

Helmsley Community Primary School

Carlton Lane, Helmsley, York, North Yorkshire YO62 5HB

Inspection dates

21–22 September 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	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The executive headteacher conveys a clear vision of improvement for the school; he is ably supported by an increasingly effective leadership team.
- The Ryedale Federation has helped to create the right conditions to improve the quality of teaching and the achievement of pupils.
- Teachers' discussions with pupils, and checks on their progress, identify gaps in knowledge to plan lessons as well as catch-up sessions. These have been particularly helpful for disadvantaged pupils.
- The newly formed governing body has quickly got to grips with the school's strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning.
- The behaviour of the pupils is good; they are polite and listen attentively. There are good relationships between adults and pupils.
- The school puts a high priority on pupils' welfare. Attendance is good. Pupils feel safe in school, and are confident that staff will deal with their concerns.
- Good provision in the early years ensures that children's learning gets off to a rapid start. They enjoy school and are well prepared for Year 1.
- Occasionally, the quality of teaching is less effective in subjects such as art and geography. Pupils of average ability are not always consistently challenged.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that pupils sustain rapid rates of progress and achieve well by:
 - pitching work more precisely at the right level of difficulty
 - planning and teaching lessons which deepen pupils' understanding consistently across all subjects
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils of average ability can achieve in mathematics
 - teaching pupils how to use the correct mathematical terms when explaining their thinking
 - ensuring that pupils show their mathematical reasoning in books.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - developing the skills and expertise of leaders at all levels so that any remaining inconsistencies are tackled
 - using the expertise within the federation to consolidate the strengths of leaders and teachers
 - ensuring that school policies are implemented consistently.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Membership of the recently formed Ryedale Federation has brought a renewed vigour to the school's leadership team, driving forward further improvements in the quality of teaching and learning.
- The executive headteacher has already had a positive impact, instilling a sense of urgency in improving outcomes for pupils, setting high expectations for the quality of teaching and conveying a clear vision for the school.
- The leadership team has been strengthened with the appointment of new people in key roles who are leading the school in their different subjects. Using the school's tracking system, leaders at all levels know how well the pupils are doing. Extra support has been put in place to help those pupils who need to catch up, and this is having a positive impact in speeding up their progress.
- Improvement in mathematics has been slower because too little is expected of some pupils, particularly those of average ability. Staff and pupils do not always use accurate mathematical vocabulary, and this hinders pupils in explaining and recording their reasoning. Although the school's presentation policy states that mathematical reasoning should be recorded, there is very little evidence of this in books and this has not been addressed by leaders.
- Professional development to support weaker teaching has been effective and teachers value seeing good practice in other schools and gaining an insight into how to improve the quality of their own work. Senior staff have used the federation's support well to develop a more accurate view of its effectiveness. The school's link with a local teaching alliance of schools, as well as the effective support provided by the local education authority, has been helpful in improving the quality of senior leaders' work and, ultimately, in improving outcomes for pupils.
- The school's development plan sets out a path to improvement with ambitious but realistic targets for pupil achievement. Suitable actions are noted to bring about the changes that are needed to raise the quality of teaching. The leadership team has monitored and evaluated teachers' performance. Performance management targets are clearly linked to pupil progress and attainment. Support has been given where teaching is weaker, and this has had a marked impact on improving the quality of teaching.
- There has been some turbulence in staffing due to absence. Changes in school policies and procedures have not always been clearly communicated or checked up frequently during periods of change. As a result there is some inconsistency in practice across the school and differences in teachers' expectations have not been picked up quickly.
- The school is reviewing its curriculum planning. Class topics incorporate a range of subjects. However, occasionally subjects are not planned or taught in sufficient depth and pupils do not achieve the same high standards across the curriculum, particularly in geography and art.
- Lessons and assemblies promote effective reflection on faith, culture and personal choices. Pupils show respect for people from all backgrounds and faiths and have a good understanding of British values. They have a thorough understanding of the importance of rules and are well informed about the democratic process. They can argue passionately for what they believe is fair, preparing them well for life in modern

Britain.

