

Highwoods Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114846
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	338465
Inspection dates	1–2 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Clive Lewis

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	395
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Phil Wood
Headteacher	Mr Nigel Hookway
Date of previous school inspection	1 July 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 18 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils and parents and carers. They observed the school's work, including a sample of pupils' books, teachers' planning documents, tracking and assessment data and analysed questionnaires from 131 parents and carers, 89 pupils and 32 members of staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage, particularly systems for assessing and tracking children's progress, and children's typical attainment on entry
- outcomes for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities
- provision for mathematics across the school

Information about the school

This is a larger than average school serving a mixed residential area. New families are moving into the area continually and because of this mobility is very high in some years and the school roll is rising. The great majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds with small numbers coming from several minority ethnic groups. There is an increasing proportion of pupils for whom English is an additional language. The proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are below average. The school has gained the International Schools Award, the Healthy School Award and the ActiveMark.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

The school has improved significantly since the last inspection and continues to do so under the strong leadership of the headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher and the senior leadership team. Together, they provide a clear sense of purpose and direction, closely linked to school improvement. This has ensured that pupils' achievement, the quality of teaching and learning, systems to ensure the care, guidance and support for pupils and the school's provision for community cohesion have all improved and clear priorities have been set for further improvement. The school has a good understanding of how well it is doing and what needs to be done next, and due to this good self-evaluation, it has a good capacity to maintain and sustain improvement.

The youngest children enter the school with broadly average levels of attainment although communication skills are below that typically found. They get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and make good progress. Attainment in the latest national tests was significantly above average at Year 2. In Year 6, pupils' attainment was above the national average in English and science and in line with national averages in mathematics. The school is aware of the need to develop strategies to improve pupils' problem-solving skills and a more consistent approach to teaching calculation methods across the school. Throughout the school all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress. Arrangements for the evaluation and monitoring of teaching and learning are good and the quality of teaching is good overall as a result.

Parents and carers say their children enjoy coming to school and pupils agree enthusiastically and this is confirmed by their good levels of attendance. Pupils have well-developed personal and social skills. A strong moral code is implicit within the school's ethos. This is reflected in pupils' good behaviour and, in turn, has a very positive effect on the good progress pupils make in lessons. In the majority of lessons, they work hard and conscientiously, without the need for constant adult intervention, both independently and co-operatively. Pupils have a wide range of responsibilities in the school and, through the work of the school council and their roles as prefects, 'buddies' and 'pals,' make an excellent contribution to the school community. Pupils' good attainment and good personal and social skills equip them well for the future. The curriculum ensures that pupils receive a good variety of exciting activities and experiences through visits, residential stays and visitors to school. Pupils particularly enjoy the good range of after-school activities and clubs, including physical activities. Pastoral care and safeguarding of pupils are outstanding. The school's work with families, children and a range of agencies to sustain the learning, development and

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well-being of individual pupils facing challenging circumstances is deeply embedded at all levels. Parents and carers are extremely supportive of the school. They like the positive family atmosphere and one parent wrote, 'Highwoods is a first rate school; my daughter has thrived and is becoming more confident both academically and socially. What more could I ask for?'

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve achievement in mathematics to the high levels achieved in reading and science by:
 - using consistent methods for teaching calculation across the school
 - developing and strengthening pupils' mathematical vocabulary in order to improve their problem-solving skills.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

From broadly average levels of attainment on entry, pupils make good progress as they move through the school. Results in national tests at Year 2 and Year 6 show that pupils, across the range of abilities, are achieving well. The school has devised strategies to narrow the gap between attainment in mathematics and English and science. Indications from lesson observations and an analysis of pupils' work are that these are beginning to have a positive effect on the attainment of the current cohorts of pupils. Observations confirm that the quality of pupils' learning and progress across the school is good and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because of the effective support provided by class teachers, teaching assistants and outside agencies.

Pupils understand what constitutes an unsafe situation and are confident that issues they raise will be dealt with promptly and effectively by the school. They behave considerately towards each other and respond quickly to any additional guidance from staff about how to conduct themselves. They work well together and individually without the need for constant reminders. Pupils are interested in the school's health promotion strategies and understand the main threats to their health and how they can be avoided. They are very proud of their school community. They willingly take on responsibility and, through the school council and eco committee, have played a vital role in improving the school environment. One example of pupils' outstanding involvement in the school community is that pupils from Year 1 to Year 6 attended the school's development planning day where they contributed to a 'Vision and Values' morning attended by different stakeholders. Pupils respect each others' needs and interests and are curious about the world around them, embracing new experiences enthusiastically. They are well-equipped for the future with their well-developed academic and social skills.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection. Teachers ensure classroom routines are made clear and regularly reinforced so that learning takes place in a well-structured environment and all pupils can contribute to lessons. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are well supported by effective and skilled teaching assistants, who are fully involved in lessons and ensure that pupils receive extra help as they need it. However, the school has identified the need to improve the consistency of methods used to teach calculation strategies across the school. They plan effectively to provide a range of work matched well to the different ages and abilities in each class or set. A good range of teaching strategies are used including 'talk partners', which enable pupils to develop their learning whilst working collaboratively. Pupils receive helpful verbal feedback on how well they are doing. They know their individual targets and are closely involved in discussing success criteria for each lesson so that they know exactly what they need to do to achieve and improve. The very good whole school assessment and tracking procedures ensure rapid intervention and appropriate support where necessary.

