

Houldsworth Valley Primary School

Rowley Drive, Newmarket, Cambridge CB8 0PU

Inspection dates

1–2 December 2015

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 in 2015 was below the national average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The proportion of pupils making expected progress in mathematics in Key Stage 2 was significantly below the national average. The proportion of pupils making more than expected progress in mathematics and writing across the school is not good enough.
- The quality of teaching is not consistently good. A small number of teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can do regardless of their starting points and in particular, the most-able pupils.
- Pupils' books show that teachers do not routinely identify next steps in pupils' learning or guide pupils as to what they need to do to improve their work.
- Pupils in the current Year 6 have some way to go to reach national expectations in 2016 in mathematics. This is due to them having to catch up on previous gaps in their learning.
- There is inconsistency in how well teachers use assessment information to stretch pupils or quickly target support for pupils who are underachieving.
- Leaders' and governors' evaluation of achievement and teaching is overgenerous. As a consequence, they have not swiftly or successfully tackled areas that need improvement.
- Leaders do not always set sharp enough targets for improvement and therefore it is difficult to hold teachers to account for pupils' progress.
- Some senior leaders do not contribute well enough to raising standards of achievement in the areas for which they are responsible.
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The school has the following strengths

- Teaching and provision in Reception classes is good. Consequently, children in the early years make good progress and are well prepared for Year 1.
- Parents view the school very positively, are well informed about their children's care and achievements.
- Pupils' personal development and welfare is good and as a result they feel safe and behave well. They are polite and courteous and develop confidence and self-esteem.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of pupils who make expected and more than expected progress in mathematics and writing by:
 - ensuring that pupils are developing their mathematical and written skills, knowledge and understanding and effectively applying them throughout other areas of the curriculum
 - ensuring that teachers are well supported in developing their subject knowledge
 - increasing opportunities for pupils to write at length to practise and hone their skills.

- Strengthen the quality of teaching so it is consistently good or better by:
 - ensuring that all teachers have high expectations of what pupils can do regardless of their starting points
 - ensuring all lessons challenge pupils, especially the more able, to achieve as well as they can
 - ensuring that all teachers keep a close eye on pupils' learning and swiftly adjust the support that pupils receive when they are struggling
 - teachers giving pupils effective feedback identifying next steps in their learning and helping them improve their work.

- Ensure that leaders, including governors, are sufficiently focused on securing good progress for pupils by:
 - using assessment and monitoring information more effectively to identify underachievement and respond more quickly when this happens
 - setting sharper targets in development planning and performance management, so that governors can play a fuller part in holding leaders to account for pupils' progress
 - strengthening the role of senior leaders so that they fully understand the part they play in raising standards.

- An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to improve this aspect of leadership and management.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management requires improvement because some leaders' and governors' evaluation of the effectiveness of actions to improve pupil outcomes is not accurate enough or based on secure evidence of pupils' progress and not just their attainment. As a consequence, leaders have an overinflated view of pupil achievement and the quality of teaching, and they have not intervened quickly enough when dips in achievement are evident.
- The headteacher understands the school's priorities and actions that now need to be taken. She recognises that the school's plans for improvement are not sharply focused on ensuring pupils make at least expected progress throughout the school. As a result, pupils' attainment at the end of both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 is low.
- There have been a considerable number of changes in teachers and leaders since the previous inspection. Almost all teachers have been appointed in the last two years, with many being in the early stage of their teaching career. As a consequence, the headteacher has led much of the development to support colleagues in their new roles, which is already paying dividends in the early years.
- The headteacher has redefined the roles of senior leaders, some as recent as September 2015. These leaders are beginning to understand the role they play in the school. Currently their evaluations of, for example, the quality of teaching in reading, writing and mathematics are not yet based on secure evidence of pupils' progress and consequently the impact on whole school improvement is slow.
- Leadership of the early years is strong. The headteacher recognises that this is providing a very good role model for less-experienced leaders while also adding to the overall capacity of leadership within the school.
- Many of the middle leaders are in their second year of teaching. The headteacher has rightly prioritised developing two specific aspects of their roles; ensuring that they have a good understanding of their particular subject and evaluating how well it is taught across the school. The results of their work have already been successful in improving the quality of teaching in the subjects for which middle leaders are responsible.
- The school is committed to securing equal opportunities for all pupils. Pupil premium funding effectively supports disadvantaged pupils. There are some very clear examples of the dramatic impact this funding has had on individual pupil outcomes and their personal development and welfare. As a result, the gap between these pupils' attainment and that of other pupils is narrowing.
- The additional funding for sport has been used to extend opportunities for pupils to take part in sports clubs and activities. As a result, the numbers of children taking part in sports festivals and inter-school sport competitions have increased. A specialist sports coach is employed to enhance the knowledge and skills of staff in teaching gymnastics, athletics, hockey and basketball. Consequently, the new leader's confidence in supporting teachers is growing.
- Leaders are developing the new curriculum in well-planned themes and teachers often plan learning that pupils say 'is fun'. Displays inside and outside of the classroom show clearly how pupils' knowledge in topics like World War I and the Aztecs is increased. Pupils say they particularly like some of the other themes like 'imaginary worlds', 'Percy the Park Keeper' and 'up, up and away' as 'they are exciting'. These themes often include external visits or visitors to the school which complement pupils' learning. Making good use of writing and mathematics skills in other areas of the curriculum is not as evident in some classes. The impact of this is that pupils do not always have opportunities to regularly practise and hone these skills
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well organised and evident in displays, discussions with pupils and work in pupils' books. The headteacher recognises that there is more work to do to ensure every opportunity is seized to capitalise on linking the new curriculum with the school's passionate ethos; 'the best for all, from each the best'.
- For the last two years the local authority has correctively identified the school as needing support and challenge. However, the support has not been sufficiently focused on the urgent priorities – improving the quality of teaching and the development of senior leaders. As a result, the support given has had minimal impact on pupil outcomes.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The membership of the governing body has changed considerably since the previous inspection. There is a new chair and vice-chair of governors but a vacancy for a local authority governor still