- The school has tried hard to improve its communication with parents and this is reflected positively in responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. Parents feel that they now receive valuable information about their child's progress. During the inspection parents commented on the school's improvement and overwhelming support for the Ryedale Federation. Parents have been rightly concerned about some of the problems in staffing and the behaviour of pupils who have since left the school.
- Leaders have used the pupil premium funding to provide extra teaching and welfare support for the most disadvantaged pupils, some of whom have emotional and behavioural needs. The school has given high priority to working with these pupils so that they gain the most from their schooling. The inspector spoke to this group of pupils during the inspection. They are motivated and keen learners, and this is reflected in their good rates of progress.
- The primary school sports funding has been used effectively to improve the skills of teachers to deliver good-quality physical education lessons, mentored by coaches who bring to the school a high level of expertise. The school now provides a wider range of extra-curricular activities so that pupils can participate in more sports and represent the school in tournaments, as well as learn new sports such as judo with which they might be less familiar.

Governance of the school

- Governance of the school is good because:
 - the newly formed governing body of the Ryedale Federation has brought about a sharper focus on holding the senior leaders to account and challenging the headteacher
 - in a short time governors have gained a good understanding about the quality of teaching across the school and are committed to ensuring that the staff they appoint provide value for money
 - while they acknowledge that the school has experienced some problems with staffing, governors are not prepared to make allowances that will have a negative impact on pupils' achievement
 - governors understand that the progress pupils make should be the main driver when awarding pay increases for teachers and the headteacher; they are fully prepared to challenge underperformance where teaching has not been good
 - governors can talk about how well different groups of pupils are doing across the school and where improvements need to be made
 - governors are aware that the most disadvantaged pupils have not always achieved as well as other pupils and can explain the support and resources that are now in place for this group and which are starting to make an impact
 - governors are fully conversant with their statutory duties for safeguarding; the new governing body has not yet recruited new staff for Helmsley.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school puts a high priority on ensuring the safety of pupils, and the arrangements for safeguarding are good. The school works closely with external agencies and parents, where appropriate, to ensure that pupils are well supported and safe.
- Pupils' attendance is good and the school follows up absences to ensure that no pupil

is away from school unless it is absolutely necessary.

- Teachers and pupils are aware of the school's procedures for safeguarding. Training for staff is up to date and staff are aware of their obligations to prevent radicalisation and extremism.
- The school is keen to give pupils the opportunity to go on school trips, including a residential stay in London. The school uses detailed risk assessments to plan these trips and parents comment that they are 'impressed' with the school's organisation.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers have benefited from some good-quality training to improve their teaching, which is now good. Teachers use a range of styles to deliver lessons. When pupils are working in a group or in pairs they cooperate and adapt well, using each other as sounding boards for their ideas.
- Teachers use information technology which engages the pupils' interest and motivates them to learn. For example, in one mathematics lesson pupils had to explain their mathematical reasoning to 'an alien'. The teacher provided a mobile phone for pupils to explain their thinking 'one to one'. This gave the pupils the opportunity to rehearse their mathematical thinking and develop their confidence.
- The progress pupils are making is checked frequently and any gaps in their understanding are planned into lessons. Time is given for pupils to talk to staff about how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Pupils say that this has helped them to know how to get better and they are keen to 'move up a stage although it is sometimes hard!'
- Teachers' marking in books provides feedback and points to improve; however, these are not always followed up. Pupils talk about the school's new grammar scheme, which they enjoy, and explained to the inspector how it had helped them with their writing. Pupils' spelling is generally accurate or at least they make plausible attempts at spelling a word using their phonics knowledge. This has contributed to some good outcomes in phonics for the younger pupils, as well as pupils' ability to use spelling, grammar and punctuation in key stage 2.
- The school has provided new reading material for the pupils and they proudly showed the inspector some of the books that they liked in the school's library. Pupils read regularly at school and at home. This home support, coupled with pupils' genuine enjoyment of books, means that they are well prepared with the necessary skills to become good readers. Pupils had recently enjoyed exploring the works of Roald Dahl, writing in a 'dream jar' and, in art, making and painting giants modelled on the author's creation of the Big Friendly Giant.
- Pupils enjoy a range of different subjects, particularly history, information and communication technology (ICT), physical education (PE) and 'getting their hands dirty' in science. While pupils' books show that a broad range of subjects are covered, subjects are not planned and taught equally effectively to ensure that pupils reach the same high level of skill and/or knowledge in all of them.
- In mathematics lessons teachers usually cater well for the least able pupils and the most able pupils, who are challenged by the work they are expected to do. Teachers do not always have high expectations of pupils of average ability. They are sometimes

given work that is too easy, and this hinders their progress.

