

Howard Community Primary School

Beard Road, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP32 6SA

Inspection dates

6–7 July 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Since concerns were raised about the quality of provision in 2015/16, leaders, governors and the local authority have failed to stem the decline in standards at the school.
- A series of temporary leaders this year have not adequately addressed the urgent priorities in the school. Any improvements are fragile or have had minimal impact.
- Outcomes in 2017 have slipped even further to a remarkably low standard in key stages 1 and 2 for all groups of pupils. Additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is not being well managed or reviewed.
- Despite significant improvements recently, safeguarding is not yet effective. Additionally, the local authority has not ensured that the weaknesses they identified in safeguarding in 2016 have been addressed.
- The curriculum is badly organised, lacking in breadth and depth, and poorly taught. This includes the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding.
- Teaching, learning and assessment in the school are weak. Teachers do not use assessment well to plan work that matches the needs or abilities of any groups of pupils.
- Improvements in the early years have not been rapid enough. There are still weaknesses in the curriculum, learning environment, teaching of phonics and use of assessment.
- Behaviour is not consistently well managed. Too often, pupils are not engaged in their learning. The provision for pupils who have more extreme behaviours is not effective.
- Attendance remains below the national average and shows little sign of improvement.

The school has the following strengths

- The recently appointed interim executive headteacher has an insightful understanding of the urgent priorities. Her initial actions are beginning to secure better leadership capacity.
- The two interim governors appointed by the local authority are diligent and dedicated to raising standards for pupils in the community.
- There is a core of leaders in the school who have managed their responsibilities effectively and made improvements during a period of unstable senior leadership.
- Many staff are committed to the pupils in their care, despite the lack of leadership to guide and support them in their work.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(1) of 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?

- Rapidly ensure that the local authority, the interim executive headteacher and governors work collectively to secure sustained capacity and improvements in leadership by:
 - clarifying leadership roles and accountabilities
 - establishing a line management system that holds leaders to account for their impact on raising standards
 - securing a fully functioning governing body with clear roles and responsibilities which has the capacity to fully address the urgent priorities in the school
 - embedding a consistent and balanced curriculum so that pupils receive high-quality opportunities both within and across year groups, including trips, visits, enrichment and extra-curricular activities
 - planning and monitoring the impact of curriculum provision that develops pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding
 - ensuring that additional funding that the school receives raises the achievement and attendance of disadvantaged pupils
 - creating a thorough system for monitoring and improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, including high-quality training for staff
 - ensuring that new performance management systems hold staff rigorously to account for the achievement of pupils
 - reviewing the use of the sport premium so that leaders can assure its impact on pupils' enjoyment and achievement in sports and physical education
 - ensuring that the leader for special educational needs has sufficient capacity to raise standards in the identification of and support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Ensure that leaders, governors and the local authority urgently address remaining safeguarding issues by:
 - making sure that there is a designated safeguarding leader on site who can lead and share the responsibility for supporting the most vulnerable pupils
 - being attentive to concerns that are reported by staff, so that they are actioned and referred on when appropriate
 - clarifying roles and responsibilities for the safeguarding of vulnerable pupils, such as children looked after, and pupils in alternative provision, so that these pupils are well monitored and cared for

