

Highwood Primary School

Loves Green, Highwood, Chelmsford CM1 3QH

Inspection dates 13–14 January 2016

Overall effectiveness **Inadequate**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Inadequate
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Leaders, managers and governors have failed to implement effective procedures for ensuring pupils' safety and welfare.
- Concerns about children's welfare are not always reported quickly enough to the appropriate designated safeguarding staff member or, if needed, to other agencies.

The school has the following strengths

- The quality of education has quickly improved because leaders, governors and staff work as a strong team.
- Pupils' attitudes towards learning are good and they are eager to learn. Teaching relationships between pupils and all staff are very positive.
- Leaders and governors understand the strengths of most areas of the school's work and they have successfully focused on the quality of teaching, particularly in mathematics, reading and writing.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength. They have a clear understanding of democratic British values and life in modern Britain.
- Assessment supports good progress. Pupils have improved in subjects where they experienced difficulty in the past, particularly in mathematics, phonics and writing.
- Early Years Foundation Stage outcomes are good because of improvements to assessment, teaching and the range and quality of activities.
- Teaching is good. It is challenging and well-organised to support the learning of pupils of different ages and abilities who attend the same class.
- Questioning is a strength of teaching and helps pupils to think deeply and work skilfully.
- Newly appointed leaders are effective. They are helping pupils to tackle the most difficult, higher levels of learning in mathematics, reading and writing across the new curriculum.

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Leaders and governors must act immediately to ensure that there is a thorough review of all safeguarding arrangements and systems, then quickly act on the findings in order to create a culture of vigilance where pupils' welfare is actively promoted.

- Improve the teaching of writing and mathematics to enable more pupils to reach the highest expected levels for their different ages by making sure that:
 - a small number of Year 1 pupils are supported to improve their handwriting and sentence skills
 - some Key Stage 2 pupils are able to apply their calculation skills more quickly to higher level work, when they have demonstrated they can explain the number knowledge required
 - literacy teaching focuses on the higher level grammar, punctuation and spelling standards of pupils in Key Stage 2.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

is inadequate

- Leaders have not fulfilled their duty to safeguard pupils who attend this school. Consequently, leadership and management are inadequate.
- Systems for safeguarding children are not effective. Leaders and managers have not created a culture of vigilance where pupils' welfare is actively promoted. As a result, leaders are prevented from acting quickly about concerns.
- Some communication with parents and carers about safeguarding concerns are not recorded properly, which means that leaders are not able to effectively check back on what has been done.
- The school's single central record was not complete at the start of the inspection because leaders and staff responsible were not clear about some of the information it should contain. This was corrected during the inspection.
- Leaders have demonstrated strengths in other areas of their work by the improvement of the school since it was last inspected. The headteacher, governors and staff have been determined in their efforts to secure higher quality teaching, better pupil progress, and improvements to behaviour and personal development. These areas of the school's work are now good. Staff of the school are well led and work as a successful team.
- Changes to staffing have been well managed and leadership appointments for Early Years Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 have been effective. The recruitment and training of teaching assistants is also successful.
- Subject leaders have quickly made a successful contribution to improving the quality of teaching, assessment, behaviour and planning, so that learning is now good across the new curriculum.
- Leaders and governors have an accurate view about most areas of the school's work. This helps them to set effective targets for improvement and create realistic plans. Different members of staff readily accept responsibility for leading areas of work and there are clear expectations about what they ought to accomplish by different times of the school year. Arrangements for checking on improvement work are well established and include governors' input and support. As a result, leaders have managed to improve areas identified as weaknesses at the time of the previous inspection.
- Assessment is a strength. Leaders and teachers use information about what children know and are able to do in order to set very precise targets for them. All classroom staff attend regular meetings to agree on what should be done to support any pupil who is experiencing difficulty, and action is taken quickly to help them as a result.
- The headteacher and subject leaders hold accurate views about the quality of teaching. When judging teaching, they look at the quality of learning, pupils' work and their assessment records. As a result, leaders know the strengths of teaching and give good advice to teachers and teaching assistants, which helps them improve. Teachers also receive useful training, which they find supportive, particularly those who are new to the school.
- Performance management is effective because teachers and teaching assistants receive targets matched closely to the progress of pupils and teaching quality. Pay is awarded on the basis of improved performance.
- The curriculum is broad, balanced and supports pupils to make good progress. One of its main strengths is the way it encourages pupils to think for themselves and find new knowledge quickly. Subject plans are organised from very accurate assessments of pupils' abilities across the small classes, which are of mixed age and ability. Leaders are now developing the curriculum so that pupils can develop the highest levels of knowledge and skill for their age, by ensuring that they practise their communication, literacy and numeracy skills across all subjects. Despite significant weaknesses in safeguarding, the curriculum, teaching and extra-curricular work support pupils' effective personal development.
- Pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain and have clear views about the meaning and value of democracy and the rule of law. They also learn to respect different cultures and beliefs within Britain. Full elections are held for the respected school council, and pupils take its work very seriously. This helps them understand and explain how laws are made and the value of respect for people who are different to them, or who hold different views. Other activities support them to value British heritage. For example, in an extended assembly seen by the inspector, every pupil had dressed as an important person from history and could give some form of explanation for how they had influenced the future of their country.

