

Howbridge Infant School

Dengie Close, Witham, Essex CM8 1DJ

Inspection dates

6–7 December 2017

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	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders and governors continue to ensure that pupils receive a good quality education. By the time pupils leave at the end of key stage 1, the proportion of pupils who reach the required standard is at least in line with the national average and continues to improve.
- The proportion of most-able pupils who work at greater depth by the end of key stage 1 was above the national average in 2017 in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The most able disadvantaged pupils achieved as well as other pupils nationally in reading at greater depth in 2017.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who reached the required standard in reading, writing and mathematics was below other pupils nationally in 2016 and 2017.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They are confident and happy in a well-organised learning environment.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is provided for effectively. Adults are positive role models. They encourage pupils to learn and to use the school values successfully.
- Pupils are kind to each other and have good relationships. They respond swiftly to adults' instruction and have very positive attitudes to their learning.
- Middle leaders are effective. They are enthusiastic for their roles and responsibilities. They ensure that the curriculum is stimulating and captures the interest of pupils.
- The quality of teaching and learning is consistently good across classes and year groups. Teachers work effectively together to ensure that pupils receive similar opportunities.
- The provision for pupils' physical education is a strength of the school. Pupils receive high-quality instruction and develop skills in a wide ranges of sports.
- Pupils achieve well in science by the end of key stage 1. Pupils experience practical lessons where they can develop their skills and abilities.
- Leaders do not have a secure enough grasp on the starting points for children when they enter Reception. This impacts on how successfully adults adapt learning activities to match children's individual needs to enable more to reach a good level of development.
- In 2017, the proportion of pupils who reached the required standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check was below that found nationally.
- The attendance of disadvantaged pupils has been lower than national for the previous two years.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of the early years foundation stage by:
 - leaders gathering information that demonstrates children’s capabilities in each area of learning when they enter the school, so that adults’ planning and assessment can be rigorous
 - adults using assessment information carefully to adapt the learning to meet individual needs so the most able and the least able children can make good progress.
- Improve outcomes for pupils further by:
 - ensuring that disadvantaged pupils and those who are most-able make better progress so that more reach at least the required standard, particularly in writing and mathematics, by the end of key stage 1
 - raising pupils’ achievement in phonics by the end of Year 1.
- Improve leadership and management further by:
 - making sure assessment information securely reflects children’s starting points and is analysed precisely
 - continue to raise the attendance of disadvantaged pupils.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders and governors have ensured that pupils experience good-quality teaching and learning throughout their time at Howbridge Infant School. Leaders provide effectively for pupils' safety and well-being. Consequently, pupils are very happy, safe and well cared for. Many are suitably prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Leaders understand what the school is good at and what requires further improvement. They place a high priority on providing training and development for staff at all levels. Staff receive high-quality training that often leads to recognised qualifications. Leaders regularly monitor the impact of teaching on learning and the progress pupils make, quickly tackling underperformance. They are ambitious to improve further.
- Staff are proud to work at the school and all say they feel supported by school leaders and the headteacher. Newer members of staff commented that they receive strong support to improve their planning and teaching. Consequently, staff work well together, share their good practice and follow the school's policies and procedures willingly and well.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school. Through lessons and assemblies, pupils learn about the school's ethos and values. In assemblies, they offer their opinions and views sensitively and demonstrate tolerance and kindness. The many high-quality and current displays around the school demonstrate pupils' mature reflections for events such as Remembrance Day.
- Leadership of the provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities and the use of additional funds are effective. Pupils' needs are identified early, with relevant support in place for those who require it. Staff receive training to meet individual pupils' needs carefully. Leaders have identified that the achievement of these pupils and the progress each individual makes could still improve further. This is because pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make mixed progress from their starting points. The action plan produced identifies the correct areas and activities so that pupils can succeed.
- Leaders of English and mathematics have accurately identified the strengths and weaknesses of their subjects. They have credible action plans in place and monitor the impact of their work on the progress pupils make. Through regular checking of the work in pupils' books, these leaders ensure that teachers provide consistency and good quality in the provision of English and mathematics.
- Additional funds for the provision of sport are allocated highly effectively. This year, funds have been used to employ a specialist teacher to work alongside teachers. Pupils, including those from early years, participate in a wide range of activities and benefit from good-quality coaching to develop their skills, health and well-being. All pupils attend an extra sports club at some point in their time at the school.
- Middle leaders, some of whom are new to their positions, are enthusiastic and benefit from working with other leaders at the same level both within the school and with neighbouring schools. They ensure that the curriculum is suitably covered and are

