

Houldsworth Valley Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	124546
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	393483
Inspection dates	27–28 June 2012
Lead inspector	David Jones HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (HMCI) the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	144
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Robert Golding
Headteacher	Sharon FitzGerald
Date of previous school inspection	27 January 2011
School address	Rowley Drive Newmarket CB8 0PU
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

David Jones

Her Majesty's Inspector

This inspection was carried out at no notice. HMI conducted seven lesson observations, including five joint observations with members of the senior management team. A total of six hours was spent directly observing teaching. All staff were offered professional feedback. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, governors and nominated staff. HMI found time to meet with a number of parents and carers at the school gate on the first morning of the inspection and took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. The inspector heard pupils in all year groups read and scrutinised their class books. HMI looked at a range of documents provided by senior managers, the headteacher's reports to the governing body, the minutes of the governing body meetings, and the school's most recent self-evaluation.

Information about the school

The school is smaller than average although the number on role is rising. Most pupils are white British. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is average, although the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average. There are more boys than girls in the school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above the national average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action plus is average, as is the proportion with a statement of special educational needs. The school site provides accommodation for a privately run nursery that was not part of this inspection.

An acting headteacher was appointed on the 1 September 2011 and a deputy headteacher took up his post on that day. A new Chair of the Governing Body was appointed at the end of September 2011. The acting headteacher was appointed to the substantive post in February 2012. As part of the local authority's reorganisation of school places, a new Year 5 class was formed in September 2011. These pupils will be the first year group at the school to take the Year 6 national tests in the summer of 2013.

The school was found to require special measures in January 2011 and was visited by HMI on three previous occasions in July and December 2011 and March 2012.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures. This is now a good school. Standards have risen and pupils are currently making good progress as a direct result of good teaching. The school has done very well to have progressed thus far in so short a period; it is not yet outstanding because it is too early in the schools recovery for all pupils to be making rapid and sustained progress in most subjects, over time, given their starting points.
- The good leadership provided by the headteacher and senior team have resulted in consistently effective action that has secured significant improvements in the quality of teaching, behaviour and attendance. A new leadership team has been developed and staff at all levels have been empowered. As a result, attainment has risen in a matter of months from a low base to a point close, and in some cases above, the level expected for pupils’ ages.
- There is good teaching in all year groups and nearly half the lessons seen were outstanding, a figure that matches the headteacher’s most recent analysis of the quality of teaching. The very best teaching also developed the pupils’ spiritual, social, moral and cultural thinking and made very good use of mid-point reviews to re-focus their learning.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage has been transformed by the recent deployment of an outstanding practitioner to an area where provision has been of concern; the children are now making rapid progress from a low base.
- Pupils’ behaviour and safety are good. Attendance has risen significantly and is above average. The school provides a calm and friendly environment. Parents and carers are positive about their child feeling safe, the improvements secured in teaching, the way in which behaviour is managed, and the improvements

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secured in the children's attitudes to learning since the autumn term 2011.

- Leadership and management are good. The improvements secured in less than a year are impressive. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning is robust and performance management is effective. Governance is satisfactory but vacancies exist on the governing body which hinders the provision of effective challenge and support.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Finalise the adjustments to staffing in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Further increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by:
 - sharing the best practice in the school
 - making good use of mid-point reviews within lessons to redirect learning
 - seeking spiritual, moral, social and cultural opportunities to provide added challenge and a different dimension to the pupils' thinking.
- Fill the vacancies on the school's governing body.

Main report

Achievement

As a result of the improvements secured in teaching, many are now working at or, in some cases, above the level expected for their ages in English and mathematics. Attainment on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage has been below average in the past. During this inspection and as part of the previous monitoring visit, HMI cross-referenced the quality of the work in the pupils' books with the assessments recorded in the school's evidence base and found an accurate match to support the school's progress data. The inspector reviewed the pupils' current work in every class and noted that pupils across the ability range, including disabled students and those with special educational needs, and those who speak English as a second language were making good progress because teachers had effectively matched the tasks provided to the pupils' learning needs.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage have begun to make rapid progress since the deployment of an outstanding teacher into this class. An effective programme of literacy and numeracy skills is helping children make rapid progress towards the levels expected for their age. The inspector heard children from the Early Years Foundation Stage read books appropriate for their age; some were reading more fluently than might be expected whilst others used phonics with confidence to decode unfamiliar words.

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HMI heard pupils from across the ability range in Years 1 to 5 read in a number of contexts. Lower achieving pupils in each year group used a mix of segmentation skills and phonics to read unfamiliar words. However, all pupils were able to 'sight read' a wide range of familiar words and most from Years 2 to 5 read with increasing fluency. The most confident pupils showed an awareness of punctuation and read with expression.

