

Howe Dell Primary School

The Runway, Hatfield, Hertfordshire AL10 9AH

Inspection dates

28–29 September 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- Howe Dell Primary School is an extremely caring, outward-looking and highly inclusive school. Pupils are proud and passionate about their education. One pupil enthusiastically exclaimed: 'I love coming to this school. I would come during the weekends if I could.'
- The exceptional leadership of the headteacher and support of her team set a culture of high expectation and ambition for all pupils to be the best they can be.
- Governors support and challenge the headteacher effectively. They know the school well because of the quality of information they receive and their close contact. They make a valuable contribution to the ongoing development of the school.
- Teachers use assessment information to pitch work at just the right level. They plan enthralling activities which excite and challenge pupils in their learning.
- Provision for vulnerable pupils is a significant strength. Leaders 'go the extra mile' to make sure that pupils have no barriers to their learning and, as a result, they make excellent progress.
- From their low starting points, pupils make excellent progress. As a result, gaps in attainment in relation to pupils nationally have been eradicated or are closing rapidly.
- The curriculum, which is based on the school's core value of sustainable development, provides rich and rewarding experiences. Exciting themes and 'wonder days' fuel pupils' desire to learn more.
- Pupils are enthusiastic and eager learners. They value their education highly and approach their learning with focus, as well as with an energetic sense of fun. Pupils take pride in their written work.
- As a result of strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, pupils develop as well-rounded, confident and thoughtful citizens. They have a very clear understanding of their place in modern Britain.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school and feel confident that their children are happy and safe and make exceptional progress.
- Children in the early years quickly develop skills that allow them to learn and play happily together.
- Leaders have accurately identified the improvements needed for the development of children's speech and language.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of the early years provision so that more pupils start Year 1 at levels typical for their age by:
 - increasing children’s skills in speech and language so that these can then be used to support learning in other areas of the curriculum
 - extending the range of learning opportunities for the development of speech and language in the outdoor areas.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The headteacher's inspirational leadership and clear, determined vision have transformed teaching and pupils' experiences of school. The headteacher is very ably supported by the deputy headteachers who share, along with staff, high expectations of what pupils can achieve. The success of each and every pupil is at the heart of all the school does.
- Leaders have successfully created an environment in which pupils thrive academically and socially. Their core purpose is to improve the quality of teaching so that it is never less than good and is often outstanding, and they do this well. Where teachers require support and advice to help them to improve outcomes, they are comprehensive and readily available.
- Staff use their expertise and experience to develop one another's skills, and the school has a reputation for its capacity to provide training to other schools. The headteacher has coached a number of senior leaders so that they are now headteachers of other schools.
- Senior leaders and governors have a sharp and insightful view of what the school does well. This is as a result of an ongoing, extensive and accurate review of the school's performance. Plans for further school improvement are well judged and based on careful analysis of pupils' progress and well-being.
- Leaders not only track pupils' performance in lessons but also their social and emotional development. As a result, provision for pupils is responsive to their needs and removes barriers to learning. For example, the school provides vulnerable pupils with art and play therapy to address social and emotional needs so that these pupils can access the curriculum.
- Middle leaders and newly qualified teachers are unanimous in the view that they are well supported and held rigorously to account for their work. They appreciate their leaders' immediate follow-up and helpful advice, and speak highly of wide-ranging planned opportunities to evaluate their work, such as 'speed dating' with their link governor.
- Because leaders know the precise needs of each pupil, their use of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is very effective. Leaders are creative in allocating resources. Additional support helps to ensure that pupils catch up if they are falling behind. Activities that broaden pupils' learning experiences are routinely planned. As a consequence, disadvantaged pupils grow in confidence and make similar progress to their peers. In some year groups, they make better progress than their peers.
- Funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is used well so that they make similar progress to their peers. For example, the provision of additional opportunities, such as a movement class, and the purchase of extra resources have helped to develop pupils' confidence and risk-taking.
- The curriculum is very strong and it complements the school's eco status. It provides a variety of activities that help foster strong awareness of global issues and active citizenship.