becoming more effective at providing an interesting and suitable curriculum that meets the needs of individuals.

- Leaders use additional funds for disadvantaged pupils with increasing effectiveness. They identify the barriers to learning and track the progress of disadvantaged pupils carefully, intervening when pupils fall behind. Teachers and teaching assistants use their knowledge of each pupil to provide them with extra guidance and support. As a result, some disadvantaged pupils and all who are most-able disadvantaged are currently making better progress than was previously the case.
- Parents are highly positive about the work of school leaders to keep their children happy, safe and well cared for. The view of many parents can be summed up in one response to the online 'free-text' service: 'My son is challenged and enjoys school and feels very safe, supported and happy there. The teachers have always been available and happy to discuss his needs. I would happily recommend the school to others.'
- Leaders have the capacity to improve further. At times, they do not ensure that the wealth of assessment information they hold about pupils' achievement and starting points is analysed as effectively as it could be. As a result, leader's actions can lack the precision needed to ensure that even more pupils achieve the required standard by the end of key stage 1.
- The local authority provides 'light touch' guidance to the school. It has identified the areas for improvement and provides support to governors so that this aspect of leadership continues to develop further.

Governance of the school

- Governance is effective. Governors fulfil their statutory duties and are dedicated to the success of the school and its pupils.
- Governors effectively hold school leaders to account for pupils' achievement. They have a secure understanding of the current strengths and weaknesses. Under the skilled leadership of the experienced chair of the governing body, each member has clear roles and responsibilities. New governors receive appropriate induction so they can quickly become effective.
- Through regular visits to the school, governors check the validity of the information they are given. Minutes of meetings show they challenge and question the work of school leaders so the school continues to improve.
- Governors ensure that the financial management of the school meets statutory requirements. They are becoming increasingly involved and effective when deciding how to use the additional money provided for disadvantaged pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. School leaders and governors have ensured that the school is a safe and secure place for pupils and staff.
- Safeguarding arrangements are in place. Staff are appropriately trained in line with current national requirements. Records are meticulously kept and staff are

knowledgeable about raising concerns they may have about the welfare of a child. In the staff questionnaire, all staff stated that pupils are safe and well cared for.

- Governors are appropriately trained in their safeguarding duties and continue to update their own knowledge and understanding so they can hold school leaders to account for the safeguarding of pupils.
- Pupils can explain how to keep themselves safe in an age-appropriate way. The many posters around the school demonstrate that they receive regular instruction regarding keeping safe when using technology and the internet. The school provides effective help and guidance to parents about keeping their children safe online.
- Pupils told inspectors that they are safe and act in a way that shows they feel safe at school. Almost all parents who responded to Parent View agree that the school keeps their children safe and responds well to any concerns that they have.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching is good across the school. Teachers plan learning activities effectively so that pupils receive similar experiences and equality of opportunity irrespective of the class that they are in.
- Adults are positive role models for pupils. They have good relationships with pupils and as a result pupils learn in a purposeful environment where they grow in confidence.
- Adults provide pupils with a full and stimulating curriculum. They provide exciting opportunities for pupils to gain skills and knowledge in subjects such as science and computing, so they are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Relationships between school and home are strong and this assists pupils in acquiring their reading skills quickly and effectively. The proportion of pupils who read at the required standard by the end of key stage 1 has been strong for a number of years.
- Pupils respond to teachers' instructions quickly and well. As a result, lessons proceed smoothly and easily. Pupils also respond competently to the guidance provided by teachers to improve their work. For example, pupils in Year 2 are becoming increasingly skilled at editing and redrafting their writing.
- Pupils work hard in mathematics. They apply their skills conscientiously. Increasingly, pupils choose their own starting points in each mathematical activity and many relish the challenges they receive. Adults are becoming more adept at providing the sort of challenges that allow pupils to explore, reason and use their mathematical understanding effectively. Pupils are making better progress as a result.
- In some classes, teachers ensure that teaching assistants are appropriately deployed and have a positive impact on helping pupils make progress during lessons. Teaching assistants often use effective questions to help pupils explain their learning. However, this is not consistent and in some lessons teaching assistants are not used well.
- The teaching of writing is strong and pupils have opportunities to develop their writing skills across many curriculum subjects. Even so, adults are not reinforcing precise handwriting skills. Consequently, some pupils are developing poor handwriting habits and letter formation.

