

Helmingham Community Primary School

School Road, Helmingham, Stowmarket, Suffolk IP14 6EX

Inspection dates

15–16 November 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Leaders have not maintained the school's standard of education since the last inspection. Outcomes have declined due to ineffective teaching and a lack of effective monitoring.
- Assessment procedures do not provide a clear overview of how well pupils are progressing.
- Expectations of pupils are too low. Work in pupils' books is untidy and often unfinished. Not all pupils are challenged to do their very best or show pride in their work.
- Teachers do not use time in lessons well enough. Questioning does not engage all pupils or fully test their understanding.
- Pupils do not make enough progress in mathematics. Topic work is not used effectively to strengthen pupils' writing skills.
- Where teaching does not capture and retain pupils' interest, some pupils disengage from learning too easily.
- Children's learning in the early years is not always planned effectively to help them learn in and outside of the classroom.
- Leaders' monitoring and the procedures to manage the performance of teachers have not led to significant improvements in teaching.
- The roles of subject leaders are underdeveloped. In the past, they have not been expected to monitor teaching of their subjects or lead improvements.
- Leaders' evaluation of the school is too generous. Improvement plans do not have enough measurable targets to hold staff to account for making improvements.
- Governors do not ensure that all statutory duties are met. Some documents on the school's website are out of date.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders and governors, with support from the local authority, are demonstrating the capacity to improve the school.
- Pupils are polite, well mannered and eager to learn. Most behave well.
- All safeguarding requirements are fully met.
- The school is a safe, friendly place to be. Pupils' enjoyment of school is shown in their regular attendance.
- Most parents and carers praise the school's work, and the care and support provided for their children.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - eradicating weak teaching
 - sharpening assessment procedures so that leaders and staff have an accurate overview of how well pupils are progressing from their entry into to their exit from the school
 - making full use of time in lessons for learning
 - ensuring that pupils' work clearly illustrates their learning and progress over time and shows that pupils have pride in their work
 - planning learning in the early years that enables children to develop their skills and understanding in the outdoor environment
 - applying the school's revised procedures to manage the performance of teachers rigorously and systematically.
- Raise achievement throughout the school by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving
 - providing much greater challenge in mathematics and more opportunities for pupils to develop their problem-solving and reasoning skills
 - ensuring that the school's new approach to teaching mathematics is evaluated to check that it is working and that pupils are making good progress
 - ensuring that topic work, and learning in other subjects, strengthens pupils' writing and reinforces their literacy skills
 - providing further training for teachers and monitoring systematically the impact this has on improving pupils' learning and progress.
- Improve pupils' attitudes to learning in lessons by:
 - setting high expectations of them
 - planning learning that captures and retains their interest
 - ensuring that questioning engages them and assesses their understanding.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - raising leaders' expectations of staff and making staff far more accountable for the progress made by pupils in their classes
 - combining the areas for improvement identified in this inspection with the actions required by the local authority and the school's current improvement priorities into a