- reviewing the issues identified by the local authority in November 2016 and being assured that all of these have been fully addressed
- ensuring that the curriculum provides pupils with thorough information about how to keep themselves safe and that this evolves as pupils get older.
- Improve teaching, learning, assessment and raise achievement significantly by:
 - providing staff with ongoing training about how to use the new assessment system more effectively to plan for pupils’ learning over time and to meet specific pupils’ needs and interests
 - raising teachers’ expectations about what pupils can achieve, notably the most able pupils, those from disadvantaged backgrounds, those who need to catch up and those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
 - ensuring that staff are confident to teach pupils the new national curriculum skills and content, so that standards rise rapidly, most notably in phonics and in reading, writing and mathematics in key stages 1 and 2.
- Embed recent improvements in the early years by:
 - improving the indoor and outdoor provision for children, including the celebration of their work and learning
 - ensuring that there is clear monitoring of the early years pupil premium and that leaders measure the difference that it makes to disadvantaged children
 - developing communication and assessment practices between the Nursery and Reception provision, so that there is greater consistency in teaching, learning, assessment and transition
 - reviewing the curriculum so that children access a fully enriched provision, including trips, visits and visitors
 - ensuring greater consistency between staff in the development of children’s early language and phonics skills.
- Strengthen pupils’ personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
 - reducing the absence and persistent absence of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities
 - identifying the right support and provision for pupils who exhibit significant difficulty in managing their own behaviour, so that incidents of extreme behaviour reduce
 - further embedding teachers’ use of the new behaviour systems, so that pupils are confident in staff’s ability to deal with poor behaviour consistently and fairly
 - significantly reducing the numbers of pupils who lose focus in their lessons or become distracted.

An external review of the use of pupil premium funding should be undertaken to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

The school should not appoint newly qualified teachers (NQTs).

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Standards have been declining at the school for some time. In 2015/16, the local authority raised concerns about the quality of provision in the school. Since this time, there has not been a well-coordinated, strategic approach by leaders, governors and the local authority to effectively and rapidly improve the quality of teaching and learning. As a result, standards, most notably in key stages 1 and 2, have continued to slip to all-time lows.
- This year, there has been a series of leaders who have worked in the school, with little clarity about their strategic roles in the short and longer term. Often, they have attempted to implement urgent actions but have been hampered by a lack of leadership capacity within the school or by the temporary nature of their position.
- Numerous leaders and staff have worked hard to try and raise concerns and support pupils in the school during this turbulent time. The deputy headteacher and a core of other staff have attempted to bring about improvements in the early years, pastoral care, special educational needs and assessment. However, these improvements are constantly hindered by the raft of interim leaders who arrive and leave the school, with a lack of shared strategic vision between them.
- There has been no organised approach to ensure an appropriate level of communication and handover between leaders, governors and the local authority involved in the school. Minor improvements have not been sustained and have not impacted sufficiently on the significant weaknesses across the school. Care for the most vulnerable pupils is not well monitored between different temporary leaders.
- Leaders have not ensured that the additional funding that the school receives for disadvantaged pupils, for special educational needs and for sports and physical education is being used effectively. They do not know the difference it has made to the pupils since 2015.
- The pupils' curriculum in subjects such as science, history, geography and art is poorly organised. Pupils told inspectors that they often repeat topics from previous years with no new learning. The recently appointed interim executive headteacher has quickly identified that the development of other aspects of the curriculum, such as pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding, is not well planned or monitored.
- Leaders' efforts to monitor the quality of teaching, learning and assessment have not raised standards. Teachers are not supported well enough to improve their practice, and training is not well tailored to their specific areas of development. It is too soon to determine whether the recent implementation of an appraisal system for staff is ensuring that they are held to account for pupils' achievement.
- The knowledgeable and talented special educational needs coordinator has used her limited capacity and support to successfully ensure that the pupils with the most complex needs receive appropriate assessment for their education, health and care plans. However, she does not have enough support currently to be able to address the numerous issues for other pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, including the quality of provision in the classroom.

- Many staff, despite a lack of leadership, show immense care for pupils. For instance, the school site moved in September 2016 to its new premises. Staff were instrumental in spending their annual leave to physically move resources and equipment to the new site. Much of the site was not ready for pupils, so staff and leaders spent large amounts of time establishing appropriate temporary classrooms. Some of the accommodation, including in the early years, is still tired, well worn or unsuitable for use by pupils.
- The recently appointed and very experienced interim executive headteacher has quickly established a clear understanding of the weaknesses in the school. She has rapidly secured a full staffing structure for September 2017. Prior to the inspection, she had also secured some additional leadership capacity for some of the areas identified by inspectors, including an inclusion leader to support the most vulnerable pupils.
- The future of leadership in the school remains unclear. The executive headteacher is now in position for three days per week and on an interim basis. Parents have received confused and mixed messages about who will be supporting her in this role in the coming autumn term 2017 and the plans beyond this time.

