

Houldsworth Valley Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124546
Local Authority	SUFFOLK LA
Inspection number	314958
Inspection dates	26–27 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Joy Richardson

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

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	96
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs G Goulden
Headteacher	Mr P Mellor
Date of previous school inspection	23 March 2004
School address	Rowley Drive Newmarket Suffolk CB8 0PU
Telephone number	01638 663214
Fax number	01638 667356

Age group	3–9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Most pupils come from the immediate area and many walk to school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is just above the national average. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with statements of special educational need, is broadly average. Ninety per cent of pupils are White British, and ten per cent are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language. Attainment on entry varies widely within and between year groups. Overall, children start school with skills and knowledge that are slightly below those expected nationally at this age. A separately managed pre-school is housed within the school building.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school gives pupils a satisfactory education and this reflects the school's own view of itself. It has improved well since the last inspection. The school has become more effective in managing pupils' behaviour, so that the behavioural difficulties of a few do not disrupt learning for others. As a result, there is a calm and settled atmosphere in lessons and around the school. Playground activities are being extended to encourage more sociable play and a wider range of games. Due to the school's great efforts, attendance has risen from below to above the national average. The school works well with parents and carers to help them support children's learning.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall with some good features, consistently ensuring that pupils' learning in lessons is at least satisfactory. Pupils' achievement over their time in school is satisfactory. The standards reached vary between year groups. Taking the last three years together, standards have been slightly below average overall at the end of Year 2 and at the end of Year 4. National test results, at the end of Year 2 show an improving trend in reading, writing and mathematics. The school recognises that standards in writing and in mathematics are not as high as they could be, because basic skills are not practised enough.

Some pupils make good progress in the older years, beginning to catch up from a low base, but the pace of progress through the school is not consistent. Pupils' progress in reading is checked regularly over time and more recently in writing. However, this does not yet impact sufficiently on pupils who fall behind or could do better. The system is being extended this year to mathematics, but it is not yet fully in place.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Pupils enjoy school. They learn to keep safe and they are encouraged to eat healthily. The school supports and cares for pupils well, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The guidance for pupils about making progress in learning is satisfactory. Pupils are given some targets to work towards, such as punctuating sentences correctly, but the next steps in learning are not always mapped out clearly for them.

The school's leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher creates a positive atmosphere, building good relationships and a strong sense of community. Work is in hand, with changes in staffing, to share leadership responsibilities more widely, in order to extend the school's capacity for improving pupils' learning. The school's evaluation of its own performance is honest and accurate, though it has yet to be carried through into detailed planning for school improvement. Governors support the school well and are becoming more informed about its strengths and weaknesses.

The school has earned the respect and goodwill of the community it serves. Parents appreciate the ease with which they are able to approach staff with any concerns, and value the school's concern for the welfare of each individual.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make a good start in the Foundation Stage, attending in the mornings from the September when they are four, and full-time from the term of their fifth birthday. They enjoy a good range of activities, indoors and outdoors, and take delight in the action rhymes and songs which help them to learn numbers and letter sounds. Children progress well towards the goals set nationally for the end of this stage, particularly in reading and in their personal and

