

Howitt Primary Community School

Holmes Street, Heanor, DE75 7FS

Inspection dates

3–4 December 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Although standards of attainment are rising, these remain too low in reading and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1, and in grammar, punctuation and spelling at the end of Key Stage 2.
- Not all groups of pupils are making consistently good progress, particularly, the most-able and disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.
- In Key Stages 1 and 2, not enough teaching is good or outstanding.
- Pupils' behaviour requires improvement. A few pupils do not concentrate well enough on their learning. This is because teachers' expectations of pupils' attitudes to learning are not always high enough.
- Leaders' plans for improvement do not have clear milestones so that governors can check whether actions are having the desired impact on pupils' achievement.
- Leaders of subjects have not had enough opportunities to check on the quality of teaching through visiting lessons. This is not helping them to drive improvement quickly in areas of weakness, or check on the extent to which the new curriculum is having a positive impact on pupils' learning.
- A small minority of pupils in Key Stage 2 has gaps in their understanding of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) which is hindering their progress in reading.
- The leaders responsible for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are not checking closely enough the quality of support provided to pupils.
- Governors are at an early stage in undertaking regular visits to the school to check on the rate of improvement.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher provides authoritative leadership. She has harnessed support from senior leaders and has successfully improved the quality of education from a low level.
- Senior leaders have improved teaching and pupils' achievement.
- Children make a good start to their education in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- The primary sports funding is used well to develop pupils' skills in a wide range of sports.
- Pupils' spiritual development is well promoted.
- Pupils say that they feel safe at school and enjoy the range of after-school clubs. This is reflected in improved rates of attendance.
- Teachers' marking of pupils' work is good. This helps pupils to improve their written work quickly.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 16 lessons taught by 12 teachers
- Inspectors looked at pupils’ current and previous workbooks across a range of subjects.
- Inspectors heard a group of pupils from Years 2 and 6 read.
- Meetings were held with: the headteacher, other senior leaders and leaders of different subjects; a group of pupils from Key Stages 1 and 2; and members of the governing body. The lead inspector met with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation including: the school’s own self-evaluation and plans for improvement; the school’s evaluations of the quality of teaching and learning; school policies; the school’s most recent data on the attainment and progress of pupils; information provided to families; information relating to the safeguarding of pupils; and the school’s most recent data relating to the attendance and punctuality of pupils.
- Inspectors considered the range and quality of information provided on the school website.
- Consideration was given to the 12 responses from parents and carers to the online questionnaire (Parent View) as well as the school’s own analysis from its own surveys. Staff were not required to complete a questionnaire for this inspection.

Inspection team

David Carter, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Lynne Bennett

Additional Inspector

Full report

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.