exists. To fill governing body vacancies was an area for improvement from the 2012 inspection and this has not been successfully tackled. Governors are actively working with the local authority to secure this position and gain an experienced governor who will bring additional skills to the school.

- Governors have a broad understanding of the current school improvement priorities. However, the evidence on which this is based has not been challenged effectively enough to ensure it is an accurate picture analysis. Too much emphasis is placed on pupils' attainment and not enough on their progress. As a result, the governing body has an overinflated view of pupils' progress and the quality of teaching across the school.
- The Chair of the Governing Body has effectively supported the headteacher to deal with many challenges, not least of which is recruiting experienced teachers. The school has taken decisive action on several occasions to ensure that teaching is the best it can be, which has often resulted in considerable changes in teaching staff. Governors recognise that this has resulted in pupils not achieving as well as they should. With more stable staffing this year, governors agree that they will need to keep a closer check on pupils' progress so that pupils achieve the expected levels at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2016.
- Governors are developing their understanding about different aspects of the school's work. For example, they pay close attention to the impact of regular attendance on all pupils' attainment and have used well the additional funding that the school receives for pupil premium and sports development. Governors are informed about the performance of teachers and understand the link between performance targets, pupils' progress and teachers' pay.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders work well with other professionals outside of the school to ensure that pupils are safe and their families are well supported.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because it is not consistently good in all classes. As a result, pupils' achievement is inconsistent, particularly in mathematics.
- Some teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can do. In many lessons, the most-able pupils are not challenged enough. Pupils say that learning in mathematics in particular 'is way too easy'. In a small minority of lessons the least able are not supported well enough to help them understand what they are learning.
- Some teachers do not use assessment information well enough to check on pupils' understanding and quickly move them on in their learning. However, there are some good examples of teachers using questions skilfully to challenge pupils.
- Supporting pupils with next steps in their learning is not yet consistent in every class. As a consequence, pupils are not always aware of how they can improve their work or what they could try next.
- Teachers' expectations of the quality of work in pupils' books varies from class to class and between subjects. The presentation of pupils' work in their books is sometimes untidy, as is the handwriting of a small number of staff. There are, however, some examples of good presentation of work and higher expectations. Some teachers effectively use the 'working walls' in their classrooms to demonstrate what can be achieved. One pupil told inspectors that having the best work up on the walls 'makes you think how you can do that in your own work'.
- Teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) is effective. This has led to a marked increase in the number of pupils reaching the standard expected in Year 1. Phonics skills are used well by pupils when they read. Many activities have been designed to encourage reading. This is having a positive impact on how often and how widely pupils read.
- The teaching of writing is improving, particularly in the Reception classes and Key Stage 1. It is evident that pupils are using their phonics skills in their writing. As a result, most pupils are making expected progress. However, the proportion of pupils making more than expected progress in all classes is not high enough. This is partly because pupils are not getting enough opportunities to write regularly and at length and partly because the most-able pupils are not being challenged sufficiently.
- The teaching of mathematics is not yet taught consistently throughout the school. Teachers' subject knowledge and skills in mathematics vary considerably. As a consequence, identification of the gaps in pupils' knowledge is not quick enough and support for pupils is taking too long. However, the headteacher and inspectors recognise the pockets of good practice seen in some of the least

experienced teachers. Plans to make better use of this expertise to reduce the inconsistency in the teaching of mathematics and support teachers in their delivery of the new curriculum are imminent.

