



Howard Community Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 124555
Local Authority SUFFOLK
Inspection number 293030
Inspection dates 11–12 January 2007
Reporting inspector Paul Missin

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	St Olave's Road
School category	Community		Bury St. Edmunds
Age range of pupils	3–9		Suffolk IP32 6RW
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01284 754450
Number on roll (school)	169	Fax number	01284 705041
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs B Marshall
		Headteacher	Mrs R Parkin
Date of previous school inspection	11 March 2002		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
3–9	11–12 January 2007	293030

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This school is smaller than most primary schools and there has been a significant fall in the number of pupils on roll in recent years. Attainment on admission is well below average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average but an above average proportion is eligible for free school meals. Almost all pupils have White British heritage and a very small number are at an early stage of learning English.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with some outstanding features. It provides good value for money and has the overwhelming confidence of parents. Pupils feel safe and secure. They enjoy school and their personal development is good.

They behave very well and their keenness to learn and to do their best is outstanding. Parents recognise the excellent standard of pastoral care provided. Commenting on the school's openness one parent wrote, 'I was very pleased in the way that my concerns were acknowledged and dealt with fairly, sensitively and speedily.' Pupils gain a good appreciation of the importance of healthy lifestyles through advice on diet and exercise. Through links such as the 'adopt a grand-parent' scheme and the country dancing programme, pupils have a very good understanding of the school's place in the wider community.

Pupils make good progress in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2, and satisfactory progress in Years 3 and 4. The best progress is in the Nursery and in Year 2, where the quality of teaching is highest. In the Nursery, children are encouraged to settle quickly into school routines and soon learn important personal and social skills. In Year 2, pupils' needs are met very well by particularly effective teaching. Standards are well below average on entry to the Nursery and still below average when pupils begin Year 1. Standards are average in Year 2 and also average by the end of Year 4. However, standards are rising in writing and are likely to be above average in the current Year 4. This is the successful result of a whole school initiative to improve writing. Standards are also above average in art and design because of the high profile given to the subject across the school and the effective teaching of specific skills. The art work on display in Years 2 and 3 is exceptional.

Pupils achieve well because teaching, learning and the curriculum are good. The strongest teaching is in the Nursery and in Year 2, where teachers plan carefully and manage pupils very well. Where it is less effective, teachers do not consistently match work to the abilities of pupils in the class. As a result more able pupils, especially in the mixed Reception/Year 1 classes, are not consistently challenged. A good range of assessment data is collected and this is beginning to set pupils' clear learning targets. However, pupils do not yet fully understand their targets and what they need to do to improve.

