

Holywell CofE Primary School

Mill Way, Needingworth, St Ives, PE27 4TF

Inspection dates 6–7 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Pupils' achievement is outstanding in many lessons and over time they make excellent progress. This is because teaching is outstanding. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and plan exciting, interesting tasks to engage and motivate them.
- Children in Reception make rapid progress, particularly in developing their relationships and listening skills. Staff teach phonics (linking letters and sounds) exceptionally well. Outdoor learning is a major strength.
- Behaviour in lessons and around school is outstanding and pupils feel safe. All arrive on time.
- Attendance is consistently above average.
- Leadership and management are outstanding. The new headteacher is supported by a well-established and experienced team of teachers who identify the right priorities for improvement by regularly checking on teaching and pupils' progress.
- Senior leaders and governors have brought about rapid improvements in teaching and in pupils' achievement.
- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive and say that the school has gone from strength to strength.
- Governors are keen to help the school to improve and have much expertise to offer. Their regular visits mean that they know how well the school is performing.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 15 lessons taught by seven teachers and a higher-level teaching assistant. Three of these lessons were seen together with the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the pupil council, a group of six Year 6 pupils, the Chair and Vice Chair of the governing body, the headteacher and senior leaders.
- A discussion took place with a representative from the local authority about the support and advice they give to the school.
- There were 73 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) by the end of the inspection. They represented the views of over half of all parents. The inspectors took account of these and also sought the views of parents and carers as they arrived at school with their children.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documents, including the school's own information on pupils' recent and current progress, planning for school improvement, and records of governing body meetings, checks on teaching and behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Joseph Peacock, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jacqueline Pentlow

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school and there are two age-groups in each of the five Key Stage 1 and 2 classes. The Reception class has children of Reception age only.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is well below average. Very few speak English as an additional language and all are fluent in English.
- The proportion of pupils supported by additional government funding through the pupil premium is low. In this school, it only applies to the few pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion who are supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- A breakfast club and after-school club, organised and managed by the governing body, is available during term time. These are included in this inspection.
- A new headteacher joined the school in September 2011.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Enable more middle-ability pupils to achieve the same exceptional progress as other pupils by making sure that:
 - they are given time to respond to teachers' marking comments on how to improve their work
 - learning is more closely matched to their level of ability in lesson introductions and in final recap sessions
 - senior and subject leaders check that their learning is relevant and challenging for them in all parts of lessons.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Children start school in the Reception class with skills and understanding that are broadly in line with those expected. Relationships and listening skills are identified as lower than in other areas in early assessments. Staff are extremely caring and supportive, helping children to settle quickly. They work together well on enjoyable activities after listening carefully to instructions.
- Children make excellent progress in learning phonics (letters and their sounds), often using skills spontaneously to write a title for their work or accurately spell words when writing. The school's records show that children are making rapid progress in developing key skills in all areas of learning and their attainment is above average by the time they leave Reception.
- The excellent start children make to school is due to the high quality of teaching and the wide range of enjoyable and challenging activities planned for them. All show competent skills in writing and number awareness and work together well when cooking. Outdoor learning is outstanding. Children look forward to the weekly sessions in the 'forest school' and 'muddy kitchen'. The favourable staff ratio allows children to be independent and take risks such as climbing trees, whittling sticks or getting very muddy.
- Most pupils make excellent progress in Key Stages 1 and 2 because teaching is often outstanding. Attainment has been significantly above average at the end of each key stage for the past four years with all typically achieving expected levels and a much higher proportion than nationally achieving the higher levels of attainment.
- Standards continue to rise and this year almost half of pupils in Year 6 have taken Level 6 tests in mathematics in the national assessments and a third in reading and writing. This is well in advance of their age. However, some middle-ability pupils do not make the same exceptional progress as the others because learning in all parts of lessons is sometimes not tailored closely enough to suit them.
- Attainment and progress in reading and writing is high because teachers have high expectations of most pupils and plan interesting tasks to inspire and motivate them. Pupils in Years 5 and 6, for example, created creatures from ancient Egyptian myths and planned stories about them with the intention of making an animated film. Pupils made good use of modern technology to research information about Aztecs, or compare diet between Nigeria and the United Kingdom.
- Pupils are making excellent progress in mathematics. Most tasks are challenging and linked to everyday problems that give purpose to pupils' work. Calculating the area or perimeter of irregular shapes fully engaged Year 4 and 5 pupils. They are constantly challenged to 'convince a partner' ensuring that they understand new learning.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make rapid progress in mathematics and in English. They benefit from the outstanding teaching and the expertise of some highly skilled teaching assistants who work closely with individuals or small groups in lessons.
- The school uses the small amount of additional funding well to provide individual help for the few pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, and school records show that this helps to improve their attainment in English and mathematics. Too few pupils were known to be eligible for free school meals in 2012 to comment on their attainment in national tests without

