

# Highwood Primary School

Loves Green, Highwood, Chelmsford CM1 3QH

**Inspection dates** 11 July 2016

**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	Inadequate

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The headteacher and governors acted quickly to address the concerns identified during the last inspection. They have ensured that procedures for safeguarding pupils are effective.
- Governors hold leaders to account for the school's performance.
- The headteacher leads the school with a strong vision of excellence. This is well evidenced in pupils' enthusiasm for learning, the improving quality of their work and their understanding of what they need to do to make progress.
- Because other key leaders are also teaching, planned improvements are implemented quickly and consistently. Work in partnership with other schools is used well to develop teaching and to check on the accuracy and quality of the school's work.
- Teachers are effective in meeting the range of pupils' learning needs in the mixed-age classes. The most able pupils are challenged well in most lessons.
- Teachers quickly identify when pupils start to fall behind in their learning and take action to help them catch up. As a result, pupils make good progress, particularly in reading and writing.
- Reported outcomes fluctuate because pupil groups are very small. Overall outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics are good because pupils are well supported to make expected and better progress as they move through the school.
- Pupils behave very well. The school is a calm and purposeful environment in which pupils say they feel safe. Because adults model the expectations of behaviour effectively, pupils treat them and each other with care and respect.
- Children in the early years are taught key literacy and numeracy skills well. They enjoy a wide range of interesting learning opportunities and make good progress.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Leaders' planning and monitoring lacks the detail necessary to enable them to accurately judge how well they are meeting school priorities.
- Older pupils do not use the most complex spelling, punctuation and grammar skills enough in their work.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to use and further develop the core skills they learn in mathematics.

## Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that:
  - pupils have frequent opportunities to practise the new skills they learn in mathematics and to use them to solve complex problems
  - teachers continue to develop the most able pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar skills.
- Improve the impact of leaders by ensuring that:
  - development plans, monitoring records and analyses of extra support for pupils make clear what the intended impact of actions is and how it will be measured
  - the mathematics subject leader implements plans for improving the teaching of problem-solving in mathematics.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher provides calm, focused leadership for staff and pupils in this small school. Expectations of academic achievement and pupils' personal development are high. Because governors, leaders and staff work collaboratively together, with shared ambitions for pupils, priorities for improvement are well understood and acted on quickly.
- Following the last inspection, the headteacher and governors took decisive action to improve child protection and safeguarding procedures. The local authority's safeguarding officer audited the school's work and identified actions to be taken. Staff are now well aware of their responsibilities for safeguarding pupils and evidence shows that any concerns they have are appropriately shared and recorded.
- Leaders have an accurate understanding of how well the school is doing. Procedures to analyse and develop the school's work are effective in making sure improvement happens. However, at times, the details against which expected improvement is measured are too vague. As a result, this does not allow leaders and governors to know if initiatives are on track for achieving anticipated improvements.
- Through formal and informal processes, the headteacher and other leaders carefully review pupils' achievements. Procedures to assess and track pupils' progress are well matched to the curriculum. The parents spoken to showed good understanding of the new systems and what they tell them about their children's achievement. The headteacher, who is responsible for managing provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, has ensured that their needs are well met.
- Staff meet regularly to discuss how well each individual pupil is doing. Information about what is, or is not, working to help pupils move on in their learning is considered carefully for each individual pupil. This means that pupils are quickly helped to catch up if they start to fall behind in their work. In some reviews, for example of the impact of extra support programmes, analysis is not sharp enough to be used to make decisions about which are the most effective.
- Teachers have ensured that the curriculum is relevant to pupils. Exercise books show a good range of work across different subjects. Topics are well planned to enthuse and inspire pupils throughout the school. Pupils generally work in three mixed-age classes; however, a flexible approach allows key stage 2 pupils to work together when they study subjects beyond English and mathematics. This flexibility is also used to ensure that pupils are challenged at the right level so at times they move to work with older or younger peers. In this way, staff ensure that pupils receive the right level of support and challenge.
- Other elements of pupils' learning are planned for well. Pupils develop a strong understanding of the school's values and explain well the meaning of these values such as graciousness and respect in relation to how they treat others. Pupils learn to be resilient and self-reliant. They are well prepared for the challenges they may face when they leave the nurturing environment of this small school.
- The additional primary sports funding is used to provide specialist sports coaching which builds pupils' skills as well as developing those of staff. This is increasing the number of pupils involved in competitive sport, ensuring that pupils make good progress in their skills development and contributing to them being able to swim well.
- Leaders use the pupil premium funding effectively to support disadvantaged pupils. It is used to provide training for staff, to provide extra intervention and to support pupils' personal development. Because the start and end points for extra provision and intervention are not clear, it is difficult to know which strategies are the most effective.
- Parents are confident that their children are safe, happy and learn well at this school. They receive good information about their children's progress. Inspection evidence supports their views.
- The local authority has provided effective support for leaders and governors by establishing a school improvement board. As a result of this work, as well as supporting change and improving safeguarding procedures, governors have increased the rigour with which they challenge leaders about the school's standards. Leaders work in increasingly strong partnership with other local schools. This provides valuable opportunities for staff to share and develop practice with others who have similar responsibilities, for example with those who teach pupils of a similar age.
- **The governance of the school**
  - With the headteacher, governors have taken swift action to address the safeguarding concerns identified at the previous inspection. They have supported the headteacher well and worked with advisers from the local authority to ensure that procedures to protect pupils are rigorous. To ensure that this current level of rigour is sustained, a safeguarding governor visits termly to ensure that records are kept fully up to date and child protection procedures are well understood by staff and