Information about this school

- Howitt Community Primary School is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage which has two classes in the Nursery and Reception Years. There are two classes per year group between Year 1 and Year 6.
- Most pupils come from White British backgrounds. There are very few pupils from other heritage groups or who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of boys compared to girls is much higher than that found nationally.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is around one in five. This proportion is slightly above average when compared to all schools nationally.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for pupil premium funding is around 37%, which is above that which is found nationally. This is additional funding provided to give extra support to those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and to children who are looked after.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for the attainment and progress of pupils by the end of Year 6.
- The school runs its own breakfast club which is managed by the governing body.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching in Key Stage 1 and 2 and pupils' attitudes to learning, to secure consistently good progress for all groups of pupils by:
 - making sure that teachers use their assessments of pupils' prior learning more precisely to provide suitable challenge for all pupils during lessons, including for the most able and those with special educational needs
 - making sure that all teaching is presented in ways which will sustain the interest and engagement of all pupils
 - providing pupils with more opportunities to develop their skills in reasoning through applying their mathematical learning in other subjects
 - ensuring that teachers in Years 1 and 2 build upon children's prior learning in reading and mathematics more systematically so they can attain the same standards as they do in writing
 - ensuring that older pupils who have gaps in their understanding of phonics are provided with a programme of work to address their prior underachievement
 - ensuring that the teaching of grammar, punctuation and spelling is systematic and that all teachers keep a close eye on how well pupils are applying their skills in the full range of written work.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that subject leaders and the leaders responsible for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs have the skills and opportunities to make robust checks and accurate evaluations of the impact of their work to improve pupils' achievement
 - ensuring that the school's improvement plan has clear milestones so governors and leaders can check the extent to which actions are having the desired impact on pupils' achievement
 - ensuring that governors strengthen their systems for gathering information so they can hold leaders to closer account for the progress of different prior attaining groups of pupils
 - ensuring that the school website contains relevant and up-to-date information to help parents become more informed on how they can support their child's learning.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The headteacher has provided authoritative and effective leadership: she has given staff clear guidance on what she expects from their performance and has supported their development by providing training which is appropriate to their needs. Consequently, she has eradicated inadequate teaching and has raised standards. This demonstrates that senior leaders have the capacity to secure further improvements. Nevertheless, at this stage, leadership requires improvement because the work of governors, leaders of subjects, and teachers in charge of the areas of the school's work, is not fully embedded. As a result, inconsistencies remain in the quality of teaching in Key Stages 1 and 2.
- Leaders of English and mathematics have started to develop key leadership skills and are checking more closely on the appropriateness of teachers' plans and quality of learning in pupils' books. However, they have had limited opportunities to add to their skills by observing and checking pupils' achievement during lessons. Consequently, they are not able to gather a full picture of the extent to which teachers' skills are having an impact on pupils' learning and to inform their next steps to help them drive further improvements.
- Senior leaders' action plans are informed by accurate evaluations of teaching and pupils' achievement. Clear actions are identified to address areas for improvement and build upon emerging strengths. Nonetheless, the plans do not contain sharp milestones relating to pupils' achievement. This limits the ability of governors and senior leader to check closely on improvements.
- Leaders responsible for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs have produced detailed plans which identify the range of support that is provided for individual pupils. They have started to check on the quality of the intervention programmes which pupils receive. However, due to their lack of experience, they have not checked closely enough how well identified pupils are supported during whole-class lessons. Consequently, they are not able to evaluate the effectiveness of this support properly.
- Leaders of each subject have taken responsibility for designing the new curriculum which has been introduced from the beginning of the autumn term. They have determined the subject matter of what is being taught in each year group and are beginning to highlight how activities can combine learning in more than one subject to make it more meaningful for pupils. Subject leaders have had few opportunities to gather information on how the new curriculum is working and the extent to which this is having a positive impact on pupils' achievement.
- The new curriculum covers a wide range of subjects and there is sufficient emphasis upon helping to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain. Pupils are taught about the importance of respecting people from faiths and cultures different to their own. Pupils' work on, 'What it means to be British' is celebrated in displays around the school, helping pupils to appreciate the influence of famous Britons and how they have helped to shape British heritage.
- The curriculum is particularly successful at promoting pupils' spiritual development. Pupils are encouraged to be creative and have many opportunities to express themselves through art, writing, drama and music. The three school choirs regularly perform in the local community and have been successful in regional music festivals, receiving high accolades for the quality of their performance.
- Senior leaders have conscientiously checked on the progress of groups of pupils and individuals and this has helped to identify those at risk of underachieving. Consequently, they are able to channel additional support where it is most required. This approach has been successful in helping to accelerate the progress, particularly of boys and disadvantaged pupils, to address the legacy of prior underachievement, for these groups of pupils. This is characteristic of the school becoming more successful in promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination.
- The primary school sports funding is used highly effectively to: increase pupils' participation rates in a wide range of sports; enable pupils to receive high-quality coaching; develop teachers' skills in delivering more effective physical education sessions; challenge and develop those pupils who demonstrate a talent for sport; and ensure that pupils learn about the importance of being part of a team when competing

against others from different schools.

