

Hallcroft Infant and Nursery School

Whitaker Close, Retford DN22 7QH

Inspection dates	7–8 June 2016
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The strong and unwavering leadership of the headteacher has ensured that standards across the school have risen significantly since the previous inspection.
- The senior leaders have high expectations of themselves, staff and pupils.
- The governing body has an accurate view of the school and has the confidence and skill to support and challenge senior leaders effectively.
- The pupils enjoy their learning and make good progress because lessons are exciting. The teachers use questions to challenge pupils' thinking and to check their understanding.
- The staff ensure that all pupils have the opportunity to experience a broad range of artistic, sporting and community-based activities. As a result, pupils develop a pride in their own talents as well as a sense of responsibility and understanding of the needs of others.
- The pupils reach standards that are in line with, or better than, those achieved nationally by the end of key stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics. The teaching of mathematics has improved significantly since the previous inspection and is now a strength of the school.
- Reading is taught well across the school. As a result, the pupils display a love of books and thoroughly enjoy their reading.
- The pupils are polite and caring towards one another. Typically, they behave well in class, at playtimes and as they move around the school.
- Pupils feel happy and safe in school because the staff ensure that everyone is well cared for and that safeguarding procedures are followed.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The governing body and leaders do not communicate the school's policy for the management of pupils' behaviour effectively. Consequently, a significant minority of parents are not clear about the school's agreed approach to dealing with instances of poor behaviour.
- Leaders do not ensure that all support staff receive the training needed to consistently extend pupils' learning and check their understanding. As a result, the quality of questioning and support from some adults does not always help the pupils make the progress of which they are capable.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that leaders communicate with parents more effectively about the school's policy and practice in managing pupils' behaviour and the agreed systems for dealing with any instances of bullying.
- Raise the achievement of pupils further by ensuring that all support staff receive the training needed to extend pupils' learning and to challenge their thinking.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher has successfully led the school from strength to strength since the last inspection. She sets a tone of warmth and ambition throughout the school and models the highest levels of expectation and care for all her pupils, families and staff.
- She has gained the respect of not only the staff, pupils and parents in her own school but also from colleagues in the local authority and staff in the other schools with which Hallcroft School works closely. As a result, the reputation of the school in the local community has risen and staff and pupils are clearly proud to be part of the Hallcroft team.
- The appointment of the current deputy headteacher has strengthened the senior leadership of the school. She is quietly determined that every pupil in the school has the opportunity to reach their full potential. She unfailingly models exceptional practice and this has been central to the improvements in teaching, learning and assessment which have taken place since the last inspection.
- The headteacher and governors have ensured that systems for managing the performance of teachers are rigorous. Teachers are held to account and supported through both the formal systems of observation and review by the headteacher, but increasingly so through more frequent opportunities to work alongside the subject leaders and the deputy headteacher. Consequently, the quality of teachers' work, although not yet typically outstanding, is consistently good.
- The senior leaders have worked hard to improve the leadership skills of others in the school. The subject leader for mathematics is confident and knowledgeable about her subject. She has worked in a successful partnership with leaders in other local schools to develop a whole-school approach to calculation. Consequently, the teaching of mathematics is improving and attainment in mathematics for the current Year 2 pupils is above what is expected for their age. This work also ensures that there is a consistency of approach across all the schools in the local area. Staff say that this is helpful to pupils when they move on from Hallcroft Nursery and Infant School.
- The headteacher is passionate that all pupils at the school receive the richest possible range of learning experiences during their time at the school. The curriculum is broad, balanced and exciting, and the pupils enjoy a particularly impressive range of musical and artistic experiences during their time at Hallcroft. For example, the school has recently held its own arts festival and frequently invites theatre groups into school.
- The school provides clear and accurate information on the school's website about the current themes and activities in which pupils are involved. Parents say this helps them support their children's learning.
- Many of the activities which take place in the school support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. There is a strong culture of mutual care and respect throughout the school, of valuing difference and of the importance of listening to the views of others. This promotes an age-appropriate understanding of British values.
- Senior leaders ensure that pupil premium funding is used effectively. As a result, disadvantaged pupils make particularly strong progress. Staff plan exciting ways to increase the confidence of these pupils and ensure that additional activities are focused very sharply on their individual learning needs. Leaders regularly check these pupils' learning so that plans can be changed if specific activities are not quickly enough helping the pupils make the progress required.
- The school makes effective use of the physical education (PE) and sport premium. PE is used to promote confidence and skill in a wide range of different sports and the headteacher is adamant that it also helps pupils 'walk a little taller in everything they do'.
- The senior leaders have not ensured that teaching assistants have received appropriate training to allow them to challenge and support pupils effectively. Where the work of adults is strongest, they help the pupils stay focused on their learning and make progress. Where support is weaker, adults do not correct pupils' misconceptions in their learning or extend their thinking or language skills.

