

Halifax Primary School

Prince of Wales Drive, Ipswich, Suffolk, IP2 8PY

Inspection dates	6–7 October 2015
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher has driven rapid improvement in key areas of the school's work over the last three years. Outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics have all improved.
- Pupils achieve well and make good progress from their different starting points in every key stage.
- Most teaching effectively supports good progress. Based on high expectations, good subject knowledge and excellent feedback for pupils, much of the teaching inspires and motivates them.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are given an excellent understanding of the world of work.
- Pupils enjoy school and feel safe and cared for. They are polite, respectful and keen to learn
- The personal development of pupils is good. They are confident, and enjoy challenges in their learning. Governance of the school is strong. Governors know their school well and regularly visit to see how the school is doing. They provide rigorous challenge to the headteacher.
- Partnerships with parents are effective. Parents are welcome into school and feel teachers will always listen when they have concerns.
- Provision in the early years is good. Leaders and teachers respond well to the differing needs of every child. The learning environment has been carefully planned to support good progress.
- The teaching of early letters and sounds (phonics) is particularly effective.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils' achievement in reading, although good, is not as strong as it is in writing and mathematics. Opportunities to share the best teaching in school have not yet ensured that progress is consistently outstanding.
- In Key Stage 2, too few disadvantaged pupils reach the highest levels.
- Sometimes, pupils do not make the progress that they could because teachers' expectations are not high enough, or because their subject knowledge is not strong enough.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure more children reach the higher levels in reading by:
 - providing more challenging activities in class
 - raising expectations for what can be achieved by all pupils, particularly those who are eligible for the pupil premium
 - encouraging pupils to be more confident in choosing challenging books to read.
- Improve the consistency with which teaching impacts on learning over time by:
 - sharing the best practice that exists within the school more fully
 - strengthening the depth of teachers' subject knowledge, particularly in science
 - ensuring that expectations for what pupils can achieve are consistently and sufficiently high in every class.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher have created an ambitious culture within the school around the theme of 'Proud to do our best'. This theme has been used to drive up standards in all areas of the school and has successfully created a community where all are working hard to improve.
- Senior staff and governors know the school's strengths and areas for development well. They have used this knowledge to create a high-quality school improvement plan which is linked to an ambitious raising attainment plan. Together, these documents have enabled leaders to provide well-targeted support and challenge to staff.
- A strength of the school is the 'Team Halifax' approach. Staff and pupils talk about how they are working as a team so that pupils can do their very best. Results from the online survey, Parent View, show that a high percentage of parents agree that the school is well led and managed. Staff are highly supportive of the leadership team with many commenting positively on the quality of support, encouragement and guidance provided by leaders.
- As a result of strong leadership, pupils' outcomes have risen in every key stage. The progress of pupils has accelerated so that it now matches and often exceeds that of pupils nationally. Pupils are also now reaching higher standards than their peers nationally in writing and mathematics.
- The quality of middle leadership has improved significantly since the last inspection. Middle leaders have put in place actions to support improvements in their subject areas. They spend time monitoring the quality of teaching in their subjects and look at pupils' books to see how well they are doing. Middle leaders provide effective reports to the headteacher and present their findings to governors.
- Training for teachers and other adults is good. Innovative programmes have been put in place to improve teaching and learning. One such system allows teachers to receive real-time advice during their lesson through a speaker placed in their ear. The good staff development programme has led to much teaching that is inspirational and highly engaging, but this varies from year group to year group.
- Leaders make effective use of the pupil premium (additional government funding for disadvantaged pupils). They have successfully raised the achievement of disadvantaged pupils in the early years and Key Stage 1 so that there is now no gap between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and others. In Key Stage 2, this gap has been reduced but not enough disadvantaged pupils are reaching the highest levels.
- The additional funding given to schools to support physical education and sport has been used effectively, resulting in 90% of pupils attending at least one of the after-school clubs. There has been particularly strong success in swimming, where the team has performed well at local and regional swimming galas. The money has been used to purchase new resources such as table tennis equipment, physical education kit for disadvantaged pupils and to employ a sports coach.
- The curriculum is rich and varied and has been designed with the needs of pupils in mind. Curriculum plans are detailed and show progression throughout the school in each subject. One pupil told inspectors, 'I love the school because teachers make all subjects fun and we learn loads.' There are strengths in a wide range of subjects such as computing, physical education, writing and music. The effectiveness of the curriculum is evaluated each year and adapted in the light of a school review. The good-quality curriculum that has been put in place is one of the key factors that have supported improving achievement over the last three years. Pupils develop a good understanding of British values through activities, visits and assemblies.
- The school's work to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. It is enhanced by an extensive extra-curricular programme with a wide range of sporting and musical clubs. This is supported by regular class trips and residential trips to London and Norfolk. The trip to London where pupils get to sleep on HMS *Belfast* is a particular highlight for many and plays a key part in developing their confidence.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements and ensure that pupils are very safe in school. Leaders have developed a good partnership with parents so that parents feel they can talk to the headteacher, deputy headteacher or class teacher at any time. The quality of additional support provided by all staff, especially the family support workers, is effective at meeting pupils' emotional and academic needs.