- Senior leaders have encouraged parents to play a greater role in their children’s education. Regular newsletters have helped to keep parents aware of what is happening in school. However, the school’s website is not always kept up to date with the relevant or required information for parents.
- The local authority advisor has skilfully dovetailed external support with the professional development which the school has been able to provide for itself. This has ensured that change has been managed at an appropriate pace. While staff have been challenged to improve, they have been supported in equal measure. Consequently, the headteacher and local authority have ensured that staff morale has remained high. This has been a contributory factor in helping to secure incremental improvements to the quality of teaching and learning.

■ The governance of the school:

- The governing body has responded positively to an external review of its work and the school’s use of the pupil premium. The Chair of the Governing Body has instigated a reconstitution process which has ensured that: sub-committees have been streamlined and have clear terms of reference; governors’ skills have been harnessed more effectively and aligned to aspects of the school’s work where they can provide bespoke support; and that a programme of monitoring has commenced. Although this is at an early stage of development, governors are now collecting independent evidence so they are beginning to challenge senior leaders about the rate of implementation of key actions in their plans for improvement. Nevertheless, this is not systematic enough at this stage to hold leaders fully to account for the extent to which actions are having the desired impact upon the progress of different prior-attaining groups of pupils.
- Governors have a secure grasp of the school’s performance. Governors keep a regular check on the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. They have accurately evaluated that the support, which they have put in place, is helping to narrow the gaps in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and others in each year group.
- Governors have worked closely with the headteacher to put in place a robust system for managing their performance of staff. Governors are gaining a clearer view of the quality of teaching, drawing on information from the checks on teaching undertaken by leaders and the local authority. This information is used to inform reviews of teachers’ performance and decisions that governors make relating to pay. Governors have reviewed key policies in relation to the safety and safeguarding of pupils. As a result, the school’s procedures are ensuring that pupils feel safe, are safe, and that their arrangements for safeguarding meet requirements.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Pupils’ attitude to learning during lessons is too variable and is not consistently good. A few pupils can quickly lose concentration, particularly when learning tasks do not capture their interest. As a result, they can become restless, inattentive, and chatter with their classmates, which has a negative impact on their rate of learning.
- Pupils say that instances of misbehaviour still occur, particularly at breaktimes. However; these are far less frequent than before. Leaders have worked closely with parents and other professionals to help potentially vulnerable pupils to manage their emotions and social behaviour more effectively.
- Pupils are usually calm and sensible as they move around the school, including when they attend breakfast club and assembly. Adults’ expectations of pupils’ behaviour are clear and there is a consistent application of the systems for rewards and sanctions. Pupils from different backgrounds are encouraged to get on well with each other. This is indicative of how well the school promotes pupils’ social, moral and cultural development.
- Pupils’ attendance has improved markedly during the last four terms, following below-average rates of