■ The governance of the school

- The governing body is determined and focused in its work to improve the quality of teaching at the school and to continue to raise the achievements of all pupils. The governors say they are able to hold senior leaders to account because of the information which they receive and, most importantly, that they now understand what they are being told and know 'what questions we need to ask'. As a result, governors are aware of the progress of different groups of pupils in the school, and are proud to talk about the impact which the improved outdoor-learning environment in the early years classes is having on the progress of boys.
 - Several members of the governing body have been in post for a number of years and know the school and local community extremely well. They are proud of the improvements which have been made since the previous inspection and have ensured that the school's plans for improvement are effective. The plans are detailed, ambitious and set realistic time frames in which the actions required will be carried out and checked.
 - The governors have not ensured that senior leaders have provided parents with clear enough information about the school's agreed approach to the management of pupils' behaviour. Consequently, although it is clear that incidents of serious misconduct by pupils are rare, a significant minority of parents say that they are not sure about what the school does to deal with any instances of bullying.
 - The governors ensure that the school's finances are in good order and that the agreed processes are rigorously followed for the management of teachers' performance and the recruitment of staff.
 - The governors are deeply committed to the notion of lifelong learning and have high expectations of themselves as well as the pupils and staff. They are eager to refresh their knowledge and acquire new skills. They regularly attend training opportunities provided by the local authority and as a result, have an up-to-date understanding of their roles and responsibilities.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The governors and senior leaders are extremely vigilant in the way that they check all aspects of health and safety. The governor with responsibility for safeguarding meets with the headteacher regularly to discuss current safeguarding practice in school. As a result, he is confident that staff training is up to date and that any concerns about the well-being and safety of children or adults are dealt with effectively. The staff have a clear understanding of the agreed protocols for safeguarding and are clear about how to report any concern which they may have. There is a strong culture in the school which recognises the importance of listening to one another and this helps to keep pupils safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The pupils enjoy their time at school because teachers make learning fun. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and plan and prepare resources and questions which the pupils' imagination and interest. As a result, pupils work hard because for the large majority of the time, they tremendously enjoy their learning.
- The teachers have systems in place to track pupils' progress effectively and know each pupil in their class extremely well. As a result, teachers know what they need to teach next and plan their lessons accordingly.
- The teaching of communication and language is a strength of the school. From the Nursery class through to Year 2, teachers ensure that pupils listen carefully to one another in class and acquire the vocabulary needed to explain their ideas and to ask their own questions.
- The teachers use questions very skilfully to find out what pupils already know and to challenge their ideas. Pupils of all abilities are thinking more for themselves in all aspects of their school work. Teachers also say that this is particularly helping pupils to be more confident in explaining their reasoning in mathematical tasks and problem-solving activities.
- The pupils enjoy finding out about a wide range of topics and teachers carefully plan opportunities for pupils to transfer the skills they have learnt in one subject to other areas of their work. For example, Year 1 pupils were able to record their findings from a science-based walk, 'looking for signs of summer' accurately and neatly, and to carefully analyse their findings, because of the skills they had acquired in English and mathematics.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good or better throughout the school. However, it is not yet consistently outstanding because there are too many occasions when support staff do not effectively extend the learning of the pupils they are working with. On these occasions pupils' progress is slowed.