or changed the world.

- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. The 'Core Values' of the school were created by pupils. Curricular activities and assemblies support the pupils to reflect on these values and, as a result, they are cooperative, sensible young people who respect each other and expect to succeed in life. They are well aware of, and respect, cultural differences, and have contact with other schools which are very different from their own. They also understand the sacrifice made for them by service men and women in the armed forces and have written to them as part of an appropriate 'Letters to the Troops' campaign.
 - Additional funding to support the improvement of sporting education and pupil participation is effective. Pupils attend an active pre-school session each morning, there are three sports clubs and, during the summer months, they are able to use the school swimming pool.
 - The school makes effective use of additional funding to support disadvantaged children. They are provided with additional teaching and support to improve their progress and standards in literacy and numeracy. The gaps in attainment and progress between them and other pupils nationally have been reduced.
 - Relationships with parents are positive. Parents are supportive of the school and value the quality of teaching, the progress made by their children and the quality of personal development made. Leaders listen to parents' views and act upon them to make improvements.
 - The local authority's school improvement department has provided effective support and challenge for the school. Local authority advisers hold accurate views about the quality of education provided, including teaching, leadership and curriculum.
- **The governance of the school:**
- Governors have been unable to fulfil part of their statutory duty to ensure that the school is safeguarding its pupils. This is because they have not been informed of serious concerns about safeguarding which have been recorded within school. Governors do ask leaders about safeguarding issues and have ensured that the school's policies and training are current but they have not been informed of serious concerns contained within school records and for this reason they have been unable to act upon them. They are clearly aware of how to raise concerns about safeguarding within the school and with the local authority and they are also trained to protect children from the risk of extremism and radicalisation.
 - In other areas of their work, governors are a well-qualified and committed group of leaders who have contributed to the improvement of this school. They know the pupils very well. They know most areas of the school's performance equally well, especially the quality of teaching, assessment, behaviour and remaining areas for improvement. Governors have an accurate view of pupil progress owing to their understanding of the assessment information and statistics for the small numbers of children. They use this information well in their discussion with leaders and their regular visits to check on progress. Governors have worked with and offered a careful balance of challenge and support to the headteacher, particularly in the recruitment of new teachers, and this has been beneficial for the school. Their understanding of how the school uses performance management to improve the quality of teaching is effective and they are well-informed as to how the school uses additional funding to support disadvantaged children and improve the range and quality of sports activity.
 - Governors have not ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are effective.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment **is good**

- Teaching is organised very well. The school is much smaller than the average-sized school, so pupils in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 attend classes with mixed age groups and many different abilities. Teachers use their subject knowledge and their knowledge of the individuals well, so they can plan work and activities which help all pupils make good progress. The quality of this teaching has quickly improved the learning and progress of pupils who did not achieve as well in the past, while helping the most able to succeed with higher level work.
- All teachers and teaching assistants, including the most recently appointed, set very high expectations for behaviour and attitudes. Relationships are very positive and pupils respect their teachers, who are encouraging and supportive.
- Work is challenging and teachers make effective use of pupils' assessment information to ensure that

pupils complete activities which are suitably difficult. Time is used well and pupils are given the opportunity to think about what they are learning so they can use their knowledge skilfully and work things out for themselves.

