

Howitt Primary Community School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 135172 |
| Local Authority | Derbyshire |
| Inspection number | 329046 |
| Inspection dates | 7–8 May 2009 |
| Reporting inspector | George Derby |

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.

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 3–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School (total) | 433 |
| Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS | 60 |
| Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years | 0 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mr Bob Harper |
| Headteacher | Mrs Mandy Marriott |
| Date of previous school inspection | Not previously inspected |
| Date of previous funded early education inspection | Not previously inspected |
| Date of previous childcare inspection | Not previously inspected |
| School address | Holmes Street Heanor Derbyshire DE75 7FS |
| Telephone number | 01773 713217 |
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|--------------------------|--------------|
| Age group | 3–11 |
| Inspection dates | 7–8 May 2009 |
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Howitt Primary Community School is a new establishment which opened in September 2007 and is located in an area of social and economic disadvantage. It is a very large school formed as a result of the amalgamation of two long-established schools, Mary Howitt Infant School and William Howitt Junior School. Howitt Primary pupils are predominately White British, although there are a few from a variety of minority ethnic groups. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is low. The numbers of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and with statements of special educational needs are about average. These pupils often struggle with their literacy and numeracy skills and many have difficulties with behaviour. Children currently enter the school in the Nursery with skills, knowledge and understanding which is broadly typical for their age, although some aspects of their language, literacy and numeracy skills are slightly below the level usually found. When the school opened, the attainment of most year groups was below average and some groups significantly so. At the time of the inspection, a number of staff were in temporary positions due to staff absence.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school which has undergone a considerable transformation since it was opened. It is led effectively by the headteacher who took decisive action to deal with some significant issues when the school opened over a year ago. She has forged a staff group who have a common sense of purpose, working to common goals. The barriers which the school faced, which included weak teaching, the difficult behaviour of many pupils, and the need to improve standards in many year groups, have largely been eliminated and it is now on the right path of improvement. She has been well supported by the senior management team which has been a major driving force in raising staff morale and forming a cohesive team, focused on children and their future development. Their capacity to bring about further improvement is good. The extended leadership group is very supportive but not yet as effective in planning areas of work or in seeing developments through. Therefore leadership and management are satisfactory and governors provide much valuable support. They know they must now be more systematic in their monitoring and evaluation of the school's work. The school's journey has not been an easy one; there is still much to do, but a clear vision by senior staff has set it confidently in the right direction.

The progress that pupils have made from when they entered the school is satisfactory overall and for some groups, such as those who have literacy or behaviour difficulties, this is good. Although standards are still below average, they are close to average in Key Stage 1 and in English in Key Stage 2. Standards are rising because the school is now a settled place and teaching is improving; it is now satisfactory with nearly a half of teaching seen on the inspection judged as good. Although standards in mathematics and science in Key Stage 2 are clearly rising, they are still below average because of the past underachievement of these pupils. Across the school, the attainment of more able pupils is improving more slowly than that of others. Pupils have a satisfactory range of opportunities to help them learn and make progress, although there is not always consistency in the way these are planned in some year groups.

Staff have worked hard to establish good relationships with parents and many parents express considerable confidence in the school and headteacher. Comments such as 'I could not ask for a better school', 'my children are getting the best education possible', and 'I'm more than pleased with the progress [my daughter has made]', typify their positive views. Many parents are grateful for the individual help their child has received. However, there are some parents who feel strongly that bullying and bad behaviour are still features of the school and that too little attention is given to the more able pupils.

Much has been done to improve pupils' personal development, especially behaviour, and these are now satisfactory. Support for their emotional health is good. Staff's expectations of pupils' behaviour are high and the deployment of effective strategies means that classes are calm places. Pupils are mostly keen to learn and, although there are still occasional incidences of difficult behaviour, there is little bullying; that which does occur is dealt with swiftly. The school's restorative justice approach, where pupils have to 'make amends', is effective. The school is also working hard to counter occasional racist comments through close contact with parents and a programme of experiences designed to prepare pupils for living in a multicultural society. Pupils are developing healthy lifestyles and know how to keep themselves safe.