used appropriately.

- Governors know the staff and pupils well. They visit regularly to assure themselves that the information leaders share with them is accurate. Because the detail in some aspects of planning and evaluation is not specific, they cannot be entirely certain that priorities will be addressed in the timescales set. Nevertheless, they understand pupils' achievement well and have a good knowledge of what needs to happen to make sure current standards continue to improve.
- Governors work with the headteacher to secure the best possible staffing appointments for the school. They have provided good support during a year of significant challenge for leaders. They are rightly confident that the current leadership team has strong capacity to further develop the school.
- Governors know how the extra funding the school receives to support disadvantaged pupils is used. The governor responsible visits regularly and meets with staff and pupils to analyse how well pupils' needs are met. The level of information currently shared does not enable them to make decisions about which uses of the funding provide the best value for money.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Appropriate checks are made on staff suitability to work with children and these are regularly monitored. Staff training has been updated and all staff have also received training to support them to identify signs of concern when children may be at risk, for example training in the 'Prevent' strategy, which supports awareness of the risks of radicalisation and extremism. Child protection procedures have been improved and endorsed by further specific training where staff have identified a need for greater understanding. Appropriate documentation and recording of the follow-up of any concerns staff may have about pupils are in place. Pupils are taught to keep themselves safe. They have a good understanding of the risks of sharing too much information on the internet. They explain well the school's own security procedures which are in place once the front gates are locked in the morning.

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

- Teachers plan interesting activities which challenge pupils across the range of ages in their classes. These are well organised so lessons move at a good pace and pupils remain on task and work hard.
- A strong feature of learning in classes is the extent to which teachers encourage pupils to take responsibility for their own learning. They find ways to answer questions and manage new challenges for themselves. This means that pupils make good progress because they are not over-reliant on adults to support their learning so there is very little waiting for extra support or advice in lessons.
- Teachers use their good subject knowledge well to explain what pupils are intended to learn. Pupils relate new learning to what they already understand, and are confident that they know what they are expected to do in lessons to move their learning on.
- Teachers provide pupils with informative feedback about what they are doing well and what they need to do to move on in their learning. The small class sizes mean that there are plentiful opportunities for this high-quality dialogue and these are maximised. Pupils learn to review and evaluate their own learning and to give their peers feedback on how well they are meeting expectations.
- The teaching of phonics (the link between sounds and letters) is good. Pupils learn to use their skills quickly to both read and write confidently. Engaging activities and lively teaching mean that pupils are motivated to be successful and are supported to use the new skills they learn effectively.
- Action has been taken to improve the teaching of spelling, punctuation and grammar for the older pupils in the school. Pupils are developing a better understanding of how punctuation and grammar enhances their writing and are starting to use these skills well. There is still more to do to ensure that pupils' spelling skills develop quickly.
- Teachers ensure that basic mathematical understanding is taught well. Pupils' work shows they quickly develop the confidence necessary to try out their thinking and have a good understanding of the core operations such as division and multiplication. However, opportunities to develop and use their growing skills to reinforce their learning and to solve a range of problems are not extensive enough to ensure that pupils are fully competent in using their skills.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well, and steps in their learning are carefully planned. They are helped well to understand what they need to do but the emphasis is on them using what they already know and understand to ensure their progress is sustained.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