attendance in the previous two academic years. Leaders follow up pupils' absence assiduously and have been successful in working with families to increase the attendance of individual pupils. Pupils say that they enjoy coming to school and they particularly like attending the wide range of lunchtime and after-school clubs.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say that they feel safe at school because they are well cared for by adults. The school's own survey of parental opinion, as well as responses on the most recently available information held on Parent View, shows that all parents who responded felt that their child was safe at school.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations. Displays and lessons on e-safety have ensured that pupils are particularly aware of the risks posed when using the internet. Pupils are clear about what they would do if they found something untoward on computers.
- Pupils are aware of different forms of bullying and can talk about what they would do if it occurred. Through assemblies, displays and lessons, school leaders convey a consistent message that bullying of any kind will not be tolerated in the school.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching is improving and there is no longer any inadequate teaching. Since the last inspection, the proportion of teaching that is good or better is steadily rising. Nonetheless, teaching requires improvement because there is not enough good teaching to help pupils sustain good progress in all subjects between Year 1 and Year 6.
- Teachers do not always use their assessments of pupils' learning precisely enough to match work to challenge pupils of different abilities. Although a large majority of teachers are challenging the thinking of the most-able pupils, this is not consistent between year groups and classes. Consequently, work for this group of pupils is not always demanding enough. Occasionally, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are not always provided with work which helps them to build steadily upon their previous learning.
- Teachers and teaching assistants do not always check closely enough on the progress of pupils during lessons. Adults' use of questioning is not always sharp enough to check and test pupils' understanding and to inform where additional support or challenge is required.
- Teachers' expectations of pupils' behaviour during lessons is not always high enough. Teachers and teaching assistants do not always recognise quickly enough when pupils' attention begins to wane. Occasionally, teachers do not insist that they have the full attention of every member of the class when they are delivering presentations or reviewing learning with the whole class.
- Teachers are beginning to teach grammar, punctuation and spelling to pupils in a more systematic way. This follows a period of many years where this part of the curriculum was not given sufficient emphasis. Although this is helping to address the legacy of prior underachievement of pupils, teachers are at an early stage in ensuring that pupils are applying their knowledge and skills of grammar, punctuation and spelling in all pieces of written work.
- Teachers have started to provide more tasks to help pupils develop their skills in reasoning by applying their skills to solving mathematical problems. However, pupils are not given enough opportunities to apply their skills in mathematics in other subjects.
- The teaching of phonics is better structured across Key Stage 1. Teachers and teaching assistants are routinely using strategies which are proving more effective in helping pupils to make better rates of progress than in previous years. Pupils in Key Stage 2, who have not been in receipt of the formal

approach to the teaching of phonics, still have gaps in their knowledge and skills, which is a barrier to them making good progress in reading.

- Teachers, especially in Year 6, are providing pupils with regular opportunities to write in a range of subjects. This is helping pupils to develop their skills in writing in a range of styles. As a result, standards in the quality of pupils' written work have risen at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2.
- Teachers' marking of pupils' workbooks is consistently good. Pupils are provided with detailed feedback on how to improve their work, especially in writing. Pupils are responding to teachers' comments and are rewriting sentences and paragraphs to show how they have refined their work. This is helping pupils to improve the quality of their finished pieces of writing. This has been a key factor in pupils' making at least expected rates of progress, so that inadequate achievement has been eradicated.
- Teachers have worked hard to ensure that classrooms are attractive, well-organised, and stimulating environments that support pupils' learning. Teachers creative use of 'working-walls' enables pupils to refer to relevant visual materials to help them when they are reviewing their learning. Teachers ensure that pupils' best work is celebrated in classrooms and central areas in order to encourage pupils to be proud of their achievements.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Senior leaders have been successful in raising standards at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2. Nevertheless, the achievement of pupils between Years 1 and 6 is inconsistent, reflecting the unevenness in the quality of teaching. Not all groups of pupils are making good rates of progress to address the legacy of prior underachievement. In particular, the most-able pupils, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, do not achieve well.
- The proportion of pupils who meet the expected standard in the Year 1 national screening test on phonics has risen in each of the last three years. Despite this improvement, disadvantaged pupils, and those who have special educational needs do not do as well as similar pupils nationally.
- At the end of Key Stage 1 in 2014, standards improved in reading, writing and mathematics. Although standards in writing are now average, standards in reading and mathematics are still too low. The proportions of pupils reaching the higher levels in reading and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1 are significantly below average.
- Year 6 pupils in 2014 attained standards that were broadly average in reading, mathematics and the quality of their content of their writing. Pupils made good progress during their time in Year 6. Nonetheless, this was insufficient to address gaps in their prior learning. Consequently, they made inadequate progress from their starting points at the end of Key Stage 1 in reading and mathematics.
- The standards of pupils' work at the end of Year 6 in 2014, in grammar, punctuation and spelling was low. The most-able pupils in particular did not achieve well enough in this aspect of English. The proportions attaining the expected Level 4 and the higher standard of Level 5, were significantly below average.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are beginning to make similar rates of progress to others in the school. However, in Key Stage 2 in particular, progress is not consistently good and the progress of a large minority of pupils is no better than average.
- Disadvantaged pupils attained standards that were much lower than their classmates in the 2014 Year 6 tests. Disadvantaged pupils were behind others by: five terms in mathematics, grammar, spelling and punctuation; four terms in reading; and three terms in writing. Disadvantaged pupils were behind similar pupils nationally by two and a half terms in reading, writing and mathematics. Despite disadvantaged pupils making good and faster progress than their classmates during Year 6, this was not sufficient to close the gaps because of their low starting points.

