

# Inspection of Howard Junior School

Parkway, Gaywood, King's Lynn, Norfolk PE30 4QJ

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Inspection dates: 13 and 14 March 2023

## **Overall effectiveness**

**Inadequate**

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The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Requires improvement**

Leadership and management

**Inadequate**

Previous inspection grade

Good

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils at Howard Junior School trust the staff to look after them and, in most instances, their confidence is justified. However, the trustees and members who are meant to check that children are safe do not always do so. There are serious failings in the school which have been unchallenged for too long.

Relationships between staff and pupils are positive and warm. Pupils appreciate the exciting playground area and immersive displays in corridors and classrooms. Nevertheless, these do not make up for the weak quality of education pupils receive. Pupils throughout the school do not achieve as well as they should because leaders have prioritised the appearance of the building at the expense of the curriculum.

Pupils are positive about their education and talk enthusiastically about their school. They are happy and play well together. They know they can learn in peace without being distracted or picked on by other pupils. Pupils want to please their teachers and are polite and welcoming to staff, visitors and each other. They take care of their school, pride in their appearance and ensure that the well-loved rabbits are never short of attention.

## **What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?**

The school curriculum is suitably broad, covering all of the required national curriculum subjects and objectives. In all subjects, staff know roughly what pupils need to achieve and understand by the end of each term. However, individual teachers, including those who are unqualified and known as instructors, are left to plan how pupils will reach these goals. Staff do their best to make this work, but too often lessons fail to build on what pupils already know. This means that, pupils forget too much of what they have learned. Teachers make regular checks on pupils to assess their progress. However, they rely too heavily on exams and test papers. This approach does not provide staff with the precise information they need to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge.

Many pupils arrive at the school needing support with their reading. The new phonics scheme is helping these pupils to revisit and learn the basics. Nevertheless, staff have not been trained to deliver this scheme and sometimes teach in ways that confuse pupils. Pupils read regularly which helps to hone their skills. However, for weaker readers, the books they read are poorly matched to the sounds they know and can recognise. This means that pupils do not benefit fully from their time spent reading.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified accurately by leaders who put in place appropriate plans to support these pupils. As with other areas of the curriculum, staff lack the training and knowledge to enact these plans as precisely as leaders have set out.

Pupils benefit from a range of clubs, trips and visitors. Laughter and joy abound on the playground as pupils burn off steam on the extensive equipment available to them. Pupils are tolerant and kind to others but struggle to debate and question complex concepts such as race, religion and gender. This is because the curriculum for personal, social and health education (PSHE) and relationships and sex education (RSE) is underdeveloped and not tailored to meet their needs. Leaders have not consulted with parents to help them develop their curriculum.

The purpose and structure of governance is not understood by trustees, leaders or members of the trust board. Trustees, while willing to serve, have taken up roles without the knowledge, training or experience they need to fulfil them. Trustees do not understand the guidance that they must follow, nor have they always sought the advice of experts to inform their actions. Trustees have failed to spot and act upon serious and significant concerns.

Staff are committed but many feel ground down. They know that the school should be better but feel powerless to make suggestions or express concerns. They do not report their grievances as they have little confidence in the process and are fearful of the backlash this may cause.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Leaders and trustees do not handle allegations of staff misconduct well. They have a weak understanding of the statutory guidance they must follow. They have not always accepted the help of local agencies who have tried to support them. Reports of staff misconduct are poorly handled, meaning issues are allowed to persist. Inspectors did not identify any pupils who were harmed because of these weaknesses.

Pupils learn how to stay safe and are confident that adults in the school will help them if they need it. Appropriate checks are made on new staff who join the school. Nevertheless, trustees do not have enough knowledge to check safeguarding systems are working. Trustees are unable to satisfy themselves that the systems are working as they should.

The staff know how to identify and report concerns about pupils. They do so, rightly confident that leaders will act in the best interests of pupils and families. Leaders work skilfully with a range of external agencies, who provide the right support in a timely way.

## What does the school need to do to improve?

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Trustees of the academy do not possess the skills, knowledge or experience to undertake their duties effectively. Both the structure and purpose of governance are unclear to those trusted to oversee the school. This means that leaders' work remains unchallenged, and serious allegations and concerns are mishandled. Members and trustees must ensure they undertake appropriate training to understand their roles. Trustees and members must agree their purpose, policy and approaches to ensure that appropriate checks are made on leaders' work and that their statutory obligations are met.
- Leaders have not identified the precise knowledge they want pupils to learn. Plans do not set out the best order to teach content nor the approaches staff should use. This means that staff make curricular decisions and teach using methods that are not aligned with leaders' intent. Leaders must ensure that staff are given appropriate training and resources to deliver the curriculum effectively and adapt this skilfully for all pupils.
- Staff have not received the required training to deliver the school's reading scheme. The school does not have books that contain sounds that are matched to those pupils know. Teachers' instruction is imprecise and the books are confusing for pupils. Leaders should provide appropriate training and resources for staff to deliver the reading curriculum as intended.
- The curriculum for PSHE and RSE is not tailored to the needs of the pupils in the school. Pupils' ability to reflect on challenging social concepts are underdeveloped. Leaders have not met their statutory obligation to consult parents on the RSE curriculum. Leaders must ensure that they gather, and reflect on, the views of parents and their knowledge of the community to tailor the PSHE and RSE curriculums to provide the greatest benefit to the pupils.

## How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

## Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	141583
<b>Local authority</b>	Norfolk
<b>Inspection number</b>	10277385
<b>Type of school</b>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	204
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Kevin Fawkes
<b>Headteacher</b>	Gregory Hill
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.howard-jun.norfolk.sch.uk">www.howard-jun.norfolk.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	7 December 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The headteacher was not present for the duration of the inspection. The two acting headteachers had been in this post for less than a week when the inspection began.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, His 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.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- The inspectors met with senior leaders and four members of the board of trustees, including the chair. The lead inspector also met with an officer from the local authority.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, computing and geography. They talked to subject leaders, staff and pupils, visited lessons and looked at pupils' work. They then considered a wider range of evidence.
- The inspectors reviewed the arrangements for safeguarding by scrutinising safeguarding records, interviewing staff and through discussions with pupils.
- The inspection team considered the views of parents shared through the Ofsted surveys. They gathered the views of pupils and staff through surveys, interviews and discussions conducted throughout the inspection.

### **Inspection team**

Daniel Lambert, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Tracy Fielding

His Majesty's Inspector

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