A major factor in the school's recent success is effective leadership and management. The headteacher leads the school well and her promotion of the school's inclusive ethos is effectively shared with all those involved in its work. Because the school's knowledge of itself is accurate and evaluation procedures are generally good, it has dealt effectively with issues from its last inspection and has good capacity to improve further. However, a relative weakness is that the impact of the recent decision to teach Reception and Year 1 pupils together in two parallel classes has yet to be rigorously evaluated. Governors support and challenge the school satisfactorily.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the quality of teaching and learning further by ensuring that activities are more closely matched to pupils' abilities, especially for those who are more able.
- Ensure that pupils have a clear understanding of their learning targets and how to improve their work.
- Critically evaluate the effectiveness of the mixed Reception/Year 1 classes.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress as they move through the school. Children make good overall progress in the Foundation Stage. On entry to the Nursery, many have poorly developed language and social skills. They make good progress, although standards are still below average when they begin Year 1. Progress in Years 1 and 2 is also good. Standards in the Year 2 tests in 2006 were slightly above average and represent an improvement since 2005, especially in writing. Progress in Years 3 and 4 is satisfactory overall, but good in writing. Standards at the end of Year 4 are average overall but higher in writing. Across the school, pupils make good progress in their art work and standards are above average. Pupils with learning difficulties and those at an early stage of learning English also achieve well and make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good; pupils really enjoy all the school offers. Attendance is good. Pupils feel safe in a school where bullying and racism are rare. Pupils' moral and social development is outstanding and spiritual and cultural development is good. These provide rich and rewarding learning opportunities. Pupils are very clear about right and wrong and usually treat each other with kindness and consideration. Pupils' social skills are extremely well developed and older pupils show increasing maturity as they take on responsibility. Pupils make an excellent contribution to both the school and local community. The school promotes healthy lifestyles well and pupils have a good understanding of how important this is. Pupils appreciate their healthy lunches and the many chances to take physical exercise, such as the very popular country dancing. Pupils are developing some good skills for their future economic well-being as, for example, when they design and make items to sell at the Christmas fete to raise funds for playground equipment.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Children get a very good start to their time at school in the Nursery. Here the teacher is very skilled at settling new children quickly and encouraging them to develop the social and learning skills that they need. Other features of good effective teaching across the school are the positive way that pupils are managed and encouraged to do their best and the good relationships which are established. Where teaching is less successful, activities are not always sufficiently closely matched to pupils' abilities and extension work is not always demanding enough to really challenge more able pupils. The teaching of writing and art and design is good. Pupils with learning difficulties and those at an early stage of learning English are taught well. Their needs are accurately assessed and they get good support.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It fulfils statutory requirements and it meets pupils' needs and interests well. There is a strong focus on developing basic skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communications technology. The recent whole school initiative on writing has brought about a much broader and more inspirational range of writing for different purposes and has helped to drive standards higher. New approaches to art and design have produced some superb pieces of artwork that pupils are justly proud of. The new computer suite is helping pupils to develop some good early computer skills; pupils' confidence and competence are increasing rapidly. However, access to outdoor education for Reception class children is limited and there is a shortage of large apparatus to promote physical development. There are plenty of visits, visitors and clubs to enrich learning, extend personal experience and improve the quality of the school community.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good care and guidance in a very supportive environment in which pupils thrive and are very happy. The induction arrangements for new children in the Nursery and Reception are excellent and so help them to settle quickly. All pupils have great confidence in the outstanding care available, should they feel vulnerable in any way. Procedures for ensuring pupils' health, safety and welfare are thorough and effective. Support for pupils' personal development is good, as is guidance for pupils with learning difficulties. Assessment procedures are systematic. Teachers use assessment information to set satisfactory class and group targets but do not give enough guidance on the next steps that pupils need to take in order to improve their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has ensured that all staff and governors share a clear vision and a commitment to placing the needs of all pupils, regardless of their ages or abilities, at the heart of the day-to-day life of the school. As a result, care and welfare procedures are excellent and help to promote an impressive sense of community within the school. The headteacher has worked successfully to give the school a high profile in the local area and to enable parents and the wider community to extend and support its work. An example of the school's effective evaluation procedures has been its very well managed response to a drop in writing results in the 2005 tests. Several whole school initiatives focused on improving writing have been introduced. The whole programme has been carefully evaluated and has resulted in a significant rise in standards being achieved across the school. A relative weakness is that there are insufficient procedures to evaluate the impact of the recent initiative to combine Reception and Year 1 pupils in two mixed classes. Governors support the school satisfactorily but do not collect enough first-hand information about its performance to hold it to account for what it achieves.

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

12 January, 2007

Dear Pupils,

Howard Community Primary School, St Olave's Road, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP32 6RW

Thank you very much for your welcome when my colleague and I visited the school recently to see how well you were doing. We were impressed by your very good behaviour and the enthusiasm which you show in all that the school provides. We were very pleased to watch some of you taking part in the country dancing class. You certainly showed considerable energy and had a lot of fun.

There were several aspects of the school which we thought were really good.

- You all have a very clear sense of belonging together in the school community.
- Most of you work hard and make good progress in your learning. Older pupils are now doing much better in their writing.
- You enjoy your art work. The standard of some work on display was very good indeed.
- Your headteacher and the staff know all of you very well and make sure that you are safe and well looked after.

There are a few things that we thought could be better.

- Teachers do not always provide hard enough work for more able pupils.
- Teachers do not tell you enough about your learning targets and what you must do to get better.
- Your senior teachers and governors have not yet developed ways of judging whether the teaching of Reception and Year 1 children together is fully successful.

We wish you well in the future.

Paul Missin

Lead inspector