

Halcon Community Primary School

Outer Circle, Taunton, Somerset TA1 2BU

Inspection dates	10–11 February 2016
Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Inadequate
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Inadequate
Early years provision	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Historic poor leadership and governance since the previous inspection has led to a deterioration in the quality of education and pupils' achievement across the school.
- Leaders have not tackled the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection.
- Poor teaching over time has resulted in pupils making inadequate progress in mathematics and writing, particularly the disadvantaged and most able.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is poor. Teachers plan lessons without taking into account pupils' prior knowledge and skills. Much of the work is too easy for some pupils and too hard for others.
- School leaders and governors do not have a clear picture of pupils' attainment and progress. They do not use additional funding effectively to help the most disadvantaged pupils achieve well.
- Teachers' expectations of pupils are too low and lessons do not challenge, interest or engage pupils well enough.
- Teachers' feedback to pupils does not identify precisely what they must do to improve.
- The curriculum does not prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain.
- Pupils rely too heavily on adult support in lessons. They show little resilience or determination when the teaching fails to inspire them.
- The early years provision is inadequate because the children do not make the progress of which they are capable, especially in mathematics and writing. Leadership is ineffective.
- Personal development, behaviour and welfare require improvement. Low-level disruption is prevalent in some lessons and not tackled consistently by all staff.
- In the past, governors have been ineffective in challenging school leaders; a culture of excuses and low expectation existed for too long. Consequently, pupils are poorly prepared for their next stage of education.

The school has the following strengths

- The newly appointed interim executive headteacher and interim executive board are aware of the school's weaknesses. They are working decisively to introduce systems to halt the decline and improve the standard of education.
- Attendance is improving. Pupils say that they feel safe and enjoy school. The emphasis on developing pupils' emotional well-being is strong.

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - systems to monitor pupils' attainment and progress are effective and performance information is used to improve pupils' achievement
 - the interim executive board provides robust challenge and support to leaders to accelerate the rate of improvement, particularly in writing and mathematics
 - a package of support is put in place so all teachers and teaching assistants receive high-quality training and guidance, especially in mathematics and writing, to improve teaching and learning particularly for the most-able and disadvantaged pupils
 - the curriculum strengthens the quality of pupils' cultural and spiritual experiences so that they are better prepared for life in modern Britain
 - information on the school's website is up to date and meets statutory requirements.

- Ensure the quality of teaching, learning and assessment secures good and better rates of progress for all pupils by teachers:
 - planning lessons based on accurate assessment information about pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding and using the information gained to ensure that gaps in learning are eradicated quickly
 - raising expectations of what all groups of pupils can achieve, particularly in writing and mathematics, so that pupils are consistently challenged to make the progress of which they are capable
 - increasing their subject knowledge so that they can plan the next steps in pupils' learning effectively, especially for the disadvantaged and the most-able pupils
 - providing feedback that makes clear to pupils what they are learning and what they must do to improve further.

- Raise standards of behaviour by ensuring that:
 - all staff follow the agreed behaviour policy so that there is a more consistent approach to managing behaviour
 - all adults have high expectations of pupils' behaviour in the classroom
 - low-level disruptive behaviour in lessons is eliminated.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how to improve this aspect of leadership and management.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is inadequate