- Questioning is highly effective. Teachers use questions to challenge pupils to think hard and check on how well they understand what they have learned. Questioning is carefully planned and teachers adapt the difficulty of their questions to support pupils of different abilities and ages. During discussions, pupils are encouraged to use their knowledge to ask questions of their teacher or comment on what others have to say, which helps them deepen their understanding.
- Work is explained very carefully and misunderstandings are tackled quickly. For example, in Key Stage 2 mathematics, Year 3 pupils were able to improve their calculation skills because they were given extra help with number knowledge while other pupils worked on other activities.
- Lessons are imaginative and maintain pupils' interest. For example, in a Key Stage 2 lesson about the use of language in drama, pupils of all ages and abilities were helped to understand complex Tudor language by enthusiastically enacting the lines and events of the shipwreck scene from 'Twelfth Night'. Similarly, during 'History Day', every teacher and all pupils dressed and represented a character from British history. Previous lessons had prepared them very well and their knowledge of their characters was very accurate.
- Teaching assistants support learning very well. This is because their work is well-planned with class teachers and they are especially skilled in explaining work to pupils. Their use of questioning is also a strength and they are very encouraging to the pupils they support.
- Pupils receive useful feedback when teachers discuss their work with them or provide written comments. They are also given time to improve their work once their teachers are clear that they understand what they need to do next. Consequently, their learning improves quickly.
- Reading is taught well. Pupils follow well-planned reading programmes and read with an adult every day. They are also encouraged to explain their understanding of characters and the way stories develop.
- In Key Stage 1, the teaching of phonics (the sounds made by letters and words) is effective and children who have experienced past difficulty are quickly helped to improve because of regular, extra help.
- The teaching of mathematics is effective. Younger children are becoming confident with number work and older children are improving their calculation and problem-solving skills. However, in Key Stage 2, some children need to move on to higher level reasoning work more quickly, once they understand the number rule that they have been practising.
- Writing is taught well. Pupils are able to write in different styles and for different purposes. At all ages, teachers encourage a growing vocabulary and older pupils regularly use dictionaries to improve their spelling. In a Key Stage 1 lesson, Year 2 pupils created highly descriptive eye-witness accounts of the Great Fire of London.
- In Key Stage 2, teaching has not supported enough pupils to use the higher level skills of grammar, punctuation and spelling.
- Teaching is less successful with a small number of Key Stage 1 pupils who need to improve their handwriting or sentence skills, because they made less progress in early years.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

is inadequate

Personal development and welfare is inadequate

- The school's promotion of pupils' welfare is inadequate because the school has not fulfilled its statutory duty to safeguard children who attend.
- There are some strengths in the personal development of pupils and their relationships with one another.
- Pupils created the school's 'core values' which are 'happiness, independence, graciousness, healthiness, excellence and respect'. When asked, they can explain what the values mean in an age-appropriate way and are regularly reminded of their importance through teaching and assemblies.
- Pupils are encouraged to serve their school and the local community and do this with great pride. They work as house captains and apply to serve as head boy or girl. Elections are held for the school council and pupils take its work very seriously. The council organises the school's work in the community, including support for the local church. A large proportion of pupils serve as councillors, and governors attend these meetings. As a result, pupils understand how democracy works and laws are made.
- Pupils are well prepared for living in modern Britain. This helps them understand the value of respecting

people who are different from them, especially those who hold different views and religious beliefs. They value their British heritage while also respecting other cultures within the United Kingdom. For example, in an extended assembly seen by the inspector, every pupil had dressed as an important person from British history and could give some form of explanation for how they had influenced the future of their country or changed the world.