- The teaching of phonics in Year 1 is mixed. At times, pupils do not practise their blending of sounds sufficiently well. This slows the progress that lower-ability pupils make.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils develop good levels of confidence and self-esteem. They have positive attitudes towards learning and are keen to do well. They show perseverance in their learning and often select the more challenging activities when given the choice.
- In an assembly seen, pupils contributed their ideas easily and sensitively, presenting their views and opinions maturely. They demonstrated respect and enjoyment when watching their friends present the story of the Good Samaritan, as they considered the value of helping one another. The pupils participated in singing with equal passion and skill.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education and the promotion of British values are threaded throughout school activities and are promoted well. Pupils are generally kind and caring to each other and develop their social skills well.
- The school provides a well-organised breakfast and after-school club for pupils at Howbridge Infant school and two other local schools. Pupils have a calm start to their school day. They are cared for well. Older pupils told inspectors how much they enjoy attending this additional provision.
- Pupils say that adults help them, and deal quickly, with any potential and rare friendship or bullying incidents that occur. Pupils and parents agree that the school is a safe and happy place. One parent commented: 'My child is being taught in a lovely, warm and safe environment.' Inspectors agree.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The school is an orderly community because adults are consistent with their expectations and kindly remind pupils to consider their behaviour choices. Staff who responded to their questionnaire consider that pupils are well behaved. Where pupils find it challenging to adapt their behaviour, the school supports individuals and families with careful consideration.
- In school and lessons, pupils demonstrate good conduct. On rare occasions, when low-level disruption occurs, pupils are quick to respond to adults' correction. As a result, lessons proceed without interruption.
- Pupils enjoy their playtimes in expansive and well-kept grounds. They play well together and have sufficient adult supervision. Any friendship issues are effectively and swiftly dealt with.

- Older pupils carry out their responsibilities maturely and sensibly. They particularly enjoy their leadership roles such as those of play leaders.
- Overall, attendance is in line with the national average. Leaders ensure that where pupils' attendance falls below their high expectations, then families are carefully supported. Even so, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils was lower than the national average in the last two academic years. Currently, the impact of improvements in raising attendance of disadvantaged pupils remains mixed.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- The proportion of pupils who achieved the required standard in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 1 has been at least in line with national averages for the previous two years. In 2017, pupils' attainment improved further and was above the national average in reading and writing.
- The proportion of most-able pupils who have worked at greater depth in reading by the end of key stage 1 has been above that found nationally for two years. Pupils are listened to reading regularly at home and at school. Consequently, in 2017, over 40% of pupils in the cohort reached the higher expectations.
- Pupils enjoy writing and their books demonstrate that they have opportunities to practise their writing skills in English and in other subjects. In Year 2, pupils have the opportunity to edit and redraft their work so they can make improvements. They make particularly good progress in their final year at the school and are well prepared for the move to the junior school.
- The progress that disadvantaged pupils make is mixed. For example, the most able disadvantaged pupils achieved the same as others nationally in reading at key stage 1, in 2017. However, disadvantaged pupils did not achieve as well in writing and mathematics when compared with other pupils nationally at the required standard. Currently, work in these pupils' books demonstrates that while disadvantaged pupils make similar progress to their peers in writing and mathematics the difference is not diminishing as quickly as it could.
- Most pupils achieve the required standard in science by the end of key stage 1. Pupils participate successfully in lessons because learning sparks their interest and allows them to investigate further. On occasions, the work is not as well matched to their needs as it could be. As a result, the most able pupils do not produce the higher standard of work of which they are capable. This is true in subjects across the curriculum.
- In 2017, pupils' achievement in the phonic screening check fell below the national average. This was the first time this had occurred in four years. Inspection evidence demonstrates that adults have appropriate support in place for those who did not achieve the required standard, so that they catch up by the end of Year 2.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Inspectors found that children start Reception with individual skills and abilities that are mostly typical, in all areas of the early years curriculum. The proportion of children who