single, coherent plan to raise achievement

- ensuring that the plan has aspirational targets to enable governors to measure the impact of leaders and staff in improving the school, within the given timescales
- providing middle leaders with further training and time to lead improvements in their subjects.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders have not done enough since the last inspection to maintain the school's overall effectiveness. A lack of thorough monitoring of teaching and learning and weak procedures to assess pupils' progress have contributed to a decline in overall outcomes in key stage 2 over the past two years.
- Staff have not been held accountable for the progress made by pupils in their classes. Ineffective procedures to manage the performance of teachers have led to some staff being rewarded with pay increases, even though outcomes for pupils have fallen.
- Leaders have not ensured that pupils progress well enough. Procedures to assess how well pupils are doing have focused on their attainment, rather than on the progress they make.
- Weaknesses in the school's leadership, and wider concerns about its performance and safeguarding arrangements, were raised by the local authority in 2017. Governors were issued with a warning notice by the local authority.
- The warning notice requires leaders to submit an action plan to raise achievement this term. Leaders acknowledge the need to combine this with the inspection outcomes into a single plan for improving the school.
- The headteacher realises she needs to do more to secure improvement and has responded to the heightened challenge from the local authority. Safeguarding arrangements have been strengthened. Improvement plans have been bolstered to increase the pace of improvement. Revised assessment procedures now provide a clearer overview of how well pupils are doing. Lesson monitoring has improved and new, more challenging, targets have been set to manage the performance of staff.
- The headteacher's evaluation of the school has identified most of its strengths and weaknesses, but does not fully recognise that wholesale improvements are needed to teaching and leadership to enable pupils to achieve well.
- The local authority is confident that, with support and challenge, the headteacher and governors are capable of leading further improvements. The headteacher also has the full support of her staff and the majority of parents who responded during the inspection.
- Expectations of middle leaders have been raised to ensure that they take more responsibility for leading improvements in their subjects, particularly English, mathematics and science. Actions to promote the teaching of writing led to significant improvement in the progress made by pupils in Year 6 last year. The leader of mathematics has implemented new curriculum planning this year. It is too early to gauge the impact of this on pupils' learning and progress.
- Leaders ensure that funding to support disadvantaged pupils is spent effectively. Funding is used to tailor support to enable each of them to overcome the barriers to achievement they face and engage fully in all aspects of school life.
- A significant proportion of pupils have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. Several of them join the school at times other than the start of each year.

Additional funding is used effectively to design personal programmes that enable these pupils to integrate into school and re-engage in learning. The headteacher ensures that the learning and welfare of those with education, health and care plans are provided for and reviewed each year.

- The physical education (PE) and sport premium funds a specialist PE teacher to teach lessons alongside staff each week, enabling them to gain from the specialist's knowledge and experience and develop their own practice. Funding also provides termly 'sports days' for pupils to participate in a range of new sports activities.