- Pupils are helped to understand the risks involved when using age-appropriate internet services and, when asked, they can explain how to use them safely.
- Pupils are supported and encouraged to eat healthily from meals served in school and they can explain what types of food they should choose.
- Pupils report that bullying of all kinds is rare at the school.
- Parents believe the school helps these areas of personal development.

Behaviour is good

- The behaviour of pupils is good and they enjoy school.
- Pupils show good attitudes towards learning and working hard. In lessons, they are keen to contribute to discussions, apply themselves quickly when activities begin, and are very cooperative with one another.
- Pupils do not give up easily when they experience difficulty or are set new work which is challenging. This is because teachers help them and also expect them to always try hard as well.
- All school, staff and governors apply the behaviour policy of the school. They also conduct themselves professionally and politely in front of pupils and provide them with good examples of the behaviour expected at the school.
- Around school, pupils' conduct is respectful and sensible. They respect one another and move sensibly when changing classrooms. Their behaviour in the playground is also sensible. At lunchtimes, older pupils set a good example and help younger members of the school at the mixed dining tables.
- Attendance has improved. The school works hard with all families to ensure that pupils attend school properly. Taking account of the school's size and the mobility of some families, pupils' attendance is now above average.
- No pupils have been excluded from the school in the last four years.
- Parents agree that behaviour is good at the school.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Taking careful account of pupils' different starting points, very small numbers in each year group and pupils arriving or leaving at different times, standards have risen since the previous inspection and progress is good
- Pupils join the small Reception class with knowledge and skills close to those typical for their age, but there are wide differences between their starting points in reading, writing and mathematics. However, they make good progress in these and other areas and most move into Year 1 ready to make an effective start to Key Stage 1.
- The attainment and progress made by Year 2 and Year 6 pupils have risen and are now around the national average.
- Progress is good in the different year groups of the school and across subjects, including reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils' learning in history, geography, science, art and religious education is also good. This is shown in their work, skills, levels of knowledge, assessment information held by the school and published test results.
- Pupils who made less progress in the past have been helped to catch up quickly owing to improved teaching and well-planned extra help.
- All leaders and teachers use assessment accurately and set realistic, challenging targets for each pupil, carefully taking their starting points into account. All teachers and teaching assistants check on pupils' progress regularly so that they can support them if they are at risk of falling behind. As a result, the numbers of pupils who make or exceed expected progress for their age in reading, writing and mathematics are close to or above national results.
- Pupils' progress in phonics (the sounds made by letters and words) is good and the proportions achieving the expected standard have improved quickly since the previous inspection. Teachers provide extra help and well-planned reading programmes for those who may need to catch up. The results for these pupils

are especially good in Years 2 and 3.

- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress from their different starting points. This is because of the quality of the school's assessment and planning, and the effectiveness of their teaching assistants.
- The most-able pupils are learning well in all subjects and their progress is good. Their writing skills have been developed for different purposes, while in reading, they are able to quickly interpret the purpose of the writer, even when the language is unfamiliar or complex. In mathematics, they are confident with numbers and shapes, while their calculation skills are effective.
- There are too few disadvantaged pupils currently at the school to make a meaningful comparison between their progress and others within the school. However, the school provides well-considered support from its assessments of their knowledge and skills. As a result, between 2014 and 2015, the gap in attainment and progress between disadvantaged pupils and others nationally was closing and continues to improve.
- Most pupils' knowledge of number has improved in both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, and they are developing effective calculation skills. However, some Key Stage 2 pupils spend more time than is needed on number work, which gives them less opportunity to tackle higher level calculations where they can acquire new levels of knowledge and skills more suitable for their ability.
- In Key Stage 1, a few pupils are not making as much progress in writing as others across the school and their handwriting is not as controlled as it should be.