Governance of the school

- Until recently, governance has not robustly challenged leaders about the decline in standards over the last few years. In particular, governors have not ensured that the additional funding that the school receives makes a difference to pupils. They have also not ensured that appraisal systems are in place to hold staff securely to account for the achievement of pupils.
- The local authority has allocated a chair and vice-chair of the governing body for 2016/17 to bring urgent improvements to the school. These governors have quickly established a thorough understanding of the weaknesses in the school and are adamant that local pupils deserve a good education.
- The new governors have worked hard to try and build much-needed positive relationships with the local community. They are also working alongside the local authority to secure the future leadership of the school.
- Although the governing body has recruited some additional governors, these representatives are not yet fully trained or holding the school to account on the many inadequacies in its provision. Currently, there is very limited governance capacity, especially considering the plethora of issues facing the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.
- In November 2016, the local authority undertook an audit of the school's safeguarding provision and identified a series of inadequacies. The office manager and assistant safeguarding leader have worked relentlessly to address these issues, with limited ongoing support. They have established significantly better processes and systems.
- However, a lack of consistent leadership in the school, or rigorous review by the local authority, means that there are still areas of safeguarding provision that are not

adequate. The local authority has visited on numerous occasions, but has not ensured that all actions have been fully implemented.

- There is not a designated safeguarding leader on site in the school. The assistant safeguarding leader is not being given adequate support to ensure that new systems and processes are being maintained as fully as required. Consequently, there is not sufficient vigilance over some concerns raised by staff. Necessary referrals are not always made on a consistent or timely basis and sometimes they are overlooked entirely.
- Checks on pupils who access alternative provision are not well maintained. There is no named leader with responsibility for checking on the safeguarding, attendance and provision for these pupils. Consequently, leaders do not know if these pupils are being well looked after.
- Although there is some provision to provide pupils with information about how to keep themselves safe, this is not well organised, managed or reviewed. Consequently, leaders do not know if they are providing pupils with an adequate curriculum that teaches them about age-appropriate safety and potential vulnerabilities, such as radicalisation and extremism.
- The records of checks on staff are now compliant as a result of the diligent work of the office manager. The assistant safeguarding leader has ensured that staff have received the most up-to-date guidance. This includes information on the 'Prevent' duty, which supports pupils who are vulnerable to radicalisation and extremism. Records of this training are now well maintained. Staff use this information to make appropriate referrals to leaders.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- Teachers have not received adequate support, training or guidance over time to raise the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. As a result, pupils' achievement is poor and shows little sign of improvement.
- Teachers' use of assessment is underdeveloped. The new assessment systems recently implemented by the deputy headteacher are not yet well embedded. There are significant levels of inconsistency in how teachers use their knowledge of what pupils know and can do, in order to plan appropriate learning activities which engage, motivate and challenge pupils to learn effectively.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are inconsistent and often too low. In particular, the expectations and support for pupils who need to catch up and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are not clear enough.
- Teachers' use of questioning does not support pupils to develop confidence or resilience in their learning. Pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to develop their answers verbally and to develop their skills in speaking.
- More often than not, pupils receive the same work irrespective of their ability, including the most able pupils. They do not receive work or guidance which helps them to deepen their understanding or develop their skills as quickly or as well as they could. Pupils do not understand how their learning links together from one lesson to another or how their skills and knowledge are developing.

