

Halifax Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124670
Local Authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	328188
Inspection dates	9–10 July 2009
Reporting inspector	Nick Butt

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	317
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr R Fern
Headteacher	Ms A Hennell James
Date of previous school inspection	4 July 2007
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Prince Of Wales Drive Ipswich IP2 8PY
Telephone number	01473 683932
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This larger than average sized school has Early Years Foundation Stage provision in two Reception classes. The vast majority of pupils on roll come from a White British heritage. Hardly any pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. Almost a third of pupils have learning difficulties and/ or disabilities, which is high compared with most schools. These include speech and language needs, and social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The school has the Bronze Science Quality Mark and the Activemark award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Halifax Primary is a good school with many strengths. It has made rapid progress since its last inspection and has a good capacity to improve further. A strong and very committed team of staff are embracing well the excellent vision set out by the headteacher and deputy headteacher, who both provide outstanding leadership. Their tenacity in driving forward change and improvement has resulted in rising standards and improved teaching. Parents are very supportive of the school, and recognise how it is getting better all the time. One, typical of many, wrote, 'The enthusiasm and quality of the teaching staff to involve the children in learning and extra activities has given rise to an atmosphere where the children are able and really want to learn.'

Pupils achieve well from starting points that are well below those typically found. They make good progress throughout the school, although the pace of learning is not always even in every year group. By the time they leave Year 6, pupils' standards are broadly average in reading and mathematics and a little below average in writing and science. In writing, pupils do not have enough opportunities to develop their ideas at length across a range of subjects, which slows the progress of more able pupils in particular. There is variation in the presentation of pupils' work, which at times is rather untidy.

The quality of teaching and learning is good, with very positive relationships between pupils and teachers, and a purposeful approach to learning. Teaching actively involves pupils in lessons, so they enjoy taking part and work hard. While planning takes account of pupils' different learning needs, at times the teaching does not challenge more able pupils sufficiently. The introduction of an international curriculum has increased pupils' enjoyment of their lessons, as topics are wide-ranging and interesting and engage them well. This good curriculum is enhanced further by a rich variety of clubs, visits and visitors. This, in turn, contributes well to pupils' good personal development and well-being. They support one another well and pupils have an excellent understanding of how to make healthy choices and the importance of taking plenty of exercise. Pupils take an active part in the local community, such as supporting the community garden and allotment. They leave the school with satisfactory basic skills and are ready for the move to secondary school.

The impact of leadership and management is good, both in terms of promoting academic progress and in maintaining the positive ethos that ensures that care, guidance and support are effective. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/ or disabilities, particularly those with behavioural and emotional needs, is good. The appointment of a pupil and family support worker has had a strong impact in improving behaviour and reducing exclusions. While academic guidance is generally good, pupils receive inconsistent advice through marking, not having sufficient time to reflect on teachers' comments and to respond to them. An enthusiastic and energetic team of subject leaders, some relatively new to their posts, is having a positive impact on learning, with effective monitoring of the provision. Governors make a good contribution to the strategic direction of the school under the outstanding leadership of the chair, whose expertise is put to good use in holding school leaders and governors to account.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

From low starting points, especially in language and communication skills, children achieve well in Reception. They often reach the expected Early Learning Goals as they enter Year 1, although

some children do not. Their personal and social development is good, as they work and play together harmoniously and learn to take turns. The adults form a strong team, putting children's welfare at the centre of all they do so that children are happy and confident and willing to try new experiences. Learning is good, with interesting and exciting activities carefully planned that children enjoy. For example, children took part in a range of tasks related to their recent zoo visit, and told the rest of the school about it in assembly. There is some variation in the consistency of teaching between the two classes, although this is being tackled effectively. There is a good balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities, with effective use of the indoor and outdoor spaces, although one of the classrooms is too small. There are plans to improve the outdoor environment further, as elements of the provision, such as the grassed areas, are worn and need restoring. Leadership and management are good, especially in the way children's progress is assessed and the data analysed to highlight areas for development. Staff have good links with parents and involve them well in their children's education.

What the school should do to improve further

Raise standards in writing across the school by:

- developing more opportunities for extended writing in different subjects;
- improving the presentation of pupils' work.

Increase the proportion of good or better teaching by:

- encouraging pupils to reflect on teachers' written guidance and their own learning;
- ensuring that lessons consistently cater for the full range of pupils' abilities, especially the more able.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards have been improving in recent years, although they are not always in line with the national average by the end of Year 2, especially in writing. Pupils make good progress from their starting points so that by the end of Year 6 standards are broadly average overall. The rate of progress is at times uneven. Nevertheless, good work is apparent in improving mathematics this year, with intervention groups tailored very specifically to meet pupils' needs. However, in writing, pupils do not have enough opportunities to express themselves at length. The presentation of pupils' work is sometimes too untidy. Pupils who find learning difficult make good progress because of the effective support they receive in meeting their individual targets. Occasionally, more able pupils are not challenged enough. Standards in swimming are high, as pupils benefit from the use of the school's own swimming pool throughout the year.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school's clear behaviour code enables pupils to understand the consequences of the choices they make, helping them to behave well. Pupils of all ages mix together well, with the older pupils supporting the younger ones during special events. The recent Carnival Week enabled pupils to display their knowledge of different countries' traditions, including Greek and Indian dancing, and a procession of lifelike historical figures. Pupils have an outstanding understanding about how to eat healthily. One pupil said, 'Our snacks have got to be healthy like fruit and cereal bars.' The award of the Activemark confirms pupils' commitment to taking regular exercise. Pupils say they enjoy school