- Disadvantaged pupils in the current Year 6 classes started the year five terms behind others in reading, writing and mathematics. However, they are making faster progress than others and the gaps in attainment are being narrowed quickly. The gap between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and that of others between Year 1 and Year 5 is closing steadily, especially in reading.
- Boys' attainment and progress has historically lagged behind that of girls. The school's analysis shows that boys are now making rates of progress which are similar to that of girls, particularly in reading. This is helping boys to attain higher standards than in previous years.
- The levels of challenge provided for the most-able pupils varies between classes and year groups. As a result, the proportion of pupils attaining level 5 at the end of Key Stage 2, are not as high as that found nationally. Nonetheless, Year 6 teachers have started to provide additional support to the most gifted pupils. This has been relatively successful with the proportion of pupils attaining the very high standard of level 6 in 2014, being at or above national averages in writing, grammar, punctuation and spelling, as well as in mathematics.
- As a result of better teaching, the current group of Year 6 pupils is making much better progress than those pupils who joined Year 6 in 2012 and 2013. As a result, they are on track to raise standards in reading, writing, mathematics and grammar, spelling and punctuation. A healthier profile of pupils' attainment also exists across Key Stage 2, as a consequence of pupils making more secure rates of progress from when they joined the school.

The early years provision

is good

- The headteacher recognised that in order to turn the school around, it was vital that the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage improved. She has been successful in this endeavour and children are now making a positive start to their education.
- Adults have made effective links with pre-school providers and parents, which help to ensure that children are well known to staff prior to them starting school. As a result, staff can quickly start to plan activities for children which will help them to develop across all areas of learning. Nonetheless, the large majority of children tend to join the Nursery with skills and knowledge that are below those typical for their age. Moreover, a majority of children join the school with very low levels of knowledge and skills in communication and language.
- Adults have high expectations of themselves and the children. They provide a range of opportunities for children to be engaged in learning activities that are purposeful and meet their needs well. Adults have ensured that the outdoor learning environment has been developed with new resources and equipment. This has enabled children to have the same opportunities to learn effectively both inside and outside.
- Children respond well to the clear routines which have been established to ensure that their school day runs smoothly. Adults have created a stimulating and caring environment. Consequently, children feel safe because they are kept safe. Children are encouraged to get on with each other and, from the earliest days in school, they play and learn well together.
- Parents are involved in their child's education from an early stage. A regular dialogue exists between home and school on how well each child is doing. Staff check and record children's progress regularly and accurately record this information in children's 'individual learning journey' folders. Parents are able to contribute to the ongoing record of their child's development which helps to inform staff of how to provide suitably challenging activities for each child.
- Children, irrespective of their starting points, are making good progress. In 2014, the proportion of children attaining a good level of development was similar to that found nationally. Children who find learning difficult, as well as the few who enter school with well-developed skills are given appropriate support to help them achieve well. As a result, the large majority of pupils are well-prepared to start more

formal learning in Year 1.

- The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed and the staff team work well together to support children's learning. Leaders have an accurate view of how well children are doing and the next steps in improving provision further. They recognise that there is more work that can be done to support children's development in mathematics.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	135172
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	447387

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	425
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Bob Harper
Headteacher	Pam Purdon
Date of previous school inspection	3 October 2013
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