identifying them.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Almost all teachers demonstrated outstanding teaching in the lessons observed. Teaching is typically never less than good reflecting the experience and commitment of teachers to see that pupils of all ages and abilities in the mixed-age classes do as well as they can. Common features include imaginative, effective planning which provides tasks that will engage, interest and motivate pupils. Pupils imagined that they were one of King Henry's archers, for example and wrote their diary before a battle.
- In Reception, outstanding teaching was observed indoors and out both by the teacher and by the higher-level teaching assistant. Children thoroughly enjoyed their activities in the 'muddy kitchen'. All crossed the school field singing happily, 'There's a worm at the bottom of the garden' and one girl had to tell everyone that she had found a spider!
- Teachers make frequent and accurate checks on pupils' rates of progress in English and mathematics, so any pupils who are falling behind are quickly identified and supported. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make rapid progress because their individual learning needs are recognised in teachers' lesson planning. Working in mixed-ability groups means that they learn from others and make the same exceptional progress.
- Marking is thorough and usually gives pupils clear guidance on how to improve punctuation and the content of their written work. However, there was little evidence of pupils being given the time to respond to the evaluative comments and learning from the guidance teachers gave on how to improve their work.
- Reading is taught well throughout the school with pupils of all ages employing their phonic knowledge to read and spell words correctly. Parents have had guidance from school about promoting the love of reading and play their part in helping to raise standards by listening to their children read often.
- In a very few lessons, teachers spend too long talking to all of the class in lesson introductions. Less able pupils are supported well by teaching assistants and the more able are able to concentrate and listen attentively. However, some middle-ability pupils lose their concentration in these sessions. When winding up a lesson, teachers do not always make sure that the recap is relevant for all. This limits the progress that some make.
- In lessons, there is usually a quiet, industrious atmosphere and pupils work together well. They help one another by sharing ideas and information and constantly trying to do their best.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Behaviour in lessons is exemplary and contributes extremely strongly to pupils' excellent progress. A Year 6 pupil explained 'positivity' saying that all are taught 'can do' and that 'can't do' is not allowed. All try to live up to the motto of, 'expanding our horizons with contagious enthusiasm'. All join in enthusiastically in the 'take ten' exercise session each morning, dancing to pop music.
- Pupils say that they feel safe and that 'everyone smiles all the time'. Staff provide a warm welcome for pupils attending the before- and after-school clubs. Behaviour is excellent and

pupils enjoy a wide range of well-planned activities.

- Pupils clearly enjoy coming to school. This is shown by their consistently above-average attendance over the past four years.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of different types of bullying, such as name-calling and misuse of mobile phones or emails. They say that bullying is not an issue in the school, a view backed up by school records, but know what to do if they should experience any form of bullying. They are confident that staff will help them.
- Staff manage behaviour consistently well and normally deal with any incidents of inappropriate behaviour immediately and effectively. In lessons observed during the inspection, there were no interruptions of any kind because of pupils' behaviour, indicating how keen pupils were to learn and make progress.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- 'Brilliant, absolutely brilliant!' was the consensus of parents about the new headteacher. The inspirational leadership and management are appreciated by staff and parents who agree that the school is going from strength to strength. 'Team Holywell' is so successful because all staff share the drive and enthusiasm of the headteacher to establish an outstanding school. All are highly motivated and their enthusiasm is contagious, giving the school an excellent reputation locally.
 - Senior staff are fully involved in evaluating teaching and checking on pupils' progress each half-term. This detailed analysis of pupils' progress has shown that some middle-ability pupils are not achieving as highly as other pupils.
 - Staff questionnaires show that all hold positive views. Professional development has a high profile, with many training events aimed at improving quality and standards.
 - The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage and provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are outstanding. Parents are pleased how well their children settle into the Reception class.
 - Leaders and the governing body make sure that progression through the pay scale is closely linked to teachers' performance in ensuring pupils' successful learning and progress. National 'Teachers' Standards' are used effectively in judging teaching quality.
 - A school strength is the way all pupils are treated equally by staff and reflects the school's strong principles on inclusion and equality, so that no one experiences discrimination.
 - The good range of after-school clubs for sport contributes well to pupils' achievement and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Religious studies, topics about Africa, Bhangra dance sessions and strong links with the church give pupils a good understanding of other cultures and faiths.
 - The local authority judges this is a continuously improving school because of the high quality of leadership and management and provides as much support as the school requests. Periodically, it checks the school's performance to make sure that it continues to improve.
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■ The many parents who responded to Parent View were all overwhelmingly positive about the school. They particularly appreciate the before- and after-school clubs and report how much their children enjoy them. Those spoken to during the inspection agree that their children enjoy school. 'They never want to miss' and 'can't wait to come to school' were some of the supportive views expressed by parents.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors visit the school regularly to find out for themselves how effectively the headteacher and staff are working. They know how well pupils' achievement compares to that of similar schools nationally. The governing body has a wide spread of expertise and governors are highly effective in helping the school to improve through their interest, support and by asking searching questions. Previous issues such as pupils' cultural knowledge and awareness have been improved and the school is moving towards international status with strong links with the Philippines and Sri Lanka. Each year the performance of the headteacher and all teachers is checked using information about pupils' progress and standards achieved. Governors know what the school is doing to reward good teaching and to tackle any underperformance. Governors are appropriately trained, with most having attended training sessions. Financial resources, including pupil-premium funding, are well managed. The governing body has a good knowledge of child protection and safeguarding matters and all current national requirements relating to safeguarding are met.
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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	110817
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	401157

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	175
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Barry Smethurst
Headteacher	Julie Branch
Date of previous school inspection	4 November 2009
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