and feel free from bullying or harassment, having adults they trust to help them if in difficulty. Attendance is consistently above average. The school council is run by the pupils, who have set up a quiet area for contemplation in the playground. Pursuits that are more energetic are organised by pupil play leaders. Pupils' links with the local community include supporting local churches and visiting the elderly in the nearby care home. Residential visits for all pupils in Key Stage 2 enable them to develop self-confidence and team-building skills, including two nights aboard HMS Belfast, known as 'Kip on the Ship'.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

There is much good and some outstanding teaching, although this is not always the case. The quality of teaching has risen because of the use of coaching to support staff in improving their practice. Lessons have clear objectives and pupils are often involved in setting the steps to success in their learning. A good example is when Year 6 pupils agreed the features of a successful drama review. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' good progress through the support they provide to individuals and groups who find learning difficult. There is a good emphasis on teaching basic literacy and numeracy skills, with particular improvement in the teaching of mathematics this year. At times, opportunities to review learning at the ends of lessons are missed, and planning is not always tailored exactly to the needs of all groups of pupils, particularly the more able. The Key Stage 1 accommodation, which is open-plan, can, at times, cause distraction to other classes. but improving the accommodation remains high on the school's agenda.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is organised well and underpinned by a clear framework of the skills that pupils should learn in any given year. Its international dimension is an asset that makes a positive contribution to pupils' cultural understanding. The curriculum is broad, with opportunities for pupils to experience the performing arts and to learn a musical instrument, such as the clarinet or flute. Pupils also learn French and have established links with pupils in a school in Calais, which gives them a good understanding of what life is like for children in another country. Good enrichment means that pupils enjoy taking part in a range of clubs and special events, and benefit from a wide range of visits and visitors. A parent and child cookery club run by the school cook is a particular success. This is the first year the international curriculum has been running, and the school is involved in reviewing it and making it even more relevant for its pupils. In particular, links between subjects are not sufficiently established, including opportunities for extended writing to enhance learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides its pupils with a good level of care and guidance. One pupil said, 'If you're not very good at something they support you until you're better.' Staff know the pupils well, and track their progress carefully. Intervention groups provide maximum impact, with good training for the teaching assistants who take them. Teachers are fully involved in supporting pupils who find learning difficult, such as those with behavioural and emotional needs. They

compile individual education plans for them but the targets they contain are sometimes not specific enough to help pupils' learning move forward at the required pace. Nevertheless, a wide range of support groups aids pupils who have particular difficulties, with strong links with outside agencies to provide additional advice. As a result, exclusions, which were once significant, are now very low. While there are strengths in the academic guidance pupils receive, marking is inconsistent between classes. Pupils are not given sufficient time to read and act upon the comments in their exercise books.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher and deputy headteacher have set out a dynamic and vibrant vision for the school and their outstanding leadership has ensured that rapid progress has been made since the last inspection. The value the school adds to pupils' performance from their starting points has increased yearly. Thorough monitoring leads to good self-evaluation that reflects well-written strategic plans. However, the plans do not show in sufficient detail how finances will be used to bring about change. The senior leadership team is building up a talented group of middle leaders, some of whom are new to their responsibilities. They have already had a positive impact. For example, the school has become the first in Suffolk to receive the Bronze Science Quality Mark. The governing body is led and managed extremely well by an experienced chair, who makes an effective contribution to the school's strategic direction. The school promotes community cohesion well, particularly in the way it reaches out locally, and in developing international links. It has more work to do in helping pupils to understand what life is like living in different parts of the United Kingdom.

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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?	2
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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
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 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

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	2
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**

13 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Halifax Primary School, Ipswich, IP2 8PY.

Mrs Ranger, Mr Hare and I enjoyed meeting you when we visited your school. Yours is a good school. Here are some of its strengths.

- You make good progress in your learning because the teaching is good.
- Children get off to a good start in Reception.
- You behave well and take good care of one another.
- You have an excellent understanding of how to stay healthy.
- Attendance is good and you clearly enjoy coming to school.
- The curriculum gives you a good idea about life in other countries.
- There are plenty of clubs and visits for you to take part in.
- The school cares for you well, especially when you are having difficulties.
- Ms Hennell James is an extremely effective headteacher and leads a strong team of staff.

Standards in writing could be higher, so we have asked your teachers to make sure that you do more writing, especially in different subjects like history and science. We also think that your work could be neater. We want you to have time to read the comments teachers make in your books so that you can improve your work. We also believe that some of you could do even better, and have asked your teachers to make sure that the work is just at the right level for you, especially if you find lessons easy.

Thank you once again for making us so welcome. Our best wishes for the future.

Yours faithfully

Nick Butt

Lead inspector