■ The governance of the school

- Governors bring a wide range of skills and professional experience to the school. They are highly effective in holding leaders to account because they know the school well and they challenge the information that they are given. Governors use this information to ask how leaders are improving the aspects of the school's work that are not as strong as they could be. They set deadlines for when they will check up on the effectiveness of improvements that have been made.
 - Governors know how the pupil premium funding is spent and monitor its impact on the academic achievement of the group of pupils it is intended to support.
 - Governors have a clear and accurate view of the quality of teaching within the school. They know where particular strengths are and they check on the impact of the support being given to the teachers who need it.
 - The arrangements for performance management are highly effective. Clear targets are set for senior leaders and teaching staff which are linked closely to measurable outcomes. Governors ensure that teachers' pay is linked to the performance of the pupils they teach.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The quality of teaching has improved and is good across the school. This was confirmed by looking at pupils' books, seeing the progress being made in lessons and by talking to the pupils about their learning. As a result of good teaching, the vast majority of pupils are now making at least good progress in all key stages.
- Teaching is particularly strong in writing and mathematics. At its best it can be inspirational and highly motivating. For example, pupils' learning in a mathematics lesson in Year 6 was secure because of the teacher's high expectations, careful planning and engaging style. The school has worked hard to create a curriculum that enthuses pupils' writing.
- Teaching assistants make a significant contribution to pupils' learning. Many examples of good practice were observed as support staff help pupils in small groups outside the classroom or during classroom activities. They manage pupils' learning well and communicate effectively with teachers so that they know exactly what needs to be achieved in any given session.
- Feedback to pupils through marking is good. Books are marked regularly and with attention to detail. The guidance provided helps pupils improve their work further. This is particularly effective in writing where a high proportion make better than expected progress and many reach the highest levels by the end of Year 6.
- The teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) is a particular strength of the school. In the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Year 1 particularly, teaching is strong and is enabling pupils to make rapid progress and achieve well above the national average in the Year 1 phonics check.
- The teaching of reading, while good, is not effective in ensuring that pupils make as much progress as they do in writing or mathematics, particularly those pupils capable of reaching the highest levels. This is because some teachers do not have high enough expectations for what pupils can achieve. Often, planning for lessons does not sufficiently identify activities which will support the most-able pupils to progress quickly. Sometimes, teachers do not successfully encourage enough pupils to choose to read more challenging texts or help them become confident in reading and understanding literature at the higher levels.
- While teaching is good, excellent teaching is not consistent in all key stages and in all subjects. For example, teaching in science is not always as effective as it could be because some teachers lack sufficient subject knowledge to ensure the very best outcomes for pupils.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are proud of their school and show positive attitudes to learning. The school's 'Proud to do our best' theme shines through all aspects of school life. In discussions with inspectors, many pupils talked

about their high aspirations. The school's curriculum includes visits from and to universities and a range of visiting speakers. A recent visit from a female firefighter which inspired many girls is an example of the way in which the curriculum supports the personal development of pupils.

- Pupils are confident and happy in their approach to learning. They enjoy challenges and often ask for more. In Year 6 pupils are very keen to try secondary school work because they want to do really well when they change schools.
- Pupils show good levels of perseverance when faced with difficult challenges. They work well in teams and support one another when needed.
- Pupils say they enjoy taking on responsibilities such as being school councillors, and older pupils are keen to ensure younger pupils are safe in the playground. They are good at caring for the environment; for example, Key Stage 1 pupils were eating fruit on the playground and all without exception used the playground bins when they had finished.
- Pupils have a good awareness of how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations. They know about and understand what bullying is and they say if there are any issues 'the headteacher will sort it out'. Pupils are confident that they are looked after well. Pupils have received training on how to stay safe using the internet and can talk about the strategies they would use to avoid trouble.
- Pupils' attendance is above average and has improved over the last two years. Very few pupils are persistently absent. This is because lessons are usually fun and interesting and the systems in place to check up on absence are very effective. Good work is carried out by staff who get to know families where absence may be a concern.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- In class pupils get on well with each other. There is a strong caring ethos around the school and this results in pupils being good at sharing, encouraging one another and being thoughtful when someone gets hurt or is sad.
- Leaders collect information on misbehaviour and use this to ensure improvement takes place. There is very little racist or discriminatory behaviour in school.
- Pupils show good levels of politeness and respect for adults. In the vast majority of classes pupils behave well but on occasion, when the lessons are less interesting, they can lose attention and some calling out can take place.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils achieve well and make good progress. Since the last inspection pupils' progress has been stronger in all key stages in reading, writing and mathematics.
- At the end of Key Stage 2, standards are now above average in writing and mathematics and broadly in line with the national average for reading. The level of achievement in writing is particularly high. In 2015 over half the cohort reached the higher levels compared to a third of pupils nationally. This was achieved because every child made at least the expected progress required in Key Stage 2 and three in five pupils made better than expected progress. Pupils do well in mathematics too. By the end of Year 6 a higher proportion of pupils attain at the expected levels than the national average.
- Standards in reading are not as high. By the end of Year 6 the proportion achieving the expected level is average but the proportion achieving the higher levels is below that achieved nationally. Leaders are aware of this and have put in place a range of strategies so that achievement in reading improves to match that in writing and mathematics.
- There has been rapid improvement in attainment at the end of Key Stage 1. At the last inspection pupils' attainment was below that seen nationally but now it is above for reading, writing and mathematics. Progress in all areas is now securely good and sometimes better from pupils' starting points.
- The proportion of pupils who achieve the expected standard in the Year 1 national phonics check is well above average. This is because the teaching of phonics is effective.
- The most-able pupils are challenged well in writing and mathematics but not sufficiently in reading. Less-able pupils make good progress because of good teaching and effective intervention programmes which provide additional support, ensuring many reach the nationally expected level by the end of Year 6.
- Pupils with disabilities or special educational needs receive effective support so that they make equally