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Good support is provided for pupils who are vulnerable and the school has a wide network of external support. Procedures for dealing with

the behavioural, social and emotional needs of pupils are good. The school is adept at identifying pupils who are struggling with their learning and gives effective 'booster' support. However, more able pupils are sometimes not sufficiently challenged in lessons. Marking guides pupils well, although they do not always know their improvement targets. Activities are planned to meet the needs of different pupils in the groups in most lessons, often in great detail. However, staff do not always make explicit what each group is to learn.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children's learning and progress are satisfactory, and most reach their expected goals by the end of the Reception Year in nearly all areas of learning. A few still do not reach their goals in aspects of reading, writing and mathematics. Some children in Reception find it hard to settle to activities and to behave appropriately when they are given the opportunity to choose. Children's personal development is satisfactory and the strong focus on children's welfare is reflected in the very positive relationships between adults and children. This is raising self-esteem and self-confidence well. When planning the curriculum, adults think very carefully about the types of activities that will interest children and which build on their experiences. Because the assessment of children's progress has been more systematic this year, the school has a more objective view of their achievement. However, the recording of progress is still not consistent across all areas of learning. The school uses assessment information well to target children who need an extra boost. The two outdoor areas are deployed effectively to extend children's learning experiences. The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are satisfactory and school leaders are clear about what is going well and what still needs to be done.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure standards continue to rise in science and mathematics, especially for those pupils who can achieve the higher levels, through greater consistency in planning the curriculum.
- Ensure a greater focus on learning in lessons, particularly when planning for different groups' needs, and provide suitable challenges for more able pupils.
- Take a more strategic approach to the work of the extended leadership team and ensure that governors take a greater role in monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the school.

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

Pupils have made satisfactory progress overall from their starting points on entry to this new school. This includes those who have difficulty learning. This is because the school uses its assessment and tracking data well to identify individual pupils or groups, such as boys or girls, who may be underperforming.

In last year's national tests and assessments in Years 2 and 6, standards, although rising, were below average overall and in Key Stage 2, near to well below average. This reflects the low levels that some pupils entered the school with and past underachievement. The effects of improved teaching and settled behaviour had not had a full impact on standards by the end of

the school year. Standards in Key Stage 1 have risen this year and are close to average. In Key Stage 2 in mathematics and science they are still below average but close to average in English. Recent improvements are the result of the effective 'booster' work undertaken by staff; pupils in booster groups often make good progress. However, there is still more to be done in science to ensure that pupils can undertake their own experiments.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils enjoy school and their attendance is satisfactory. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is adequate. They have a secure understanding of what is right and wrong, although a small number choose to ignore this at times. Pupils value the opportunities to celebrate their good behaviour and particularly like 'Golden Time' and subsequent rewards for consistently behaving well. Pupils mostly behave well in class and concentrate on their learning. They feel safe in school and know what to do if they have a concern or if they feel someone is being unkind. Pupils take part in a range of sporting events and physical activities at playtimes to keep fit. They have a good understanding of the importance of eating healthily and younger pupils look forward to their fruit snack every day. They make a satisfactory contribution to the school and wider communities by becoming playtime buddies, taking responsibility for small jobs around the school, contributing to local events and joining the school council. Pupils speak proudly of the money they raise for various charities including one in Romania. Pupils have a reasonable knowledge of, and a growing respect for, different religions and cultures and are developing satisfactory skills to support their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers work hard to provide lessons which are interesting, sometimes exciting and which usually hold pupils' attention. Teachers' management of pupils' behaviour is good and pupils respect their firm, consistent approach. This has helped establish a settled learning environment, often in very cramped classroom conditions. Teaching assistants make a significant contribution to pupils' learning in lessons and in the additional sessions which they teach, such as Reading Recovery and booster support. Lessons are usually planned in detail with one clear learning objective. Teachers' plans show what activities have been set for different groups of pupils, but only in a few cases do they make explicit what each group is actually to learn. Work is usually challenging, especially for the lower ability pupils but not always for higher attainers. Interactive whiteboards are used regularly to aid learning, but their interactive potential is not always utilised to the full and opportunities to use computers are often missed. Plenary sessions at the end of lessons, to assess learning, are sometimes cut short because not enough time has been allowed.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum meets requirements and is largely taught in separate subjects. Mornings are devoted to literacy and numeracy with other subjects taught in the afternoons. Links between subjects, to reinforce pupils' learning, are not well-developed. Teachers, especially those of the older year groups, tend to have their own individual approaches to the curriculum. The