- The teaching of writing and literacy across the curriculum is weak. Poor-quality work is often not challenged by teachers, and inherent weaknesses in the curriculum mean that pupils are not being given opportunities to develop their literacy skills or to write well. As a result, pupils do not make the progress they are capable of.
- Teaching does not engage pupils' interest, most notably in key stages 1 and 2. Activities are not well matched to the abilities and interests of pupils. On occasion, activities are created to fill time, where pupils undertake tasks that are far too easy for them. This is particularly the case for pupils in the early stages of developing language skills and when pupils are learning phonics.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate.
- Leaders, governors and the local authority have not ensured that safeguarding is fully effective. In particular, the vigilance to make referrals to external agencies and the support and care for some very vulnerable pupils are not well developed.
- Staff's attentiveness to some aspects of pupils' well-being is not as well developed as it should be. For example, pupils' access to classroom medical boxes, the recording of this access and pupils' development of their own understanding about how to use their personal medication responsibly are not closely supervised.
- Attendance is below average. Recent efforts by leaders to engage with parents and to involve external agencies have started to establish a more consistent approach to dealing with low attendance. However, the attendance of groups of pupils, such as disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, is very low and shows little sign of improvement.
- Pupils say that they feel safe most of the time. They feel that staff take their concerns seriously and that bullying is not an issue in the school. Pupils are very complimentary about the support that they receive from teaching assistants. However, pupils do not feel that all staff care about them as young people or about their progress academically.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is inadequate.
- Leaders have not established any ongoing, effective strategies or actions to support the complex social and emotional needs of a significant minority of pupils who exhibit extremely poor behaviours. Additionally, leaders have been unable to secure appropriate next-step provision for these pupils. Consequently, use of fixed-term exclusions has continued to rise since the previous inspection and is much higher than the national average.
- The interim executive headteacher has introduced new mechanisms to improve pupils' behaviour in lessons. This is showing some early signs of success in reducing the numbers of pupils involved in incidents of poor behaviour. However, staff are not using the new behaviour policy consistently. Older pupils told inspectors that they do not

understand the rationale behind the decisions that staff take and feel that teachers are inconsistent in their application of the behaviour rewards and sanctions. Consequently, low-level poor behaviour in lessons is still far too common.

- The learning environment, despite some efforts by staff, is tired and lacking in vibrancy. On occasion, there are some examples of pupils' work on display, which indicates the potential of pupils in the school. However, there is little celebration of pupils' successes or pride in pupils' achievements.
- In September 2016, the school site was not fully ready when the school moved in. Consequently, staff have had to face significant classroom moves partway through the term, from temporary classrooms into permanent ones. This means that parts of the building are either unfinished or unkempt, such as walls in hallways or parts of the pupils' outdoor space.
- Pupils' behaviour at break and lunchtime and when moving around the school is generally calm. However, some pupils feel that the space for them to play is not sufficient and that staff deliberately limit the space available in order to reduce poor behaviour among pupils.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Standards have not been maintained since the previous inspection. Outcomes in 2015/16 slipped considerably in the early years, in phonics and in key stage 1. Leaders were unable to provide any current evidence of consistent, thorough and accurate monitoring of pupils' progress from their various starting points. This includes the checking of pupils' achievement in alternative provision.
- Continued instability in leadership has meant that pupils' achievement has continued to decline. The school's information shows that the proportion of pupils who achieved well in reading, writing and mathematics in both key stage 1 and key stage 2 was far too low this year.
- The school's first set of key stage 2 national test results in 2017 are woefully poor, most notably, but not exclusively, in writing. Consequently, most pupils are not well prepared for the next stages in their education.
- The achievement of identified groups of pupils is very low. This includes pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, the most able, those who need to catch up and disadvantaged pupils. Leaders are not demonstrating the capacity to make sustained improvements to this.
- The progress that pupils make in their knowledge and understanding of phonics is too slow. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the phonics screening check in both Year 1 and Year 2 has been below average since 2014. Disadvantaged pupils' achievement in phonics has also been low.
- Although there is some evidence of improvement in standards in phonics, leaders are not confident that assessment is accurate. It is not clear if the improvements this year are an accurate reflection of pupils' achievement.
- The ever-diligent deputy headteacher is beginning to establish a more accurate and consistent assessment system. There is also ongoing work with another local school to

moderate this information to check its accuracy. However, this work is still in its infancy, and it is not fully embedded or used effectively by teachers.

