

Howard Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124080
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	380796
Inspection dates	5–6 December 2011
Reporting inspector	Keith Sadler

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	53
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sue Cockayne
Headteacher	Carol Shakespeare-Eyley
Date of previous school inspection	30 April 2009
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors, who observed nine lessons led by four different teachers and practitioners. The inspectors met with members of the governing body, staff, parents and carers, and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation. This included the school's analysis of pupils' progress, teachers' lesson plans, the school improvement plan, leaders' monitoring records of teaching and learning, and pupils' work. Questionnaires from 29 parents and carers, from staff and from pupils in Key Stage 2 were analysed and their responses taken into account.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Inspectors analysed the consistency of pupils' rates of progress and whether pupils in Year 6 are on track to achieve their targets at the end of the year.
- The team considered how well teachers ensure that their planning provides higher challenge for all groups of pupils.
- Inspectors reviewed the strength of the curriculum for information and communication technology (ICT).
- They investigated the extent of the role that teachers with responsibilities play in the school's monitoring and evaluation procedures.

Information about the school

Howard is a small village primary school. About a third of the pupils live in the village, with others coming from surrounding villages and a few from Tamworth. All the pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is low. The number of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is average.

There are three mixed-aged classes. All three teachers are new to the school since the previous inspection. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage share a class with Year 1 and Year 2 pupils. There is a breakfast and after-school club, which is not managed by the governing body and is inspected separately. The school has gained the Healthy Schools award and the ICT mark.

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 provides a good education for all its pupils. Consequently, pupils are happy in school, enjoy learning and achieve well. Outstanding care, guidance and support, linked to the consistent reinforcement of moral values and the positive role models provided by adults, means that the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Boys and girls from different backgrounds get on well together. Those that are new to the school are helped exceptionally well to settle in quickly through the good relationships that adults soon establish with them, and through the friendly welcome and support of their classmates. As a result, of the school's good provision and nurturing ethos, by the time that they reach Year 6, pupils are mature and reflective young people. Pupils have high self-esteem and are prepared well for their move to secondary education and life beyond.

Attainment at the end of Year 6 varies because cohorts are very small but it is generally above average. Current Year 6 pupils are on course to attain high standards. All four Year 6 pupils are already working at the levels expected at the end of Year 6 and most are at the higher level. Throughout the school, pupils make good progress. Even so, progress in mathematics is not quite as good as in English. This is because the pupils' skills in using and applying mathematics in practical activities are not as strong as their calculation skills. Much improved systems to track pupils' progress ensure that any shortcomings in the progress of individuals are quickly identified and extra help is put into place to help them catch up. In consequence, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make equally good progress in their learning as their classmates.

Teaching and learning are consistently good in all three classes. Teachers manage pupils well, establish good relationships and have high expectations of both work and pupils' behaviour. They provide varied and interesting activities that capture the pupils' imagination and are a key reason for the school's success. As one pupil commented, 'There's always a twist to our lessons and we like that.' However, even in good lessons, teachers sometimes spend too long introducing activities and this slows the pace of learning, as pupils are keen to embark on tasks set. In most lessons, teachers question pupils well though, on occasion, it is not sufficiently penetrating to elicit extended answers from pupils. Teachers' marking is of good quality. It is comprehensive and focuses well on the lesson objectives, and teachers provide clear guidance on next steps in learning. There has been a marked improvement in the quality of the curriculum since the previous inspection. It is now planned well with whole-school topics and themes, which match the pupils' interests

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well. There has been a significant improvement in the provision for information and communication technology (ICT), including the gaining of a national award. The curriculum has been strengthened and resources are good, with pupils enjoying the many opportunities that teachers plan for them to use computers in lessons.

The school's improved overall effectiveness since the previous inspection is the result of the determination and drive of the headteacher. Her leadership and management are outstanding. There are good and comprehensive systems in place to evaluate the school's own effectiveness. There is a common purpose shared by all the staff. This, when linked to close teamwork and high staff morale, and the clear shared educational direction set by the headteacher and the governing body, demonstrates the school's good capacity to sustain improvements.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By September 2012, lift the quality of teaching and learning from good to outstanding by:
 - accelerating pupils' progress in mathematics by strengthening their skills in practical and investigative mathematics
 - improve the pace of learning by ensuring that teachers do not spend too long introducing lessons
 - build on the good examples of teachers' questioning skills to ensure that they demand extended answers from pupils.