Early years provision

is inadequate

- School leaders have not ensured that the school meets its statutory duty to safeguard children, and failure in this area of leadership means the overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is inadequate because of concerns about safeguarding and children's welfare.
- The quality of education in the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved quickly in several areas.
- Children make good progress and, as a result, they are able to make an effective start in Year 1. Most enter the early years with knowledge and skills which are close to those typical for their age but with wide differences in literacy and numeracy and levels of confidence. Most achieve a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year and school results are higher than those reported nationally.
- Arrangements to assess children on entry to the Reception Year are effective and judgements are accurate. Leaders make realistic use of different types of information to assess children when they enter the Reception Year, including reports from nursery schools and the school's own assessment tests. This thorough approach helps teachers to plan suitable work, play, and learning activities which are matched well to the different children's needs.
- Individual targets are carefully set for all children and take into account their different starting points and development needs. As a result, they receive suitable challenge and support in their learning activities. Arrangements to check on children's progress and prevent them from falling behind are well established. Their new, electronic 'Learning Journey' files show clear evidence of regular checking of pupils' progress and improvement.
- Teaching is good not only because of effective checking of pupils' progress and planning, but also because teachers have organised an attractive environment for learning inside the classroom and outdoors. There are well-designed areas for different types of activities, which effectively cover the curriculum. This environment and the variety of activities and resources support children's interests and curiosity.
- Questioning and discussion work support good learning. Teachers and teaching assistants encourage children to explain what is being learned. For example, during a session involving number work, children were encouraged to explain how they might spend money wisely, while in another session, children were asked to remember and describe the best ways to make a 'Robin Hood' hat while following instructions.
- Early handwriting work is supported for each child using different resources and advice. Similarly, phonics lessons help children of different abilities to sound their letters and words properly. Children are also supported to make good use of their phonics knowledge when they begin to write and follow their first sentences.
- Behaviour is well managed. Pupils are taught to cooperate and share. During activities, children remain

interested because time is well planned.

- Parents are closely involved in their children's experience of the early years. They meet with teachers regularly and they are pleased with the electronic 'Learning Journeys' used by the school. These journals keep parents regularly informed of their children's experiences and progress through the use of the internet. School records show that parents contribute regularly to these electronic records.

School details

Unique reference number	114869
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10009147

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	33
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alan Oddy
Headteacher	Helen Hutchings
Telephone number	01245248200
Website	www.highwood.essex.sch.uk
Email address	admin@highwood.essex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	9–10 January 2014

Information about this school

- Highwood Primary School is much smaller than the average-sized primary school
- The vast majority of the pupils are of White British heritage and all pupils speak English as a first language.
- Very few children are eligible for support through the pupil premium. This is additional funding for disadvantaged children known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average.
- The leader responsible for the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 took up this role in September 2015. The leader responsible for Key Stage 2 began the role nine weeks prior to this inspection.
- The number of pupils who join or leave the school at non-standard times is higher than average.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- The school operates a pre-school ('Bunnies') for children aged 3–5. It was not part of this inspection.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning in 13 lessons and part-lessons, six of which were jointly observed with the headteacher.
- The school followed a normal timetable on the first day of the inspection. On the second day, the school ran a scheduled 'History Day', during which the children took on the roles of different people from world history. This reduced the number of normal lessons in the morning and afternoon of the second day of the inspection and all pupils attended an extended assembly as well as other events.
- The inspector looked at a wide range of school documents, including its self-evaluation records, improvement plans, curriculum information, checks on the quality of teaching, details of governors' work and attendance records.
- The inspector looked at work from each year group and listened to children read. The school's records for pupil assessment and progress were also looked at.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, subject leaders, the governing body and a local authority adviser.
- Other meetings were held to discuss the progress of children, assessment records, and the improvement of the school since its previous inspection, the quality of teaching, behaviour and attendance, the development of the curriculum and the performance management of staff.
- The inspector studied the school's safeguarding documentation, procedures and records closely and discussed them with the headteacher, the local authority adviser and the governing body.
- Meetings were held with two groups of pupils to discuss their experiences at the school and the inspector also attended a School Council Meeting.
- The inspector observed and spoke with pupils at the beginning of school, during lessons, in the dining hall at lunchtime and between lessons.
- The inspector met informally with parents at the start of school and took account of written responses to the online survey, Parent View. He also took account of the school's parental survey and the views of eight staff who completed an Ofsted survey.

Inspection team

David Turner, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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