Governance of the school

- The governing body is aware of the school's underperformance and the lack of urgency shown by leaders to improve it. It has welcomed the scrutiny from the local authority of the school's leadership, including governance.
- Governors have increased their monitoring of the impact of actions taken by leaders to improve the school. They have increased their challenge for the headteacher by setting her much more challenging targets to secure prompt improvements.
- Minutes of their meetings show that governors are asking more challenging questions of leaders about the actions taken to raise achievement. However, they are not examining thoroughly the progress made against the priorities listed in the school's current development plan, to ensure that improvements are being made at a suitable rate.
- Governors ensure that most of their statutory duties are met. Gaps in the single central record noted during the local authority's review have been addressed. A governor now makes regular checks of the school's safeguarding arrangements.
- Governors acknowledge that not all of the policies on the school's website are up to date. New arrangements have been implemented to update all policies systematically.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Prompt improvements have been made to the school's safeguarding arrangements. The single central record and the procedures followed when appointing new staff are complete and maintained fully.
- The headteacher is the designated lead for safeguarding. She maintains detailed records of concerns raised by staff. Issues raised are followed up robustly.
- A governor is trained in safer recruitment procedures.
- All staff and governors are trained in safeguarding, including 'Prevent' duty training.
- Pupils are taught how to keep themselves and others safe, including how to stay safe online. Risk assessments are in place to keep pupils safe in school and when they leave the school site.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- Weaknesses in teaching have not been tackled systematically. Some ineffective teaching has been tolerated for too long. Lesson monitoring and scrutiny of pupils' work have lacked rigour.
- Assessment is not used well enough to track the progress of each individual pupil from their starting points. The school's current procedures provide indications of changes in pupils' attainment, but do not plot accurately their progress over time. Until recently, they have not informed staff of which pupils need additional support to prevent them from underachieving.
- Expectations of pupils are not high enough. Many pupils are capable of much more, but are not given sufficiently challenging work to do to ensure that they achieve well. Teachers do not set pupils tight timescales to complete their work. Consequently, pupils work at their own steady rate and work is often left unfinished.
- Teachers do not encourage all pupils to answer questions or engage fully in discussion. They do not use questioning to test the understanding of all pupils or check that they know what to do.
- Books are marked regularly, but pupils' work is often untidy or unfinished. Pupils have clear guidelines for presenting their work, but teachers do not ensure that they follow them or challenge pupils' poor presentation through their marking. In topic work, errors in pupils' writing, especially their spelling and the use of grammar, are not corrected. Pupils are not expected to revisit their work to make corrections and complete all of their work.
- New guidance introduced to strengthen the teaching of mathematics is being followed by teachers. Books show that, currently, pupils in Years 3 and 4 experience a wide range of mathematical learning, but pupils in Years 5 and 6 do mainly calculation, with fewer opportunities to develop their problem-solving or reasoning skills.
- In some classes, teaching is shared between two part-time staff. The curriculum is planned to match their strengths, so pupils have whole mornings dedicated to teaching mainly English or mathematics. Leaders feel that this provides pupils with extended periods to learn in depth, but pupils told the inspector that they find these sessions too long and would prefer a mix of subjects each day.
- Staff generally manage pupils' behaviour effectively. They forge good relations with pupils and know them well, so usually there is no need to apply the school's procedures for managing poor behaviour.
- Most teachers make effective use of their teaching assistants. Staff work collaboratively together and pupils understand the routines.
- Where learning is most effective, teachers plan activities suited to pupils' different ages and abilities. They manage group work well, providing pupils with time to work without the direct support of staff. They regularly praise pupils for their hard work. Teachers demonstrate what pupils are expected to do and show them easier ways of working things out. Learning is made fun through the use of video and practical activities.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- It is an inclusive school that welcomes pupils from a range of backgrounds, including a large proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. A significant minority of pupils join from other schools midway through the year to make a fresh start. Staff are adept at helping them to settle quickly, make friends and engage fully in school life.
- The daily 'meet and greet' sets the tone for the day. In this small school, everyone knows each other well and looks after one another. They eat lunch and socialise together well. At breaks and lunchtimes, pupils of all ages play alongside each other, play ball games or gather to chat with friends. At the end of the day, teachers escort pupils into the playground, providing parents with an ideal opportunity to communicate with staff.
- Overall attendance is consistently high.
- Pupils told the inspector that they enjoy school and feel completely safe.
- Pupils readily volunteer to help as librarians, lunch monitors and sports captains. They take responsibility for distributing playground equipment at lunchtimes. Pupils enjoy participating in extra-curricular activities, particularly sport, but would like more after-school clubs.
- Weekly personal, social and health education lessons, and religious education, help to promote pupils' personal development and well-being. Assemblies provide daily opportunities for pupils to sing together and to reflect upon their own feelings and the lives of others. They learn about British values of democracy, tolerance and the rule of law. This, and an annual programme of visits to museums, places of worship and residential experiences, make a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Not all pupils display positive attitudes towards learning. At times, particularly when teaching fails to capture and retain their interest, pupils' attention wanes and their progress slows. When this happens, pupils do not usually misbehave, but lose concentration too easily.
- When asked by the inspector, pupils rated behaviour in lessons as 'seven out of ten' because some pupils distracted others by talking too much. They rated behaviour outside of lessons as 'six out of ten', but confirmed that they feel safe in school.
- Pupils told the inspector that bullying is very rare, and when it does happen they can approach any adult to help them resolve it. Leaders' records also show that very few incidents occur.
- Throughout the inspection, pupils were polite, well mannered and respectful towards staff and each other. No pupils have been excluded from school.