Although the new skills-based curriculum has not been in place long enough to promote outstanding outcomes, in many ways the school is at the forefront of successful innovative curriculum design. The curriculum provides memorable experiences and rich opportunities for high quality learning and wider personal development and well-being,

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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for example, 'London Week 2009' and Spanish, which is taught throughout Key Stage 2 and is in its third year of implementation. Children are actively involved in planning the content of the skills-based curriculum to meet their interests. This has increased the level of enjoyment and is beginning to have a positive effect on achievement. A good range of well-attended extra-curricular opportunities contribute further to pupils' well-being and development. Excellent, very well targeted support for pupils whose circumstances have made them vulnerable enables them and their families to make the best of the opportunities provided by the school. The school is working to make support even more effective by developing the use of child-friendly language in pupils' individual education plans.

Extremely robust arrangements are in place for ensuring that all children are safe. There are very high levels of awareness of issues related to safety which permeate the work of the school. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities do well in response to caring and sensitive support.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, with the able support of the deputy headteacher and senior leadership team, provides strong leadership, firmly focused on securing improvement. Very good use is made of a range of rigorous monitoring activities. Since the last inspection, the headteacher has secured clear improvements in the quality of teaching and learning; the curriculum; care and guidance; and in the monitoring and evaluation of the school's work. Staff are strongly motivated and have a clear sense of direction including a strong commitment to improving provision even further. Teamwork is promoted strongly and is reflected in the school's well-focused improvement plan produced with the involvement of staff, governors and pupils. The governors have a good overview of the school's work and future priorities and fulfil their roles effectively.

The school has a very positive relationship with parents and carers and regularly asks for their views and acts on the responses. The 'early birds' start to each day, when parents bring their children of all ages into school and stay with them in the classrooms for a few moments, is very effective in developing good and trusting relationships. This effective liaison with parents and carers and the school's excellent links with external partners contribute well to improvements in pupils' achievement, well-being and development. Equality of opportunity is promoted very well and where there are any

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minor variations in achievement the school is pro-active in modifying the curriculum to narrow the gap. The school has excellent safeguarding procedures which surpass recommended good practice across all areas of its work. The school identifies dangers, fosters a realistic understanding of risk and helps pupils to keep themselves safe. It makes an outstanding contribution to community cohesion. The school has very strong links with the local community, good and growing links with schools across the U.K. and, through the Comenius Project, active links with a range of international schools. During the inspection, for example, the school was playing host to pupils and teachers from schools in Turkey, Poland and France and, among activities arranged, pupils and staff from the four schools were attending a Barn Dance and visiting the local Christmas pantomime.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter the Reception class with skills that are broadly typical for their age although overall communication and language skills are below those typically found. They clearly enjoy school and, after being there for only a few weeks, they have settled into the routines well and play happily together and individually. They undertake a variety of whole class and group activities and, in most cases, co-operate well when working with others. They delight in learning and seeing new things. There are very good relationships with parents and carers through daily contact at the start and end of each day. Pastoral care and welfare arrangements are effective. Consequently, children are safe, well cared-for and aware of how to be healthy. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified quickly, are well-supported and are

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integrated well into all activities.

Provision for the outdoor curriculum is good; the Early Years Foundation Stage classroom has free access to a large, secure outdoor area with a range of free-choice and adult-led activities. This allows children to explore things with purpose and challenge and encourages the development of their independent learning skills. Leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is effective and provides clear direction for the team. Adults have a good knowledge of the learning, development and welfare requirements for the Early Years Foundation Stage. A strong emphasis is placed on developing children's language and communication skills at every opportunity. There are good systems for the long-term assessment and tracking of children's progress and planning builds securely on teachers' accurate assessments of children's needs. All staff monitor and record children's progress on a day to day basis effectively and observations and achievements are recorded in individual pupil profiles.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire are extremely satisfied with the school, reflecting the school's outstanding links with parents. All parents felt that their child enjoys school, the teaching is good, the school is led and managed effectively, and the school makes sure that their child is well prepared for the future. In all other areas, 95% or more of parents were positive. However, a very small minority felt that their child is not making enough progress at the school and that the school does not take sufficient account of their concerns. The inspection team investigated both these issues and did not find anything to justify these views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Highwoods Community Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 131 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 395 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	88	66	45	34	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	85	65	45	34	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	75	57	55	42	1	1	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	75	57	52	40	4	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	77	60	52	40	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	68	51	60	46	4	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	72	55	58	44	1	1	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	59	50	59	50	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	68	53	60	47	1	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	55	43	69	54	2	2	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	57	45	66	52	4	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	81	62	50	38	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	86	66	44	34	1	1	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



3 December 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Highwoods Community Primary School, Colchester CO4 9SN

I would like to thank you for your help during the recent inspection of your school. My colleagues and I very much enjoyed our visit. We enjoyed watching lessons and talking to some of you. You attend a very happy and friendly school. It is like that because your headteacher and staff are leading the school well. They care for you extremely well and give you good support to enable you to learn and enjoy your lessons. They make sure that you understand how to look after yourselves and keep safe and you do this well. You told us that you really like your school and there are lots of things to do and enjoy. We agree with you and feel that you make an excellent contribution to the life of your school through all the responsibilities you take on and through your school council and eco committee. Your behaviour is good and you work hard and try to succeed in all that you do. Well done!

We have asked your school to improve standards in mathematics by:

- ensuring that all of you are taught the same methods for working out your answers
- making sure you have a better understanding of mathematical terms and vocabulary so that you get better at solving word problems.

I wish you well in your future education.

Yours sincerely

Clive Lewis

Lead inspector

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