social development, because they are taught well. Children's learning is assessed carefully, but this information is not then put to full use in setting targets and guiding progress in the following years.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise pupils' attainment mathematics and writing by giving more practice in basic number and writing skills.
- Regularly check how well pupils are progressing, in order to guide the pace of learning and help pupils improve their work.
- Develop detailed plans to bring about improvement in areas identified by the school's evaluation of itself.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory. In the Foundation Stage, early skills in reading are developed well through teaching about letter sounds, and this is now being extended into Year 1. Progress is satisfactory overall in Years 1 and 2, and in Years 3 and 4. By the time pupils leave, standards are broadly average in reading, but below average in mathematics because the pace of progress is too slow. Standards are improving in writing, but are not yet high enough. At present, the school lacks a clear view of whether pupils of all abilities are making as much progress as they are capable of during the course of each year. The school sets challenging targets for attainment by each year group. These are sometimes missed because they are not related closely enough to the progress of individuals or the actions needed to achieve them. Pupils with learning difficulties are supported effectively, particularly in reading, and they make satisfactory progress. The achievement of pupils from minority backgrounds is satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils enjoy school, and the sense of community that it provides. Their personal development and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is satisfactory. Some children lack skills in relating sociably to others, and a few have significant behavioural difficulties. Pupils respond well to the school's positive management of behaviour and make progress in their self control and acquisition of social skills. As a result, behaviour is satisfactory overall, and often good in lessons. The newly acquired games tables in a quiet area of the playground are very popular. The school is continuing to work on helping pupils to play together constructively. Elected members of the school council, now in its second year, have good ideas about making the school better and some show a mature understanding of other children's problems. The school successfully develops awareness of healthy lifestyles. Pupils are helped to keep safe and they are given some opportunities to contribute to the community within and beyond the school. They are making satisfactory progress in skills to prepare them for later life. Attendance is good.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Strengths in teaching include good class management, effective teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants, and the planning of work with clear objectives. Some of the teaching generates a sense of pace and urgency and builds carefully on what has gone before. Tasks are sometimes made harder or easier for different groups. However, teaching does not always take full account of what pupils can already do, or identify and remedy weak areas of learning. There is not enough practice and reinforcement of basic number and writing skills to consolidate pupils' knowledge. Time is not always used to maximum effect to ensure that pupils complete a good amount of work. Teachers make good use of the interactive whiteboard in each classroom as a tool to help children learn better. Pupils learn to work with others, for example sharing their ideas in pairs.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school offers a satisfactory curriculum, covering topics in a two-year rolling programme to meet the needs of pupils in mixed age classes. Pupils have good opportunities to develop skills in information and communication technology (ICT). Good support is provided for lower attaining pupils, particularly in reading, in small groups who work regularly with a teaching assistant. Exceptionally able pupils are identified, but they are not consistently nurtured and challenged. Some opportunities are provided for pupils beyond lessons, including educational visits and curriculum days at the local college. Pupils enjoy belonging to the football team, which is coached by the headteacher.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The support, care and guidance provided for pupils is satisfactory and has some significant strengths. Teachers and teaching assistants work together to provide consistent care and support for pupils. The school is alert to the needs of vulnerable pupils and works closely with families and external agencies to meet their needs. The school has satisfactory procedures for child protection and for ensuring pupils' health and safety. Midday supervisors are being encouraged to take an active role in developing children's play. Parents are invited regularly into classes to see the work their children are doing. They are also given guidance about how to help their children learn at home. The partnership with parents is strong, and has a positive impact on pupils' learning. The school has good links with the pre-school on its site and with the local middle schools to which pupils transfer. The guidance of pupils' learning is satisfactory. Because the tracking of progress is not yet fully developed, the next steps in learning are not always pointed out clearly to pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The headteacher builds good relationships with pupils, staff, governors and parents, skilfully balancing his class teaching

and school leadership commitments. He monitors teaching across the school and has a clear vision for moving the school forward through a sharper focus on the quality of learning. With changes in staffing, there are plans to share responsibilities more widely in order to increase the school's capacity for further improvement. The headteacher has worked closely with governors in evaluating how well the school is doing, developing a thoughtful overview of its strengths and areas for development. This has yet to be followed through into detailed planning for improvement in learning, for example in writing and mathematics. Challenging targets for pupils' attainment are helping to focus attention on raising standards. However, because the school does not have a fully-developed system for tracking progress, it lacks a precise view of where action is needed to accelerate learning. The school runs smoothly and its communication with parents is a significant strength. The finances are well managed and the school is well equipped for learning. In the light of its overall performance, it gives satisfactory value for money.

Annex A

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?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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.

Annex A**Leadership and management**

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

28 September 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Houldsworth Valley Primary School, Newmarket CB8 0PU

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful when I visited you. I am pleased that you enjoy school so much, and that your parents and carers like it too.

You have many things to be proud about. You are learning to read well, and you are good at using computers. Your singing in assembly is splendid. You have a very enthusiastic football team. You like doing jobs to help other people and the school council has good ideas about making the school better for everyone. You are good at coming to school every day so that you do not miss important learning time.

Mr Mellor and all the staff take great care of you. They help you to behave properly so that everyone can get on with learning. The new games in the playground are giving people more fun at playtime too.

Mr Mellor and your teachers have been thinking about ways to help you learn even more. I agree with them that you could do better in mathematics and in writing. They will be checking how much you learn each term, to see if you could make faster progress. They will then be able to give you clearer targets for improving your work. You can do your part by working hard and trying to do your very best.

I hope you will leave the school with many good memories of what you have learned, just like all those children who made the lovely Class 4 banners that you showed me in the hall.

Thank you again for welcoming me to your school.

Yours sincerely,

Joy Richardson

Lead inspector.