- Teachers plan learning and support that helps disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs to make progress at a similar rate to their peers. Learning support assistants and higher-level teaching assistants are deployed well in the majority of lessons. Consequently, individual pupils are effectively supported ensuring that they understand what to do.
- A recent parent survey highlighted that it would be beneficial to do a review of homework. Leaders responded positively and worked with parents and pupils through the school council and parent forum. Homework is now appropriate to the age of the pupils, varied in its content and pupils respond well.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils know about bullying and the various forms it takes. They know that 'you can't have any type of bullying that is nice'. Pupils say that bullying is rare.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe in school and out in the community. They are clear on how to be safe on the internet. Parents say they are confident that the school keeps pupils safe, adding that 'the school is very supportive of the whole family in this regard; nothing is too much trouble'.
- Pupils readily take on additional responsibilities and are proud to carry out such duties as school council members or lunchtime helpers. They say they 'want to help people' and are proud to do so. They reinforce the dining room 'etiquette rules'. They support younger children to use their cutlery correctly and be courteous in their behaviour while they are eating.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, and social development very well and is a key focus for all adults. Pupils are very well cared for. They have great confidence in the adults in the school and pupils say that they 'are all treated the same'. Opportunities for pupils to appreciate other cultures are well developed. In lessons seen during the inspection, pupils were able to reflect on their own beliefs and those of others. 'It is fascinating to see how other people live their lives and how different they are to ours,' said one pupil in a lesson about Sikhism.
- Parents appreciate the school's caring ethos. One parent summed up the school by saying 'the school makes me feel confident that my children are receiving the best personal and academic development that they require to complement their home lives'.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They conduct themselves well in and around the school and are very polite and respectful of each other and adults.
- Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are proud of their roles in helping behaviour and lunchtime play to be as good as it can be. They have undertaken the 'Play Maker Award' to train them to deliver structured activities to other pupils at play time. As play leaders, they effectively model how to get out and put away playtime equipment and show younger pupils how to play safely. As a result, all pupils show a good level of responsibility in the use of equipment and respect how it should be used.
- Incidents of poor behaviour are rare. Pupils are clear about whom to go to if they have a problem.
- Adults consistently use the school's behaviour system and pupils understand the consequences if they do not behave well. Pupils say some pupils occasionally interrupt their learning and that they would like adults to act more quickly when this happens.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are largely good, even when learning is not as challenging for some pupils as it might be. On these occasions pupils become fidgety and less attentive; but this does not occur routinely.
- The school's system for recording incidents of poor behaviour is comprehensive and fully involves parents if the need arises.
- The vast majority of parents spoken to during the inspection are very positive about pupils' behaviour. They say it is managed well by teachers and leaders.
- The school promotes regular attendance in a variety of ways. The impact of this is that pupils' attendance has improved since the last inspection. In most classes attendance is typically above the national average. This is celebrated weekly in newsletters and on the school's website. Pupils are very competitive about winning the 'attendance cup'. The importance of punctuality is clearly shown in displays around the school. If pupils are late '15 minutes per day = 10 days lost in a school year'.

- The breakfast and after-school club are well run and pupils enjoy attending. The breakfast club is having a positive impact on attendance and punctuality and pupils' readiness for the school day.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Outcomes for pupils require improvement because in 2015 the school did not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- A considerable number of the pupils in Year 6 in 2015 had joined the school since Key Stage 1. Although their progress was better in Year 6, almost half of the pupils in mathematics and a third in writing did not make expected progress over Key Stage 2.
- Last year's Year 6 class had 22 pupils, many of whom experienced teaching in previous years that was not consistently good. For a variety of reasons, there had also been a considerable number of changes in staffing throughout the Year 6 pupils' time at the school. As a result, their progress had been slow. Consequently, these pupils had considerable gaps in their knowledge and understanding, particularly in mathematics. The school's own assessment information shows that these gaps are closing, but not quickly enough to ensure that the present Year 6 pupils reach national expectations in 2016.
- Current information suggests that progress in reading and writing is more consistent in most classes. The school's own assessment information shows that not all pupils are making expected progress in mathematics in some classes.
- Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 has been significantly below the national average for three years. In 2015 most pupils in Year 2 made expected progress from the end of their Reception year. However, a few of the more-able pupils did not all make expected progress, particularly in reading and mathematics.
- The proportion of pupils who attained the expected level in the Year 1 phonics screening check was above the national average in 2015. Pupils are using these skills well in their reading.
- In 2015, the attainment of disadvantaged pupils, who were eligible for the pupil premium, was at least in line with that of their peers. Several of these pupils made more than expected progress despite significant barriers, due to the support that they were given. Current information suggests that this group's progress compares favourably to that of their classmates.
- The progress of the most-able pupils has not been good enough. This is because the work that some teachers provide for these pupils is not challenging enough and teachers have not had high expectations. However, a larger proportion of pupils currently in the school are on track to achieve higher levels at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 in 2016.
- The progress of pupils who speak English as an additional language, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs compares favourably with that of their classmates. In many cases their progress is better than their peers. This is because they are given good-quality, targeted support in the classroom.
- The proportion of children who leave the early years with a good level of development has increased for the last three years. In 2015, this proportion was above the national average.