- Since the previous inspection, most aspects of the school's work have deteriorated. Poor leadership has resulted in a decline in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Leaders' efforts to improve pupils' achievement have been ineffective.
- Senior leaders and governors have not addressed the weaknesses identified at the time of the previous inspection. For example, they have not remedied weaknesses in the middle leadership.
- A history of significant staff turbulence, combined with low staff expectations and aspirations for pupils, has contributed to a steady decline in the standards that pupils achieve. The leadership of teaching is inadequate and reflects the widespread failure of the school's leadership to improve the quality of education provided since the previous inspection. Training and professional development have not improved teaching quality or accelerated pupils' learning.
- The performance management of teachers is weak. Until recently, senior leaders have not held teachers to account sufficiently for pupils' progress and achievement. The interim executive headteacher, new to post in February 2016, has been quick to implement personal performance targets for teachers to improve teaching quality.
- Senior leaders have not supported middle leaders effectively, despite this being an area to improve at the previous inspection. Middle leaders have not had opportunities to develop and improve the subjects for which they have responsibility or to check on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school.
- The school has not used the additional pupil premium and sports funding it receives effectively to raise standards. Senior leaders and governors do not know the impact that the funding is having. Therefore, they do not know if pupil premium funding is closing the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers. Similarly, they are unaware of the impact of sports funding in improving pupils' participation in physical education and sports.
- The curriculum is disorganised. Leaders have not planned for the implementation of the new National Curriculum well enough. Teachers have had insufficient training to enable them to teach effectively and to design and implement a broad and balanced curriculum incorporating a wide range of subjects. Pupils' basic skills in writing and mathematics are weak, particularly pupils' reasoning skills, punctuation and grammar. The ad-hoc and piecemeal approach to learning, and curriculum design, means that pupils are not acquiring the basic skills that they need to do well, especially the disadvantaged and the most able.
- The tracking of pupils' attainment and progress is not good enough. Historically, teachers' assessments of pupils' learning have not been accurate. This has led to an overinflated view of pupils' achievements. Leaders have frequently changed the way they track pupils' performance. This has led to confusion among teachers. The limited information that the school holds about what pupils know, understand and can do has not been well used to help teachers plan suitable learning activities or to ensure pupils make good gains in their learning in lessons and over time.
- Pupils' behaviour has declined since the previous inspection. Pupils show little enthusiasm for learning. Where low-level disruption exists, it slows pupils' progress. Teaching assistants sometimes give pupils too much help, and as a result they do not think for themselves. Their support is not having sufficient impact on pupils' achievements.
- The school does not prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain. Leaders have made little effort to develop pupils' understanding of British values, such as democracy and the rule of law. Leaders do not promote pupils' spiritual or cultural development well enough. Pupils do not have a good understanding of the threats posed by radicalisation and extremist behaviour.
- A significant proportion of pupils take part in a range of after-school activities including football, cricket and singing. These help develop pupils' physical, musical and emotional well-being effectively.
- The local authority did not intervene quickly enough following a decline in the school's performance. More recently, the local authority has secured a new interim executive headteacher and interim executive board, who have started to take firm and decisive actions.
- The interim executive headteacher has identified some key priorities to tackle the school's numerous weaknesses. She is offering clear direction and is beginning to restore the confidence of adults to drive forward the necessary improvement. Staff were keen to tell the inspectors how 'there has been considerable improvement and guidance for all staff since her arrival'. Also supported by the deputy headteacher, staff are committed to making improvements. However, it is too early to judge the impact of recent actions.

■ The governance of the school

- Governance is inadequate because it has been ineffective for a long time. Since the previous inspection, governors have failed to challenge the school or hold leaders to account for the decline in pupils' achievement. They have not verified the accuracy of information provided by the headteacher, or checked the quality of provision for themselves.
 - Governors have not ensured that the school meets its statutory responsibilities, such as setting and reviewing the performance management for all teaching staff, and they have not ensured that the school's website contains all the information that it should.
 - Governors have not compared the school's performance to schools nationally. They have accepted a culture of low aspiration and complacency and, as a result, they have contributed to the school's inadequate leadership.
 - In January 2016, the governing body was replaced by an interim executive board at the formal request of the local authority. The school's interim executive board is highly experienced and has a strong record of securing improvement.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective because school staff know, understand and follow the procedures for keeping pupils safe from harm. The assistant designated safeguarding leader has worked with teachers to ensure that the school's most vulnerable pupils and parents get the support that they need. The school attends weekly meetings of 'Halcon One Team' agencies, such as police, health and housing groups, to be able to support families in the community appropriately. The majority of parents who spoke to inspectors report that their children are safe at school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inadequate

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has declined since the previous inspection. This is a result of inadequate leadership of teaching. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low. Leaders have not maintained up-to-date assessment information, or used it properly to ensure work suitably matches pupils' capabilities and their specific needs. Consequently, most pupils underachieve, particularly those who are disadvantaged and the most-able pupils.
- Leaders have not focused on improving the quality of teaching, so the subject knowledge of some teachers and some teaching assistants is weak. As a result, teaching is insufficiently challenging, resulting in too many pupils making inadequate progress rather than good or better progress. Until recently, support for newly qualified teachers was not good enough at the start of their teaching careers. The interim executive headteacher has worked quickly to create a programme of training in collaboration with The Redstart Learning Partnership. This is offering much-needed support and guidance to all staff, including those who are newly qualified.
- Teaching activities do not always engage or inspire pupils to learn. This results in some pupils showing little or no interest in their work. When work is interesting, pupils are attentive and demonstrate a desire to learn, as observed during a toys workshop for Key Stage 1 pupils. However, this is not typical practice, as the teaching and curriculum lack challenge, interest and stimulation for too many pupils.
- The quality of support and guidance for disadvantaged pupils varies greatly. Too many teaching assistants lack confidence and the necessary skills to teach concepts securely and to meet pupils' specific needs. Consequently, disadvantaged pupils do not make the progress that they should in English and mathematics. Systems for teaching assistants to provide feedback to teachers about pupils' progress are fragmented. This is another result of poor leadership and training for school staff.
- Arrangements to assess pupils' progress are ineffective. The tracking system to measure pupils' progress has changed three times this academic year. Teachers have not received training in using data on progress and lack confidence in assessing gaps in pupils' learning accurately. They do not use the information gained from assessment to inform their teaching. This is a major reason why some work is too hard or is too easy for pupils. The interim executive headteacher has evaluated the current systems and started to prioritise a programme of training for all teachers. She knows that a more effective tracking system is required to determine pupils' attainment and progress over time.
- In pupils' books, feedback from adults is having little impact on their progress because it does not provide sufficient guidance to help pupils to improve their work. In some cases, pupils are unable to read or understand teachers' comments. This limits their progress.
- The teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) receives greater importance. For example, phonics is now taught daily in Reception and Key Stage 1. However, teachers do not check

pupils' progress regularly enough, and so do not challenge pupils to apply the sounds they have taught them when they are reading and writing. As a result, not enough pupils reach the expected standard.