is good

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. This is because relationships in the school are positive and respectful. Staff help pupils to understand how to overcome the challenges they face in their learning and relationships.
- A successful feature of the school's work is the extent to which pupils are supported to reflect on their learning and to make changes and improvements independently. Because of these high expectations, pupils become resourceful learners. They draw on the learning displays in their classrooms and on each other to develop their understanding and make good progress in their work.
- Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of what being healthy means. They willingly take on posts of responsibility such as buddying younger pupils. This improves their self-esteem and they grow in maturity as a result. This helps create a harmonious and ambitious community.
- Pupils have many opportunities to responsibly use the skills they learn in a range of different situations. For example, they used their learning about temperature in science to understand the environment in the outdoor 'forest' learning area. They discovered that the temperature in an area of leaf mould was high and investigated the causes of this.
- Pupils learn about other cultures and religions through the curriculum and through assemblies. Their exploration of the school's values and associated learning supports their moral understanding and prepares them well for the more diverse society they will encounter beyond the context of their school.
- Good systems are in place to support vulnerable pupils. Through ongoing discussions, staff develop a comprehensive understanding of the barriers that may prevent pupils from being successful. Leaders now involve wider agencies well in supporting pupils and their families where help and advice are needed.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good; their conduct around the school is well mannered and calm. Pupils are proud of their school and are respectful to each other and to adults.
- The school's behaviour policy is implemented well by staff. Pupils are clear about what happens if they do not meet the high expectations set for them; equally, they know that good behaviour is recognised. Pupils develop an empathetic understanding of each other, recognising differences and making sure that those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are included in all aspects of school life and learning.
- Pupils rarely need reminding of the standards of behaviour expected. They respond quickly to instructions and listen carefully to adults. During lunchtime, they eat together, socialise and help each other well in mixed age groups. Older pupils support younger pupils effectively. Through this, pupils develop respect for each other regardless of age, ability or background.
- Overall, attendance figures are below average. Leaders analyse absence and take action where it is too high and not reducing. Most of the low attendance figures arise because the school serves families who spend time in different parts of the country. Provision for these pupils is well-organised and effective. Extra work is provided for them while they are away, as well as access to school learning opportunities via the internet.

## Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils make good progress as they move through the school, from their different starting points, because the learning activities they are provided with are well matched to their abilities. Review of pupils' work across this year endorses the school's assessments and shows that pupils benefit from the individualised focus their teachers give to their learning. Attainment at the end of key stage 2 has been broadly average over several years. In 2015, all Year 6 pupils made at least expected progress in reading and writing and a significant proportion made good progress. Pupils' work shows they are responding to increased challenge in their lessons; standards in reading and writing are rising. Pupils talk animatedly about their learning and develop strongly positive attitudes which help them to be successful.
- Outcomes in mathematics at the end of Year 6 were similar to those in reading and writing. Pupils' mathematical knowledge develops well as they progress through the school and attain expected standards in their work. However, opportunities for them to practise the core skills they learn, and to use these in a range of different contexts for different purposes, are not frequent enough. As a result, pupils

improve and use their higher-order skills less rapidly than they could.