Early years provision

Inadequate

- The Nursery and Reception provision has not secured rapid sustained improvements in the quality of provision since the previous inspection.
- In 2016, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development was well below the national average. In 2017, this has improved marginally but is still unlikely to reach the national average. In particular, standards for boys and outcomes in writing have been too low.
- Since 2014, the proportion of disadvantaged children who reach the expected standard by the end of Reception has been below the national average. Leaders have not ensured that the early years pupil premium is being used effectively.
- The curriculum is not well established across the Nursery and Reception provisions. Children are not being given a wealth of opportunities, including trips and visits, to apply and reinforce their learning in different environments. Communication between staff in the Nursery and Reception classes has not been well developed to ensure children's smooth transition.
- Children are not being given sufficient opportunities to engage in meaningful play activities. Children are not being identified and encouraged quickly enough in their independent play, through questioning of guided activities by adults, to develop their language and communication skills.
- The learning environment, although slightly better in the Nursery provision, is not a vibrant learning space. There is not sufficient celebration of children's most recent work and successes, especially in their development of early writing skills. Teaching has not ensured that the various areas in the provision clearly reflect the learning and personalities of the current children.
- The small outdoor areas are not well maintained to promote high-quality activities to stimulate and engage children. The larger area of outdoor space is not being used, as it is not considered to be fully safe owing to the break-up of the tarmac surface.
- The interim executive headteacher has quickly identified the early years outdoor area as an urgent area of priority, has purchased additional resources and has actioned the work on the tarmac to be undertaken over the summer holidays.
- Since January, the early years leader has made some improvements in both the learning environment and in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. However, these are not well embedded. There are inconsistencies in the assessment of children's learning, which means that planning for their specific needs is still not precise enough.
- Staff care for children and have, in the absence of consistent leadership, taken appropriate actions to refer concerns and to record the learning of children in a variety of ways. However, staff's development is not being supported well enough, including their use of assessment information to plan appropriate activities, their use of questioning and their teaching of early phonics.

School details

Unique reference number	124555
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10039285

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.

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	252
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair	Toby Slater Robins
Executive Headteacher (interim)	Nichola Perry
Telephone number	01284 766278
Website	www.howardprimaryschool.co.uk
Email address	admin@howard-pri.suffolk.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	5– 6 June 2014

Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information on its website about curriculum, the use of pupil premium, the sport premium, governance and key stage 2 achievement. The website was new and an area identified as a weakness by the interim executive headteacher when inspectors arrived at the school.
- The school is slightly smaller than most primary schools.
- Most pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils from different ethnic backgrounds is much lower than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is slightly below the national average. However, there is a higher proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils at the school is much higher than the national average.

- The school uses the County Inclusive Resource to provide alternative provision for a small number of pupils who require additional support for their social, emotional and mental health needs.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors undertook learning walks and lesson observations across the school and reviewed pupils' work. A number of these lessons were observed jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors also undertook work scrutiny of numerous subjects across key stages 1 and 2.
- Inspectors held meetings with the executive headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator, the office manager, the family welfare officer and numerous other leaders and staff.
- Inspectors also met with the two local authority appointed representatives from the governing body. Inspectors also met and held telephone conversations with school improvement advisers and human resources personnel from the local authority.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of school documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, site safety, achievement, attendance and behaviour.
- There were 11 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, 15 responses by staff and 20 responses by pupils.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils in lessons and also met with groups of pupils formally.
- Inspectors observed pupils' arrival to the school and their conduct at break and lunch, as well as between lessons.

Inspection team

Kim Pigram, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Ashley Best-White	Ofsted Inspector
Simon Morley	Ofsted Inspector
Lesley Stevens	Ofsted Inspector

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