- Leaders keep detailed records of pupils who misbehave. They do not analyse these records thoroughly to spot patterns or trends and use this information to minimise incidents of poor behaviour.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Due to the school's small size, only very small numbers of pupils complete national tests in Year 6, and not all pupils in Year 6 sat national tests in 2017. This requires careful comparisons with the results of other pupils nationally. Similarly, groups of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those who have SEN and/or disabilities, are very small.
- Measuring the progress made by each individual pupil from their entry into to their exit from the school is a much more meaningful measure. However, the school's assessment procedures do not illustrate this well enough. Leaders are unable to show in detail how well each pupil is progressing. They have not used their assessment information effectively to intervene to prevent pupils from underachieving.
- Outcomes at the end of key stage 2 have declined since the last inspection and remain low. Last year, pupils in Year 6 did not make enough progress in reading or mathematics. The very small proportion of disadvantaged pupils made good progress in reading and writing, but not in mathematics. Progress made by pupils of all abilities in mathematics was particularly low.
- Attainment by the end of key stage 2 is low. Last year, less than half of Year 6 pupils met the required standard in reading, writing and mathematics combined.
- Observations of pupils at work and scrutiny of their books confirmed that, currently, pupils are not progressing as well as they should be, mainly because the quality of teaching is not good enough. Leaders recognise the importance of making prompt improvements to teaching to enable pupils to achieve what they are capable of attaining next year.
- The majority of pupils read well and enjoy reading. The school library is popular, used regularly and is well maintained by pupils. Older pupils told the inspector that they like reading and would prefer more opportunities to read for pleasure, rather than have additional lessons in guided reading.
- Pupils' attainment at the end of key stage 1 is usually above average in reading, writing and mathematics. In the past, none of the most able pupils in Year 2 have achieved a good level of development in reading, writing and mathematics. However, this improved in reading in 2017.
- The teaching of phonics is secure. The large majority of pupils attain national expectations by the end of key stage 1.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- The very small number of Reception-age children who join the school are taught in the same class as pupils in Years 1 and 2.
- The proportions of children achieving a good level of development in 2016 and 2017

were below average. Inconsistencies in the quality of teaching seen in classes of older pupils are also evident in early years. Time for learning is not always used well enough to promote good progress, and children find some work too easy.

- Staff provide children with an appropriate blend of teacher-led learning and child-initiated play in the classroom and in the outdoor area. At times, learning introduced in lessons indoors is not planned well enough so that children have opportunities to reinforce their learning outdoors.
- Space in the outdoor learning area is very limited. Staff make the best of this, using suitable play equipment for construction, imaginative play, sand and water and for mark-making. Children have access to a larger grassed area, but this is only available for use in good weather.
- Children are assessed on entry to identify their needs and interests. Staff work hard to accommodate the wide range of ages and abilities in the same class. They are confident in managing small groups and plan activities suited to the needs and abilities of each child. Learning is often practical to make it fun and enjoyable.
- Children behave well and look after each other. On arrival each day, they settle quickly and learn and play together well. Staff ensure that they are kept safe.
- The class leader is working closely with advisory staff from the local authority to strengthen provision and improve the leadership of the early years setting.

School details

Unique reference number	124586
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10036159

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	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	63
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Glen Buckingham
Headteacher	Bernie Cleland
Telephone number	01473 890267
Website	www.helmingham.suffolk.sch.uk/
Email address	head@helmingham.suffolk.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	19–20 September 2013

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of information on its website.
- The school met the government's floor standards (the minimum targets that schools are expected to achieve) in 2017.
- The school is receiving intensive challenge and support from the local authority.
- Almost all pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above average. Four pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- Pupils are taught in three mixed-age classes: Reception and Years 1 and 2, Years 3 and 4, and Years 5 and 6.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teachers and pupils at work in all three classes. He spent time indoors and outdoors observing pupils' behaviour.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, middle leaders, two members of the governing body including the chairperson, and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector observed the school's work. He looked at safeguarding and child protection policy and procedures, self-evaluation and improvement planning, minutes of governors' meetings, records of pupils' behaviour and attendance, and other information provided by the headteacher.
- The inspector scrutinised pupils' work. He considered 24 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, 23 free texts sent by parents during the inspection, nine responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff and 17 responses from pupils.

Inspection team

John Mitcheson, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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