- Pupils are encouraged to take risks and to develop their independence and resilience through the variety of clubs on offer and the leadership opportunities, such as the young cultural ambassadors and the 'eco squad'. Pupils are of the view that 'learning is amazing!'
- The primary physical education (PE) and sport funding is used well. Pupils take part in a wide range of sporting activities, including swimming and after-school clubs. Pupils also get the opportunity to be sports leaders. Recently purchased sporting equipment is appreciated by pupils.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and the promotion of British values are outstanding. The importance of being a good, caring citizen is evident through the way that pupils engage and cooperate with each other. One Year 3 pupil commented that, if she was the headteacher for a day, she would fundraise and donate more money to the orphanage the school is linked to. Letters from pupils to the Prime Minister advocating tolerance in society have been published nationally. During the inspection, the school held a special Macmillan charity assembly to which all parents were invited.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. Many parents that inspectors spoke to were appreciative of the wide-ranging opportunities given to their children. They value the kindness, care and understanding shown by staff. Parents commented on 'the amazing management and staff' and said that they were 'really pleased to be part of the Howe Dell family'.

Governance of the school

- Governance has strengthened significantly since the last inspection. The governing body meets its responsibilities very well. Governors are articulate and passionate about the education that is provided by the school. They know how to analyse data on the performance of pupils, and they use this knowledge to challenge and support school leaders. They bring a range of expertise to the school and have an incisive understanding of the school's priorities.
- Governors have a strong grasp of how leaders check the effectiveness of the school's performance by visiting lessons to see teaching and discussing subject performance with subject leaders. They manage finances effectively, checking on the effect of pupil premium funding and PE and sport funding on achievement.
- Governors make good use of performance management procedures to recognise the impact of teachers' and leaders' work. Governors effectively use the same procedures to hold teachers and leaders to account for their actions.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The headteacher and senior leaders are vigilant and relentless in ensuring the safety, care and well-being of the school's most vulnerable pupils.
- Record-keeping is detailed and precise so that individuals receive the best support available. The lead governor for safeguarding is scrupulous in monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the school's procedures. Clear and comprehensive

documentation supports liaison with external agencies, with whom the school works extensively.

- Staff and governors are very well trained in identifying any safeguarding concerns. Senior leaders are highly experienced in dealing with the complex issues that they sometimes encounter. The headteacher lends her expertise to the local authority for the benefit of other schools.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- The consistently high quality of teaching is a strength of the school. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and ensure that the pace of learning and level of challenge enable pupils to concentrate and be fully involved in their learning. Lessons are often a 'hive of activity'.
- The effect of teaching over time is reflected in pupils' outstanding achievement in a wide range of subjects.
- Teachers question pupils skilfully and regularly check their knowledge and understanding. There are many opportunities for pupils to apply their skills in a variety of ways and in a number of subjects. The rapid pace of learning and timely support from additional adults help pupils to make significant gains in their knowledge and understanding.
- Teachers provide pupils with different challenges according to their ability, from 'easy' through to 'superhero'. Pupils are successfully encouraged to take responsibility for their learning by deciding which challenge would suit them best. Teachers skilfully guide younger pupils to make these decisions. As pupils get older, they accurately assess for themselves what they need to do to get the most out of the lessons. Pupils are encouraged to evaluate and improve their work. As a result, they are comfortable if they need to go back a step to revisit work that they may not quite understand.
- For those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, the support they are offered is highly personalised, thorough and of high quality. Pupils' needs are identified and sensitively addressed quickly so that any barriers to learning are removed. Pupils make significant gains in their progress in lessons, as well as in their social and emotional development.
- In mathematics, skills are taught very well due to the focus on 'talking mathematics'. Pupils are encouraged to talk through their methods of calculation with their peers so they can learn from one another. This means that they are well versed in mathematical language. For example, pupils in Year 2 can speak confidently about how to add and subtract.
- Pupils have benefited greatly from the school's initiative to focus on writing. Teachers provide a variety of opportunities to practise different forms of writing. The celebration of pupils' writing through their 'best book' for display and for rewards such as 'author of the week' has inspired pupils to use their imagination and do their best at all times.
- Younger children make excellent progress with their early reading because of a systematic and rigorous approach to the teaching of phonics in order to make sense of words. Pupils continue to enjoy and make progress in their reading throughout the school, becoming increasingly fluent and expressive. Initiatives such as photographing