- Pupils in Year 1 have attained well in the phonics screening test for the past two years. Actions to improve younger pupils' handwriting skills are effectively used to develop their pencil control and letter formation skills. This is resulting in greater writing fluency. By the time they leave key stage 1, most pupils have achieved at least expected standards in their literacy work.
- Across key stage 2, pupils continue to develop key literacy skills effectively. They make good progress in developing reading skills and write confidently. Pupils are confident learners who read enthusiastically and demonstrate a good knowledge of different books and authors. Because the quality of dialogue in classrooms is high, pupils learn to reflect on their learning. They ask insightful questions and use their teachers' and peers' responses to continually improve their work.
- The numbers of pupils in different groups are very small and conclusions about achievement need to be treated with caution. Across the school, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities receive focused support which helps them to make progress in their learning. It also helps them to acquire skills which help them manage their own learning without too much support. As a result, their work shows they make good progress from their starting points.
- Disadvantaged pupils are similarly well supported. Pupils' needs are analysed and met through a range of different strategies suited to their needs. Although their overall progress is monitored effectively, the impact of the extra support is not tracked in enough detail to enable staff to know how well the extra funds they receive to support pupils are making a difference.
- Pupils develop an enthusiasm for learning across the curriculum. Whole school projects ensure that pupils work at the right level in subjects across the curriculum. As a result, they can clearly identify which subjects they particularly enjoy and which they do well in.
- Pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education. They enjoy learning, have well-developed communication skills, can reason and present an argument and have a good understanding of core mathematics. A significant strength in the preparation for their transition to secondary school is the extent to which they independently reflect on and develop their own learning.

## Early years provision

is good

- The early years teacher is well supported to develop and shape her practice so that children's needs are met well. Leadership of the early years is secure and ensures that children are well prepared for the challenges they face in key stage 1. A flexible approach to the grouping of pupils once they have moved to Year 1 is used if necessary. This means that, if children need to spend more time consolidating their early learning in the reception area, they can at appropriate times during the school day.
- Children enjoy the extensive classroom and outdoor area in which they can learn. Staff utilise this effectively so children access a variety of interesting and engaging activities which enable them to explore and develop their understanding. Because staff incorporate children's interests in planning these activities and shape them to match children's needs, children develop enthusiasm for finding out new things and develop positive attitudes to learning.
- Relationships with parents are good. The computerised assessment system is used to track children's achievements and to enable parents to see how well their children are learning. They can also contribute their own comments. This means that staff develop a comprehensive understanding of how well children are doing, drawing on parents' knowledge of their children's development to inform their planning.
- Children's early literacy and numeracy skills are carefully taught. Each child's needs are analysed and they receive well-targeted support which enables them to make good progress. Phonics is taught well. Children who understand and use their letter sounds proficiently are challenged to use more complex combinations of letters. Children who need to consolidate their early learning have every opportunity to do so. Examples of children's writing show they develop the confidence to spell words as well as to read them.
- The effective safeguarding procedures implemented for the whole school include the early years. Checks are thorough and staff have appropriate paediatric first-aid training. Children learn early essentials about how to keep themselves safe and about how they are expected to behave towards each other – with respect and consideration.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	114869
<b>Local authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	10018046

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	33
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Alan Oddy
<b>Headteacher/Principal/Teacher in charge</b>	Helen Hutchings
<b>Telephone number</b>	01245 248200
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.highwood.essex.sch.uk">www.highwood.essex.sch.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:admin@highwood.essex.sch.uk">admin@highwood.essex.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	13–14 January 2016

## Information about this school

- Highwood Primary School is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Pupils are grouped flexibly in three mixed-age classes.
- The majority of pupils are White British and speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for support through the pupil premium (additional government funding for disadvantaged pupils) is below average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading and writing.
- A pre-school operates on site for children aged three to five. It was not part of the inspection.
- An above-average proportion of pupils leave and join the school at other than normal entry times.
- The school's website meets statutory requirements.
- A pre-school group, 'Bunnies', meets on Thursday afternoons to help children transition into the Reception class.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning across the school. During these observations, they looked at classroom displays and pupils' work. They spoke to pupils about their learning. One lesson was jointly observed with the headteacher.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other leaders. They spoke to the chair of governors in one meeting, and three governors in another. They met with two groups of pupils and heard pupils from Years 1 and 2 read.
- Inspectors considered the school's own analysis of parents' views and spoke to them as they brought their children to school. There were too few responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, for them to be taken into account.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work, looked at assessment information, improvement planning, and monitoring documents, including those for the quality of teaching and curriculum plans.
- The school's register of staff suitability to work with children was scrutinised, and records of safeguarding and child protection training, processes for staff appointment and child protection procedures were also checked.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils at different times during the school day. With the whole school, they watched butterflies, hatched in the Reception class, be released.

## Inspection team

Prue Rayner, lead inspector

Richard Hopkins

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector



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