- The mathematics books show that pupils set out their work clearly and neatly but rarely record their reasoning. In lessons they have difficulty explaining their mathematical thinking because they are not fluent in using mathematical terms to justify their answers, and this is holding them back from making better progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Funding is used to provide opportunities for extra-curricular clubs and trips for pupils who would otherwise not get the chance to participate in out-of-school activities; this is having a positive impact on the most disadvantaged pupils.
- The school now runs a breakfast club to provide a good start to the day for the very few pupils who attend.
- Pupils say that they feel safe and know how to keep themselves safe. They are very well informed about safety when using the internet, and accurately described procedures to exit the school in an emergency. They are confident in the school's systems to sort out any problems they have. Pupils have good relationships with each other and with the adults. They have a good understanding of bullying, including any related to gender or race, and are knowledgeable about the use of language which could be hurtful to others.
- Pupils were adamant that people had a right to make different life choices – something that they had learned in lessons and assemblies. They understand and talk about the fact that people hold different views and have different cultures and religions, and that these should be respected. They are well prepared to develop into good citizens in a tolerant and diverse Britain.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils talk about the school's red and yellow card system for managing behaviour and say that this is helping pupils to behave. Although they are no longer in the school, there have been some pupils with behaviour problems; this has concerned some pupils and parents. The school follows up parent and pupil concerns, and follows up any action taken to make sure that it has been effective.
- As a result of parent input, the school has made some changes to the start of the day as well as the breaktimes and lunchtimes. The school is a calm and ordered place to work and play. Lunchtimes in family groups mean that pupils of mixed ages enjoy a meal together in a quieter environment and older pupils take responsibility for younger pupils. Parents are positive about seeing more senior staff in the playground in the mornings.
- Pupils are well mannered and courteous. Pupils have good attitudes to learning, and this is reflected in their good attendance. They listen well to the adults and their peers, and show respect for the views of others. They respond quickly when called to attention.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils' attainment continues to improve. In Year 1 pupils achieve well in phonics when compared to others nationally. By the end of key stage 1, pupils are now achieving broadly in line with the national average.
- At the end of key stage 2, when compared to the national average, standards are broadly the same in reading and writing, and lower in mathematics. Pupils also make less progress in mathematics when measured from their starting point in key stage 1. Pupils' progress in writing has been slow but better teaching has speeded up pupils' achievement and their books show rapid improvements. Pupils make at least expected progress in reading by the time they reach the end of key stage 2.
- The school's tracking data of pupils' progress and the quality of pupils' books show an improvement in pupils' work. Most year groups are now making better progress in reading, writing and mathematics, and are continuing to do so because teaching is good. However, because of changes in staffing some pupils have gaps in their knowledge and understanding, particularly in mathematics where progress is slower. The legacy of underachievement is now being resolved with the appointment of high-quality teachers and support for those where teaching is weaker.
- By the end of key stage 2 in reading and writing, the attainment of disadvantaged pupils is broadly in line with the national average. The extra support which is given to these pupils in school is proving to be beneficial in helping them to catch up with their literacy skills. The progress of the disadvantaged pupils is faster than that of their peers in reading and writing but slower in mathematics.
- Extra guidance in groups and good support in lessons by skilled teaching assistants mean that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. Observations during the inspection showed this group of pupils to be well motivated and confident. Adaptations to their classroom environment have had a positive impact in accommodating the needs of pupils who have disabilities and helping them to learn effectively.
- The most able pupils have not always done as well as they should. Teachers are now better at pitching work at a higher level in all subjects and have much higher expectations of what the most able pupils could and should achieve. This is resulting in better achievement, particularly in writing.
- Pupils are taught a full range of subjects; they like science, especially doing experiments. Their science books show how they plan and carry out scientific investigations and they are able to accurately record their findings in various ways. They are knowledgeable about the historic periods that they have learned about and say that they enjoy history. In some subjects pupils have not developed their skills or knowledge to a high level. For example, some pupils have limited geographical knowledge; art work shows that pupils have not really developed beyond the basic skills.