need for greater consistency and collaboration across the whole school has been rightly identified as a priority. Pupils' experience is enriched by a good range of trips, special events and visitors. Some of these involve the whole school, such as 'Aspirations Week', but there are many others that benefit particular year groups.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school is focused strongly on supporting pupils' personal welfare. Adults give sound support and guidance to pupils who need extra personal help through structured nurture group sessions and individual counselling. Pupils receive clear guidance on the different strategies they can use to manage their own behaviour and, as a consequence, are becoming more responsible for their actions. The school has rigorous systems for ensuring pupils' safety, health and welfare and that government safeguarding requirements are met. Pupils feel confident that any concerns will be dealt with effectively by any adult they tell. The quality of academic guidance is more variable, although it is satisfactory overall. There are sound systems for assessing achievement in all subjects and these are most focused, detailed and regular in English, mathematics and science. Teachers' comments on pupils' work credit success and indicate the next steps for learning. Some teachers are more conscientious than others in changing targets regularly and ensuring that pupils remember to refer to them during lessons.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has adopted a sensitive but determined approach which has successfully established a common ethos and fresh identity for the newly amalgamated school. Priorities have been very well identified and effectively acted upon. Pupils clearly feel part of one inclusive school and enjoy a sense of participation and esteem. Other leaders and managers have supported the school's development well, although strategic responsibilities among the extended leadership team are not yet fully clarified and shared. The school has a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. Information from assessment and tracking is used well to set challenging whole-school targets. Community cohesion is satisfactory and adequate consideration has been given to the school's duty to promote this. Governance of the school is satisfactory. Governors have been instrumental in securing resources and facilities to support the new school, although their capacity for monitoring and challenging the work of the school is not yet fully developed. The school offers satisfactory value for money.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| 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

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| 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 | NA |
| 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? | 3 |
| How well do children in the EYFS achieve? | 3 |
| How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS? | 3 |
| How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop? | 3 |
| How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted? | 2 |
| How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed? | 3 |

Achievement and standards

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|--|---|
| 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/or disabilities make progress | 3 |

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? | 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 |
| The extent to which learners enjoy their education | 2 |
| The attendance of learners | 3 |
| 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 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 |

Leadership and management

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| 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 | 2 |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated | 3 |
| How well does the school contribute to community cohesion? | 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

11 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Howitt Primary Community School, Heanor, Derbyshire, DE7F 7FS

Thank you for talking to us during the inspection and telling us how proud you are of your school. Those of you on the school council are clearly confident about your work and want to help make the school a better place. Good luck with your quest to improve the toilets and win the award!

Your headteacher, together with senior staff, has done a great deal to improve the school. We were glad to see that your behaviour is satisfactory and that the school is a settled place. You are clearly enjoying school now. We were impressed with the way you sang your school song proudly and confidently in assembly and we can see that all the staff work hard to bind your school community together.

In order to make the school even better, I have asked Ms Marriot and the staff to:

- help you get better at science and mathematics, and especially those of you who learn faster than others in all subjects
- make sure you always know what you are supposed to be learning in lessons and that some of you have even harder work to do
- make sure that those who assist Ms Marriot to lead the school help to develop it more and check on important aspects of its work.

Good luck for the future.

Yours sincerely

George Derby

Lead inspector