- The teaching of reading is not consistent across the school. The pace in some lessons is too quick to ensure pupils have a secure grasp of how well they are achieving. In some classes, weaker readers do not read frequently enough to adults. Consequently, those who are behind in their reading do not catch up quickly enough.
- Across the school, the teaching of mathematics is weak; in particular, pupils' reasoning and problem-solving skills are not sufficiently developed. The school has not kept up to date with national priorities, such as 'mastery of mathematics', which means pupils are not regularly challenged to apply and deepen their learning through investigations or problem solving. This is especially the case for the most-able pupils.
- The development of pupils' writing skills over time has been ineffective. For example, pupils in Key Stage 1 often lack the opportunities to think and write for themselves. In Key Stage 2, many pupils lack basic skills in English grammar and punctuation. Too often teachers' feedback does not challenge pupils to think deeply or creatively about how they can improve what they write.
- Positive relationships exist between staff and pupils. Adults take great care to support the emotional needs of all pupils.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development requires improvement.
- On many occasions, pupils rely too heavily on the teachers and teaching assistants to tell them what to do. Pupils are not routinely encouraged to think for themselves, for example about what to do if they have finished a piece of work or if they are stuck with their learning. Too few pupils display positive learning behaviours, such as perseverance and resilience, in order to produce their best work.
- Pupils feel safe at school due to well-understood safeguarding procedures. Pupils say that bullying is rare and that adults deal with any incidents effectively. Pupils are knowledgeable about the dangers associated with the internet and the potential risks from social media, such as giving out personal information. However, leaders are not proactive in developing pupils' awareness of the risks of radicalisation.
- The school council is not well developed. Older pupils told an inspector that 'a long time ago we used to meet and discuss improvements but that hasn't happened for ages'. Consequently, pupils have not had enough opportunities to improve their school or to learn about British values, such as democracy.
- Vulnerable pupils are well cared for in 'nurture groups'. A dedicated space and regular sessions provide a safe haven for pupils to explore their personal, social and emotional needs. Staff work closely with vulnerable pupils and families to ensure that they receive the right type of support in a timely fashion.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Pupils do not settle into learning quickly. Some adults do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve in lessons. Low-level disruption is common in some lessons, especially where the activities are not challenging enough. The school's behaviour policy is not applied consistently and does not have a positive impact on pupils' attitudes to learning.
- Most pupils are courteous and respectful to each other and adults. Pupils hold doors for adults and show good manners in the dining hall. However, a minority of pupils are too boisterous when moving around the school.
- The attendance of pupils has improved since the previous inspection and the number of pupils who are persistently absent has reduced. This is due largely to the work of the school's attendance officer and her strong commitment to improving both attendance and punctuality.
- School records show that there has been a reduction in the number of incidents relating to poor behaviour. Most parents who spoke to inspectors believe that the school makes sure pupils behave well. However, almost half of the staff who responded to the online survey disagree that the school leaders support staff well to manage pupils' behaviour.

Outcomes for pupils

are inadequate

- School leaders do not have accurate or robust information about pupils' performance. Since the previous inspection, standards at the end of Key Stage 1 and 2 have fallen sharply. The proportion of pupils achieving age-related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics was very low in both 2014 and 2015, when compared to the national figures.
- Although published data indicate that pupils make good progress in writing from their starting points, observations of learning, work in books and discussions with leaders confirm that pupils are not making sufficient progress and that the school's assessment information is unreliable and not valid.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is weak; it contributes to gaps in pupils' learning. This reflects the poor quality of teaching and narrow breadth of the curriculum, which over time have not secured good achievement for most pupils.
- The proportion of children at the end of Reception who achieve a good level of development has been close to or above the national average since 2014. However, scrutiny of these pupils' achievement in Year 1 and Year 2 indicates a legacy of inaccurate and overinflated teacher assessment, particularly in writing. Overall, pupils in Years 1 and 2 have not made sufficient progress in reading, writing and mathematics since the end of the Reception Year.
- Due to narrow assessment procedures, teachers do not know enough about pupils' progress in subjects other than English and mathematics. For example, pupils' achievement in humanities is weak as no system is in place to measure pupils' progress in history or geography. In most lessons, pupils with special educational needs and/or disability are withdrawn from their classes and taught by teaching assistants, which is not consistently effective. Consequently, results from tests and assessments show that not enough of these pupils made the progress expected of them.
- Teachers do not give the most-able pupils work that challenges their thinking or deepens their learning. In 2015, at the end of Years 2 and 6, no pupils reached the highest National Curriculum levels of attainment in the combined subjects of reading, writing and mathematics. The proportions making better than expected progress at the end of Year 6 remain well below the national average.
- Learning gaps between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils are not closing quickly enough. Work in pupils' books over time is not sufficiently challenging because it does not match individual pupils' abilities closely enough.
- In the Year 1 phonics check, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard is below the national average. Most pupils who do not reach the standard in Year 1 do not catch up quickly enough in Year 2 because leaders do not always share assessment information with teachers to enable them to rectify gaps in pupils' phonics learning.