Early years provision

Good

- The new early years provision, which combines the school Nursery and the Reception class, gets the children off to a good start where they happily learn and play together. Parents are welcomed in the morning and children settle well because the unit offers a safe, bright and stimulating environment.
- Children enter the early years with skills and knowledge broadly typical of their age. The quality of teaching and high expectations result in children making good progress to achieve standards above the national average when they leave the Reception class. They are well equipped for key stage 1. The teaching of phonics is effective and even the very youngest children show an early interest in learning the sounds letters make as they see the older children developing good reading habits
- Children have good relationships with adults as well as with each other; routines and expectations are established from the start. Children's behaviour is good, in the classroom and in the outside area. They play together safely, for example being mindful when using simple digging tools and taking care when they run about or climb.
- Children cooperate well in pairs, take turns, listen carefully and follow instructions. They are able to sustain concentration for a considerable time because they are so engrossed in their play, whether it is spooning out porridge for the three bears or digging in the sand. They particularly like playing on the pirate ship or in the police station.
- Children are confident in creating their own games and directing their own play. The story of the week, 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears', sparked the children's enthusiasm which resulted in them devising a play. Children designed posters to advertise the performance and were keen to issue tickets to the audience, including the inspector. They made sure that the chairs were correctly labelled for mummy, daddy and baby bear and designated the 'police station' as the dressing room. This spontaneous play showed the children communicating very effectively. They were highly motivated, including those pupils who have special educational needs, who were mesmerised as they waited for the performance to begin.
- The basic skills of mathematics and language are well planned within the classroom as well as in the outdoor areas. Numbers and labels, including some in Polish, feature everywhere in the setting, reinforcing the children's new-found knowledge in different contexts. The unit's guinea pigs have been a popular focus in developing language skills, particularly for those children at the early stages of learning English as an additional language.
- The leadership in the early years has brought about a clear focus on improving the quality of learning for these young children. Adults make frequent checks on what the children can do and what they need to learn next. This is particularly evident in the activities which are provided for them to choose so they can practise their reading, writing and mathematical skills. Challenges are provided for children to solve problems, act out in various role-play areas, or construct something using a range of equipment.
- Teaching is good and the needs of individual children, including pupils who have special education needs and/or disabilities, are well met. Those pupils needing support with speech and language are well catered for by the adults around them, who model good language and articulate clear speech.

- Relationships with parents are strong. They are effective partners in contributing to their child's learning profile. Parents are encouraged to talk to their children about what they do in school. A home-school book with a photograph of something the child has done is accompanied by a speech bubble, and parents record what the child says. These are well used by parents, who value the good channels of communication between home and school.
- The welfare and safety of the youngest children are given a high priority in the early years. Staff are skilled and responsive to children's individual needs. Good links with external agencies and specialists support children with specific needs so that they are motivated learners, able to participate fully in school life. Transition arrangements are good; staff make home visits prior to children starting. All health and safety requirements are met; the unit is a safe place for children.

School details

Unique reference number	121364
Local authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	10012055

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	113
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Ball
Executive headteacher	Mark McCandless
Headteacher	Tim Hiley
Telephone number	01439 770 783
Website	www.helmsley.n-yorks.sch.uk/
Email address	headteacher@helmsley.n-yorks.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	1–2 July 2014

Information about this school

- Helmsley Community Primary School is now part of the Ryedale Federation of schools, led by an executive headteacher.
- This is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- Nearly all pupils are from White British backgrounds and speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is lower than average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower than average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited lessons in all classrooms, some with the headteacher. In addition, the inspector observed small groups of pupils being taught.
- The inspector scrutinised pupils' work, heard pupils read and spoke to pupils about their enjoyment of school and their opinions of behaviour and safety.
- The inspector held discussions with staff, governors and representatives of the federation and the local authority.
- A wide range of school documents, including: the school's self-evaluation; its school development plan; behaviour and attendance records; governing body documents; and documents relating to the monitoring of teachers' performance, was taken into account as part of the evidence.
- The views of 48 parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, were taken into account, as were discussions with parents.

Inspection team

Karen Heath, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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