Early years provision

is good

- Children enter the early years with levels of development that are below that typical for their age. However, children make good progress in all areas of their learning from their different starting points, although progress in number lags behind other areas. In 2015 the proportion of children achieving a good level of development was above that expected. As a consequence, children are well-prepared for Year 1.
- Leaders have high expectations of all children and adults support children very well. As a result children settle quickly and become self-confident and are keen to show visitors what they are doing.
- There are very positive relationships between children and adults. Adults are encouraging, supportive and quick to pick up on any child who is struggling socially or with their learning. The growing effectiveness of the relationship with parents is also playing an important part in making the transition from home to school as smooth as possible. Information leaders receive from pre-school settings about

children's learning is used well to plan appropriate activities. Leaders therefore have an accurate picture of what each child needs and regularly check on individual children to see where they are in their learning.

- The early years area is an interesting and well-resourced environment, both indoors and outside. Planned activities are interesting and cover all areas of learning but emphasise reading, writing and number information both inside and outside of the classroom. Children independently dress themselves for going outside, happily play in 'Percy the Park Keeper's shed' and enjoy exploring the 'mud garden'.
- The school uses a good range and quality of assessments that enable teachers to clearly show good progress in children's books. Leaders check carefully the results of assessments to plan activities that move children on in their learning. This is particularly noticeable in children's good knowledge of phonics and the early writing that children eagerly produce. The most-able children are already writing short but accurate sentences.
- Teaching is good in both Reception classes. Adults support and direct children's learning well. Children are interested and motivated learners. As a result, they talk confidently about what they are doing and finding out. Children excitedly told inspectors about the 'snow' they were playing with and how the 'igloo' in the classroom was made of snow 'to keep animals and people warm'.
- Staff provide children with good opportunities to explore ideas for themselves throughout each day. Occasionally some children are not as confident in choosing what they want to do or do not understand how it can help them in their learning. Consequently, very occasionally their misconceptions are not spotted quickly enough and support given to move children on in their learning.
- Child protection and safeguarding arrangements are good. There are no breaches of welfare arrangements. Adults know the children extremely well and cater for their individual needs with care. They ensure that children are safe and behave very well.

School details

Unique reference number	124546
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10005496

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. 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	274
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Judy Richards
Headteacher	Sharon FitzGerald
Telephone number	01638 663214
Website	www.houldsworthvalley.co.uk
Email address	office@houdsworthvalley.suffolk.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	27–28 June 2012

Information about this school

- Houldsworth Valley is an average-sized primary school. The school has grown in numbers since the last inspection, having moved from being a lower school to a primary school in 2011. The school is undergoing building work to accommodate the two form entry that is now present in early years and Key Stage 1.
- The majority of pupils are White British but the proportion of pupils who are from a wide range of minority ethnic groups is above the national average. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is higher than average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is above average. This is additional funding for looked after children and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- There have been significant changes in staff members since the school was last inspected. The leadership team is relatively new, with only two members, one being the headteacher, working at the school in 2012.
- A breakfast and an after-school club are provided for pupils by the school.
- In 2015 the school did not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 14 lessons, the majority of which were jointly observed with the headteacher. In addition, inspectors made a number of shorter visits to lessons and attended an assembly.
- Inspectors listened to Key Stage 1 pupils reading.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, members of staff, two members of the governing body, groups of pupils and a local authority representative.
- Inspectors examined a range of evidence, including the school's self-evaluation and development plan, the systems to track pupils' progress, policies and records relating to behaviour and attendance. They also looked at records of the monitoring of teaching by senior staff, performance management information, safeguarding documentation and reports from external personnel and samples of pupils' work.
- The inspectors analysed questionnaires from nine members of staff.
- The Parent View online survey response of 34 parents was taken into account, along with views expressed during the inspection.

Inspection team

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