Early years provision

is inadequate

- Leadership of early years provision is not good enough. The training and development of staff in the Reception class is weak. As a result, not enough staff have the knowledge or expertise to support all aspects of children's learning.
- Adults' expectations of what children can achieve are not high enough. Children do not make the rapid progress that they are capable of because some of the teaching and activities are insufficiently challenging or have no clear learning focus. Children often flit from one activity to another, not sustaining concentration. Too many children lack appropriate levels of independence and rely too heavily on adult guidance and supervision to complete their work.
- Assessment procedures are not sufficiently robust. The systems for assessing and tracking children's progress are not good enough, especially for the large number of disadvantaged children. Children's learning journals, which record their achievements, show weak progress, particularly in mathematics and writing.
- The teaching of phonics is regular, but not sufficiently challenging. Consequently, too few children demonstrate good early reading and writing skills.
- Collaboration between the school and parents is not strong enough. Parents are not fully involved in their children's learning and do not regularly contribute to their child's learning journal.
- The indoor and outdoor areas are attractively organised for imaginative play. For example, children were keen to keep warm in the outside shelter and cook tea on the fire. Indoors, an 'emergency centre' helps children learn about people who help us. However, adults do not model how to use these areas

effectively, so children are quick to lose focus.

- Teachers are beginning to provide effective learning activities. For example, following a visit by the fire brigade, children made models of fire engines as part of a homework project. However, many of the daily activities do not motivate, engage or enable children to think critically.
- Children's personal development is supported well in the Reception class. Children are friendly and polite. They respond well to instructions from adults when moving around the classroom and cooperate well with each other. They are well looked after and safety is given a high priority.
- Children make less than expected progress in reading, writing and numbers, so they are not fully prepared for starting Year 1.

School details

Unique reference number	123707
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	10008190

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	151
Appropriate authority	Interim executive board
Chair	Guy Adams
Headteacher	Vanessa Coles
Telephone number	01823 337051
Website	www.halconcommunityprimary.co.uk
Email address	office@halcon.somerset.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	8–9 January 2014

Information about this school

- Halcon Community Primary School is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- There have been significant recent changes to the staffing and leadership of the school.
- The substantive headteacher has been absent since October 2015.
- An interim executive headteacher took up post two days before the start of the inspection, following a short period of providing part-time support as a national leader of education.
- In November 2015, the local authority served a warning notice to the school following concerns about the quality of leadership and governance. In January 2016, an interim executive board replaced the governing body.
- The school receives support from staff within The Redstart Learning Partnership, a multi-academy trust comprising three primary schools in South Somerset.
- Many of the teachers are new to the school or recently qualified.
- Most pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is higher than that found nationally. The pupil premium is additional funding for disadvantaged pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and for children looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or a disability is above the national average.
- The school met the current government floor standards in 2015, which set the minimum expectations for Year 6 pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- Children in the Reception class attend full time.
- There is a before-school breakfast club which is run by the school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in 14 lessons or parts of lessons, five of which were observed jointly with the interim executive headteacher.
- Discussions took place with the interim executive headteacher, deputy headteacher, teachers, support staff, pupils, members of the interim executive board, and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors scrutinised a number of documents, including minutes from governors' meetings, school improvement plans and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.
- Work in pupils' books was examined. Inspectors listened to what pupils had to say about their learning.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils from across the school. They observed pupils' behaviour at breaktimes, lunchtimes, in the breakfast club and around the school. An inspector listened to pupils read.
- Inspectors conducted a learning walk, looking at the curriculum provision and the promotion of British values.
- There were too few responses to the online questionnaire for parents (Parent View) to provide evidence for the inspection. However, inspectors spoke with parents at the beginning of the school day and took account of the school's most recent in-house questionnaire to parents.
- Questionnaire responses from 13 members of staff were also analysed.

Inspection team

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