good progress as other pupils. The coordinator for inclusion provides good leadership. This ensures both the academic and the personal needs of these pupils are met so that they can be successful in school.

- Disadvantaged pupils make very strong progress in the early years and in Key Stage 1 so that there is no gap between their performance and that of other groups of pupils. In Key Stage 2, the proportion of these pupils making expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics matches that of all pupils nationally but not enough make better than expected progress in reading to enable them to reach the highest levels.
- Progress in all subjects is good because of a well-planned curriculum and good teaching. It is particularly strong in computing, physical education and music where a high proportion of pupils work at levels above what might be expected for their age.
- As a result of good progress in all subjects, pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education.

Early years provision

is good

- Children enter the Reception Year with a wide range of skills and abilities which vary from year to year depending on the cohort. Last year, leaders identified particular areas of learning which were weaker than others. Swift action was taken to put in place a curriculum which supported rapid development, particularly in children's self-confidence, literacy skills and their understanding of the world around them.
- In 2015, the proportion of children reaching the expected good level of development by the end of the early years was close to the national average. This was a significant improvement compared with 2014, when it was lower.
- Children make good progress because strong leadership has provided high-quality coaching for staff so that teaching is now securely good. The classroom environment is thoughtfully planned with a wide range of stimulating activities that are linked to the class theme.
- Children enjoy both inside and outside activities. Considerable thought is put into making activities purposeful and relevant to everyday life. In the outdoor classroom children were observed building brick walls using a pretend cement mixer, practising football dribbling skills and building a cave den. Children take up the very regular opportunities for writing that they are given.
- Children receive lots of praise and encouragement and show good levels of enthusiasm. In one classroom high-quality learning was observed where the whole class were practising their letters and beginning to write words. The level of concentration and sense of achievement shown was high. Adult-led activities are of a good quality and the teaching of phonics ensures that children make good progress in learning their letters and sounds.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage leader has put in place effective systems to bring about improvements. In 2014 few disadvantaged children reached a good level of development but this area for improvement was dealt with so that in 2015 disadvantaged children outperformed others. Additional funding was used effectively to provide support above what would normally be expected and expertise was brought in so that accurate assessments of children's knowledge, skills and understanding could be established early on in the term.
- Learning journals are used to record children's progress. These are kept up to date and contain a wealth of assessment information that is used to plan the next steps in children's learning. Parents are actively encouraged to contribute to learning journals throughout the year and the school is careful to take into account learning that takes place at home.
- Children are kept safe and behave well. Their personal development is good as they learn to take turns, share, sort out their differences and concentrate well at a wide range of activities.

School details

Unique reference number	9352186
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10001872

This inspection 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	410
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Roger Fern
Headteacher	Anna Hennell James
Telephone number	01473 683932
Website	www.halifaxprimary.net
Email address	office@halifaxprimary.net
Date of previous inspection	17–18 September 2013

Information about this school

- Halifax Primary School is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The large majority of pupils are White British.
- A much lower than average proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged is average. These pupils are supported through the pupil premium funding, which is additional government funding provided to support pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils or pupils with special educational needs is well above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Leaders at Halifax Primary School provide support for a range of schools in the teaching of phonics and spelling, grammar and punctuation. In addition they provide support for the newly qualified teachers in other schools.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 30 lessons, some of them jointly with the headteacher and the deputy headteacher, looked at work in pupils' books and talked to pupils about their learning. Inspectors also attended an assembly.
- Meetings were held with pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors, the headteacher, senior and middle leaders and subject leaders. The inspectors also had a meeting with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a range of the school's documentation including the school development plan, information relating to safeguarding, pupil performance, attendance, behaviour and the minutes of governing body meetings. Inspectors also looked at the school's policies, including those relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors scrutinised the spending of pupil premium funding for disadvantaged pupils. They also scrutinised documents relating to primary sports funding.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire from 36 members of staff.
- Inspectors took account of 99 responses by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as discussions with parents during the inspection.

Inspection team

Duncan Ramsey, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Susan Cox	Ofsted Inspector
Joseph Figg	Ofsted Inspector

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