The pupils' mathematical skills have improved significantly in all year groups, with increasing numbers of pupils able to deal with higher level mathematical tasks than might be expected for their age.

Quality of teaching

Teaching was good or better in nearly three-quarters of the sessions observed and outstanding teaching was seen on three occasions. HMI noted the support and intervention work of learning support assistants, and conducted joint observations with the senior management team. In all lessons, tasks were well-planned and individual support was strong. In the best lessons, questioning was skilful and learning was driven forward at a brisk pace by precise instruction; the classrooms were happy vibrant learning environments.

The use of assessment is good and the quality of marking evident in the pupils' books is a notable strength. Opportunities to hear the pupils read are part of the daily routine and pupils are also regularly required to read their own work to the class. In an outstanding Year 2 English lesson, pupils presented with a 'dilemma story' were required to form an opinion; the debate on the social and moral issues significantly enhanced their speaking and listening skills. A very well managed whole-class comparison discussion brought strong social and moral comments from every child that were followed up with a challenging 'staying safe' task. Similarly, in an outstanding, Year 5 mathematics lesson on median, mode and range, the teacher skilfully facilitated an enquiry that prompted high-level mathematical discussion and investigative mathematics; the acceleration in pupil progress was stimulated by an excellent review of the data under investigation and the decisions required.

In those lessons where pupils made only satisfactory progress, a clear demonstration of the key task or a mid-point review of their learning to make clear to them how to make good progress were the aspects of teaching that required improvement.

The organisation of provision for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs has improved significantly since January 2012. Learning support assistants are providing effective support and these pupils make good progress. In the last year the school has provided support for a number of pupils with notable learning difficulties. The exceptional progress these pupils have made is a testimony to the expertise and patience of the learning support assistants and the effectiveness of the professional guidance provided by senior staff.

A great deal has been done to improve the Early Years Foundation Stage provision

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and the arrival of an outstanding practitioner has brought a vibrancy to the classroom that is facilitating a rapid recovery in skills and standards.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour is good and the pupils' attitudes to learning are positive features of all lessons. Attendance has risen and is currently above average. The pupils speak warmly of having people to go to if they are unhappy, whilst parents and carers were keen to note the improvement in behaviour they had seen since Christmas. They all commented that their child felt safe in school and were pleased with the support provided. HMI interviewed the school council on two occasions during the monitoring visits and pupils were clear that bullying was dealt with quickly and effectively. The pupils felt that they had a voice in the school's development and showed immense pride in their school.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are good and parents consistently comment on the improvements secured. The headteacher has forged an ambitious, successful and hard-working leadership team with a clear focus on school improvement. The quality of teaching has improved significantly in two terms and inadequate teaching has been eliminated with the routine sharing of best practice between teachers a key factor in this. Those lessons that extended the challenge provided by seeking the pupils' views on social, moral and staying safe issues were amongst the most effective. Equality of opportunity is good and often outstanding, driven on by the quality of teaching. Thoughtful appointments have been made, young teachers are developing rapidly under the headteacher's energetic guidance and the school has been effectively regenerated. The senior team's monitoring and self-evaluation are accurate. During each monitoring visit, HMI invited senior staff and key staff to join in the evaluation of teaching. The views they expressed consistently matched the judgements recorded by the inspector. The rapid turnaround of this school since the arrival of the current headteacher in September 2011 shows the school's good capacity for continued improvement.

Notable steps have been taken to improve the curriculum with the regular teaching of science, the use of drama and poetry to support English lessons, music and modern foreign language teaching. Though governance is satisfactory, the remaining vacancies on the governing body limit its ability to challenge and drive improvement. Relationships with parents and carers are a positive feature enhanced by regular communication at the start and end of the school day; they consistently spoke well of the school's efforts at every level. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements and staff recruitment procedures are exemplary.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



29 June 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Houldsworth Valley Primary School, Newmarket CB8 0PU

You will probably remember that I have been visiting your school each term for the last year. This is a process called 'special measures' designed to help schools improve. Your headteacher will have told you by now that Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools has removed special measures and that your school is judged to be good.

This is a huge achievement for any school and it shows how hard the staff have been working but also how hard you have tried. I have been very pleased to visit your school; I always saw happy faces and you were always very polite and helpful. I found the way staff helped you to speak and listen accurately very impressive and was very pleased with the way provision for those who find learning difficult has improved. Your attendance has improved and is now above those of many primary schools. Well done!

I have asked the headteacher to finalise the staffing in the Early Years Foundation Stage, to make sure that the best of your lessons are available for everybody, and to encourage some new governors on to the governing body.

It has been a great pleasure to meet you each term and I look forward to hearing about your future successes.

Yours sincerely

David Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector

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