pupils reading in different locations and at different times of the day create a buzz for reading. Pupils talk enthusiastically about what they are going to read next and where.

- Teachers' advice and guidance to pupils on how they can improve their work are clear and helpful. Pupils are given time to read and respond to feedback by staff. This moves their learning forward substantially.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to support pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- The habits of being successful learners are embedded early in the school. Even the youngest pupils show independence in their learning and perseverance in doing their best to complete all the work set, including that given for homework. One Year 5 pupil said 'just because I find this hard doesn't mean I should give up'.
- In talking about their work, pupils are confident and articulate. Key stage 2 pupils were able to summarise to inspectors succinctly what they were learning in a range of subjects. They are eager to participate in new activities. For example, many pupils in key stage 2 play musical instruments and thrive in their playing, due to regular attendance at ensembles and orchestra.
- Relationships between pupils and adults are excellent. Pupils are kind to one another and they, like the staff, ensure that they make everyone feel welcomed and valued. Pupils appreciate the care and understanding that staff show them. One pupil said that his teachers were like his best friends.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and children who are looked after are very well cared for. They participate fully in all that the school has to offer and benefit from leaders' sharp attention to detail. For example, children who are looked after are given a talking book upon leaving, which captures their most special moments at school.
- Bullying, including discriminatory bullying, at the school is very rare. This is because leaders have established a highly cohesive school community. The few cases of bullying are recorded and dealt with swiftly and very effectively. Pupils say that they trust their teachers to resolve any concerns they raise.
- Pupils are clear that they feel safe in school and are unanimous in their view that they know how to keep themselves safe personally and online. Older pupils are developing their knowledge of the possible areas of risk with online gaming.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils' conduct is exceptional and they have an excellent attitude to learning. Around school, pupils are polite and well mannered. They smile at each other in the corridor and are very happy to engage in conversation with adults. They do this in an articulate, interested and open way.
- Those pupils who have behavioural needs are able to talk about ways of managing themselves. Reflection areas are provided which give such pupils an opportunity to

manage their emotions. A nurture group helps pupils to understand their behaviour and gives them opportunities to raise their self-esteem. This provision is effective so that behaviour and emotional needs rarely get in the way of learning.

- Pupils have pride in their environment and this is reflected in the school. It is tidy and well ordered, with high-quality displays of pupils' work. Pupils spoke animatedly about their gardening club and the opportunities given to them to improve the environment further.
- Attendance is higher than the national average. Pupils rarely miss a day of school. No groups of pupils attend less well than others.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Children often start school with individual skills, knowledge and understanding which are well below typical for their age. By the time they leave school at the end of key stage 2, the vast majority of pupils have made excellent progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils' work demonstrates rapid and sustained progress across a range of subjects between joining and leaving the school.
- In 2016, Year 6 pupils' attainment at the end of key stage 2 was in line with the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. A large number of these pupils joined the school with starting points well below children of the same age. Pupils in Year 6 in 2017 joined the school with lower average starting points than the 2016 cohort. Despite this, they also attained as highly. Pupils currently in key stage 2 are making similarly outstanding progress.
- Standards in reading, writing and mathematics are rising in key stage 1. The teaching of phonics is strong and this translates into rising numbers of pupils who meet the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check. Standards of reading are impressive in most classes and new initiatives to raise them further are being implemented.
- The most able pupils make outstanding progress in line with their peers. For example, most-able pupils in Year 2 develop paragraphing abilities, which is a skill that is typically mastered in later years.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make rapid gains in confidence and thrive academically, progressing at a similar rate to their peers. This is the result of the personalised support and challenge that they receive in lessons from highly effective additional adults.
- Disadvantaged pupils benefit from a wide range of strategies to support their achievement. For example, the school meticulously monitors the progress of these pupils and ensures that they are well supported in class to improve. In several year groups, they are making better progress than their peers. In a few foundation subjects where their attainment is not as high as that of their peers, the gap is diminishing rapidly.
- Pupils are extremely well prepared for secondary school by the end of Year 6 in terms of both their achievement and their knowledge of how to be a successful learner.