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

Pupils achieve well to reach above average attainment by the end of Year 6, and they enjoy their time at school, regardless of background or starting points. Their progress is greatly helped by their good collaborative skills. For example, in a good quality literacy lesson in which pupils were focusing on descriptive writing, Year 5 and 6 pupils were thrilled to be presented with artefacts from a crime scene. Their task was to determine a mystery setting, plot and character from the provided objects. They worked closely and cooperatively to meet the lesson objectives. They prepared good quality settings because the task captured their imagination well. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are provided with a carefully designed programme, and are supported well both in class and in individual and small groups. In consequence, they reach higher standards from their lower starting points.

Pupils feel very safe in school and their understanding of safety is enhanced because they benefit from specialist visitors, such as members of the fire brigade and road safety officers, who teach them about how to stay safe. Parents and carers were unanimous in the questionnaire responses in saying that the school keeps their children safe. Pupils themselves are confident that adults will look after them and deal with any problems that arise. Pupils' excellent behaviour in class strongly

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supports their learning. They are keen to live up to the rights and respects that they have devised. This is aided by having respect monitors who are diligent in spotting any pupils that veer from the agreed core values. Pupils make a strong contribution to the school community through their care and friendship for each other, as well as through the many jobs that older pupils undertake very responsibly. This includes within the village, for example, working with the Parish Council to take responsibility for the planters that contribute towards the Best Kept Village competition. Pupils are also involved in the development of Elford playground. In addition, they have shared clear and unequivocal views with the community about dog owners not clearing up after their pets.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
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?

Lessons are thoroughly prepared by teachers and the resulting interesting tasks generate a good deal of enthusiasm for learning. They ensure that all groups of pupils in the mixed-aged classes are provided with work that challenges them well. Teachers explain things well, often making very good use of interactive whiteboards to enliven and clarify explanations. Even though questioning by teachers does not always demand extensive answers, this is not always the case. In a good literacy lesson, for example, the teacher probed pupils' thinking well when they were devising sentences to describe a character, Abdul Gasazi. Her clever questioning, such as, 'Explain why you used the word "bright",' and 'Why did you choose "awkward"?' both made pupils think, extend their speaking skills and also enabled the teacher to assess pupils' understanding of the lesson objectives.

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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There have been a number of improvements in the curriculum since the previous inspection. It is imaginative and creative, and has been organised well to meet the needs and interests of the pupils. There are extensive opportunities for them to practise their literacy skills in different subjects, which greatly enhance their learning. Pupils say that they enjoy the many opportunities they have to use the extensive grounds, which are used well to enhance curricular provision. In addition, they are proud of the work that they do in the Elford walled garden, including operating the school allotment. Topics are sometimes launched by visits, such as that to the local farm, and they are invariably concluded with well-devised celebrations such as the 'Old Time Music Hall' or productions of 'Midsummer Night's Dream'. However, additional activities in the form of visits out of school and extra-curricular activities are satisfactory.

Excellent care and outstanding pastoral support underpins many of the school's strengths in securing the pupils' personal development. The school provides an attractive environment in which there are many high quality displays of the pupils' work. Careful attention is paid to pupils' individual circumstances and needs, and the staff work hard to meet these. Strong and effective links with a range of other agencies are used actively by the school to tailor provision to support pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable. This, together with effective work with parents and carers, greatly supports pupils' well-being, happiness and consequent academic progress.

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?

Incisive and clear leadership from the headteacher has successfully generated a strong drive for change and improvement. Effective appointment procedures have resulted in the development of a strong staff team and, as well as pursuing common goals, provision is now good and achievement higher. The close analysis of the performance of different pupils has enabled the school to ensure that all groups are doing equally well. This aspect of the promotion of equal opportunities is complemented by discrimination of any kind not being tolerated. Although relatively new to the school, teachers make a good contribution to the school's monitoring and evaluation processes, particularly in literacy and science.