leave early years achieving a good level of development is just above the national average and has remained broadly similar for the previous three years.

- Leaders have not ensured that teachers are sufficiently informed about the wide range of capabilities of the children in their class. Information from parents or other settings is not used systematically enough to provide adults with a full picture of what each child can do when they start school. Consequently, learning activities are not adapted as appropriately as they could be so that more children are able to make accelerated progress and are better prepared for Year 1.
- Children's learning journals demonstrate children's learning. Adults take great care presenting work to show that each child participates in all areas of the early years curriculum. Adults work effectively to plan activities that interest and enthuse children and provide the same quality of activities in each class.
- Classes and the outdoor area are vibrant and resourced with good-quality equipment. Learning is well organised and children make good use of all the activities on offer. During less structured times, classes are calm and purposeful with children working cooperatively with each other and with adults.
- In 2017, 60% of disadvantaged children achieved a good level of development. This was a significant improvement on the previous three years. This is because leaders check carefully on the progress of disadvantaged children and intervene quickly when required.
- Children learn to read effectively during their time in Reception. Parents are supportive and listen to their children reading regularly at home. In school, support staff keep meticulous records when they hear children read in school. Children who read to inspectors were proud of their skills, using their knowledge of sounds efficiently to blend unfamiliar words. A good number of children leave Reception exceeding the expected development level.
- Behaviour in the early years is good. Children are well cared for and demonstrate confidence in their learning. During the inspection, children performed in their school Christmas play. They acted, sang and delivered their lines to their parents, with enthusiasm and delight. In lessons such as PE, children listen and follow instructions willingly. Lessons and activities flow easily and without distraction.
- Adults are suitably trained and follow the school's policies and procedures for keeping children safe. There are no breaches of welfare.

School details

Unique reference number	114951
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10041533

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	5 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	262
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Colin Hooker
Headteacher	Anna Conley
Telephone number	01376 512 153
Website	www.howbridge-inf.essex.sch.uk
Email address	head@howbridge-inf.essex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	9–10 July 2013

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- This infant school is larger than an average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is significantly below the national average. Nearly all pupils speak English.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below that found nationally. While those who have an education, health and care plan is in line with the national average.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors gathered a range of evidence to judge the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. This included observing learning in all classes, some of which were jointly seen with senior leaders.
- The inspectors spoke with pupils formally and informally. Inspectors scrutinised pupils' workbooks from a wide range of subjects, to take account of the work that has been done and the progress that groups of pupils make over time.
- The teaching of phonics was observed. Inspectors listened to a number of pupils read from Reception and Year 1.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, the chair of the governing body and members of the governing body.
- Documents such as the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans; leaders' assessment of pupils' progress; leaders' monitoring of pupil attendance and behaviour; pupil premium reports; and the school's safeguarding arrangements, records, files and documentation were examined.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents that were spoken with at the start of the school day as well as those 63 parents who responded to Parent View, including their comments on the free-text service. The views of 23 staff who completed Ofsted's staff, were also considered.

Inspection team

Kim Hall, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Kay Tims	Ofsted Inspector
Henry Weir	Ofsted Inspector

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