Early years provision

Good

- Children enter the school with starting points that are typically lower than other children of their age. Home visits prior to starting school, a staggered entry and an open-door policy ensure that leaders swiftly identify any gaps in children's development. Effective adult support and provision are put in place to ensure that all children make good progress. As a result, children's attainment at the end of Reception is rising rapidly and the gap with the national average is diminishing.
- The new early years team tailors the curriculum to meet the needs of each child, and stimulates and challenges children well. For example, a boy who has a talent for building was encouraged to build a mobile engine after a school visit from the Fire Brigade.
- Very early on, children are encouraged to look after the environment, reflecting the school's eco status. A child in Reception commented during her nature trail that there are 'lots of leaves but you don't pick them off the trees'.
- Scrutiny of the children's 'learning journals' and other observations confirm the effect that teaching is having on the development of skills such as writing, early reading and number recognition. Increasingly, children are well prepared for learning in Year 1.
- Children quickly learn essential social and emotional skills. They are able to share, take turns and behave exceptionally well. There are highly positive relationships between staff, children and parents. This helps children to quickly become confident learners and have a positive attitude to school. Children work happily and cooperatively.
- Staff encourage children to experiment and become independent through well-established and consistent routines. Activities are organised so that there is an effective balance between those led by adults and those led by children. Children explore and practise skills as they play.
- The early years provision is well led. Leaders have a very clear view about the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. Teachers successfully support the development of speech, language and communication skills of children who have fallen behind in their development. The outdoor provision has improved since the previous inspection and the space is exploited much more to maximise children's learning and development. Leaders have allocated more funding to enhance outdoor activities to develop speech, language and communication skills further.
- Leaders take their duties seriously to ensure that all aspects of health and safety in the early years are compliant with requirements. This creates an environment in which children are safe and feel safe.

School details

Unique reference number	117220
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10031590

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	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	475
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Debbie Cole
Headteacher	Debra Massey
Telephone number	01707 263 291
Website	www.howedell.herts.sch.uk/
Email address	head@howedell.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	31 January 2013

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school has expanded to two-form entry and is larger than the average primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium grant is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is in line with the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is above average. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is higher than the national average.
- The Howe Dell Day Care is on the same site as the school and is managed by the

governing body, but is subject to separate inspection arrangements.

- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school has achieved a variety of awards, including Eco Schools Ambassador status and the Governor Mark.
- Leaders are supporting the development of another local primary school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed a wide range of lessons through learning walks and longer observations. A number of these were conducted jointly with school leaders. Inspectors also attended assemblies.
- Inspectors heard some pupils from Years 1 to 6 read.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteachers, the governing body, groups of pupils and a representative from the local authority.
- A range of evidence was examined, including the school's self-evaluation and development plans, the systems to track pupils' progress and policies and records relating to behaviour and attendance. Inspectors also looked at safeguarding documentation and samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors took into account 128 responses to Parent View, 50 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and 34 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.

Inspection team

Liz Smith, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Simon Harbrow	Ofsted Inspector
John Crane	Ofsted Inspector
Christine Redpath	Ofsted Inspector
Janet Tomkins	Ofsted Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2017