Governance is good. The governing body have strengthened their effectiveness since

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the previous inspection because its members are not as reliant on the headteacher for information as they were previously. It is well able to hold the school to account for its performance. In addition, the governing body contributes well to the school’s good procedures to keep pupils safe, and they ensure that all child protection and staff vetting procedures meet regulatory requirements in full.

The school provides a cohesive community that forms an essential part of the village. Community cohesion is further enhanced by the good links that the school enjoys with a contrasting, much larger, school in the locality as well as through cluster-based events. Links with a school in Shanghai province are being cemented following the headteacher’s recent visit to China. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 enjoyed using their computers to prepare Christmas letters to email. Pupils in China are currently learning ‘Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star’ in English and those at Howard are learning it in Mandarin.

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	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Provision has greatly improved in the Reception year. Good induction procedures ensure that children settle quickly and well and they are helped by older pupils to understand classroom routines. Staff work closely together to ensure that each child’s needs are met effectively. The good emphasis placed on securing their welfare, means that children soon become confident and secure and their personal and social development is rapid. Children’s skills on entry vary each year because cohorts are small. Progress and learning is now consistently good which means that on entry to Year 1 most children achieve the expected goals.

There has been a particular improvement in outdoor provision. The space is very

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generous and is planned well although resources for large muscle control are limited. Staff ensure that children receive a good balance between those activities that are led by adults and those that the children learn for themselves. They model older pupils in the class well, such as when Year 2 pupils were gathering information about the colour of children’s hair. The youngest children followed them and were soon tallying for themselves. They also enjoy learning French songs and words.

Excellent attention is paid to assessing and recording children’s achievements. Comprehensive ‘Learning Journeys’ are developed which provide a strong picture of children’s achievements across all areas of learning. These are complemented by a wide range of photographs and close observations of children at work and play. These are used well to inform future activities.

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

A higher- than- usual proportion of parents and carers completed the questionnaires. Almost all said that their children enjoyed school and that, overall, they were happy with their children’s experience at the school. Many parents and carers made positive comments about how well their children settled into school routines. Others commented on how they felt that the school has improved since the previous inspection. These are summarised by the parent or carer who wrote: ‘Since the last Ofsted inspection the school has made many positive changes. The small team of teachers and assistants work incredibly hard which reflects on the care and support provided to my children.’

Although parents and carers were unanimous in their view of the school, in five of the questions answered a few felt that the school does not inform them sufficiently well about the progress that their children make. This issue was reviewed and inspection findings are that the school’s arrangements are at least in line with those found in most primary schools.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Howard 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 34 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 53 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	19	61	11	35	1	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	24	77	7	23	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	17	55	10	32	3	10	1	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	18	58	12	39	1	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	19	61	12	39	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	17	55	14	45	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	15	48	16	52	0	0	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)	16	52	15	48	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	16	52	14	45	1	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	16	52	14	45	1	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	15	48	14	45	2	6	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	16	52	13	42	2	6	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	16	52	14	45	0	0	1	3

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 all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 are for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 pupils' 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.

7 December 2011

Dear Pupils



Inspection of Howard Primary School, Tamworth, B79 9DB

I am writing to thank you for your help when we came to visit your school and also to tell you what we found. We enjoyed our visit and we were pleased to see how you enjoy school. I really enjoyed the school council assembly. I also think that you are very lucky to have such beautiful and interesting school grounds.

Yours is a good school, and you are helped to learn well because the adults look after you exceptionally well and their teaching is good. We were impressed with how well you get on together. Your behaviour is excellent; you have an outstanding understanding about being safe and a good understanding of the importance of being healthy. We think that your headteacher is doing an excellent job and she is helped by all the staff. They are always checking on how well you are doing because they want you always to do as well as you can.

Even in a good school like yours, there are things that can be improved. We have asked your headteacher and the governing body to make lessons even better by ensuring that there you get lots of opportunities to practise your practical and investigational mathematics skills. We have also asked your teachers to make sure that when they question you, they do so in a way that means that you have to give longer answers. This is to help you to understand and to strengthen your speaking skills. Finally, we have asked your teachers to make sure that they don't spend too long introducing lessons.

Thank you for taking time to talk to us and welcoming us to watch your lessons. We hope that you continue to find your time in school enjoyable.

Yours sincerely

Keith Sadler
Lead inspector

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