helped to settle quickly, behave well and make good progress so that a large majority reach a good level of development. Children are well prepared for Year 1.
- Boys, leaving the Reception class in 2014, did not reach the same level of development as girls, including in reading and writing. The school has responded quickly to address this by improving the range of activities that motivate boys to read a variety of words and texts with greater accuracy, for example in the 'car wash'. Boys' writing skills have improved as a result of accurate assessments that staff use to plan tasks that show them how to write increasingly complex sentences.
- The quality of teaching is good. Adults regularly assess how well children are learning and identify where they might need more help or further challenge. Activities are designed skilfully to capture children's imagination and spark their interest. There is a good balance between activities led by adults and those chosen by children.
- Children behave well and work together sensibly on their activities in the Reception and Nursery classes, sharing resources and enjoying their role play. They develop their confidence and ability to persevere well.
- Leadership is good and has ensured a consistent and effective approach to teacher-led learning and a thorough assessment of children's progress. The early years areas are well organised, vibrant and attractive. Safeguarding arrangements ensure that children are kept safe and secure.
- Partnerships with parents are established quickly when children start school. They strengthen over time so that the transition into Reception is smooth. Parents and staff work closely to ensure that children's needs and interests are met.

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	117263
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	462100

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	226
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Samantha Branch and Gill Pick(Joint Chairs)
Headteacher	Alan Brown
Date of previous school inspection	19-Jun-13
Telephone number	01992 581454
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