- When teaching is strongest, all staff have equally high expectations, pupils make accelerated progress and show a genuine excitement in their learning. In a Year 1 lesson, pupils did a 'silent cheer' because they had successfully completed their phonics work and were about to have a go at writing their own sentences.
- The teachers model a love of learning and this encourages pupils to be inquisitive and excited about their work. The school's heightened focus on posing challenging questions to all pupils is particularly helping to stretch the most able pupils.
- Pupils are not afraid to make mistakes because teachers have established a 'can do' attitude in their classes. Pupils know that their ideas will be listened to and valued. Pupils of all ages are supported to find out information for themselves. Examples of this include a boy in the Nursery class explaining that 'We can Google to find out where the dragon fruit comes from' and a Year 2 pupil telling the inspector what he had learned about wild animals from the books in the school library.
- A love of reading and books is evident across the school. The teachers and teaching assistants in each class ensure that pupils take part in a range of different types of reading experiences each day. These include opportunities for pupils to read by themselves, to read to adults and to be read to. Since the previous inspection, the library has been reorganised and improved. It is now an inviting and comfortable place in which pupils enjoy reading an impressive range of stories and poems, and factual books associated with an impressive range of historical, scientific, artistic and geographical topics.
- Pupils of all ages are keen to say how much they enjoy their homework. Parents praise this particular aspect of the school's work and give examples of how it is helping them to be more involved in their children's learning. Parents are also complimentary about how the school supports them to help their children with their reading. One father told the inspector that, as the result of attending an information session at the school, he now knows that 'I need to talk about the pictures and to ask questions about the story to make sure that she understands what she is reading – I didn't know this before.'

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. The pupils are self-confident and happy because they feel well cared for and valued by the adults in school.
- Staff teach pupils the importance of eating healthy foods. The pupils are eager to explain what they are allowed to have in their lunch boxes and which foods they should not have because they would be too sugary and bad for their teeth.
- The school's breakfast club provides those who attend with a warm and sociable start to their school day. It is also used as an opportunity for pupils to enjoy reading to adults in a relaxed and cosy environment.
- The parents value greatly the family feeling that all staff in the school have created. The parents say that staff are always available to talk to, and particularly value the high level of care which they feel their children receive. The parents also appreciate the way in which the headteacher greets everyone on the playground at the start of each school day.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school and talk confidently about what they should do if they hurt themselves or are upset in any way. Teachers provide messages for pupils about how to stay safe when they are using their computers online. However, some pupils are not clear about what they should do in these situations because the adults have not checked the pupils' understanding fully.
- The leaders and teachers grasp every opportunity to develop pupils' understanding of fairness and of having a voice. Pupils were involved recently in a project with Retford town council where they were asked to vote to choose the type and design of a splash pool, which is to be built in one of the town's parks. The pupils are also encouraged in their classes to express their ideas, and often vote on which story they would like to have or which activity should take place.
- Leaders have high expectations of what they want pupils to experience during their time at Hallcroft and have developed the '50 things to do before you leave Hallcroft' certificates. These are given to each pupil and include such things as, 'know about the different religions in the world', 'hatch a chick' and 'make a sculpture'.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good and instances of poor behaviour are rare.
- Pupils are typically extremely polite and well behaved. In one class, a Year 1 pupil told the inspector, 'You are in my chair but that's ok. I'll go and fetch you one.'
- The pupils display positive attitudes to their work because they find it interesting and they know that the adults in school take a genuine interest in their achievements. Pupils' work in their books is usually tidy and carefully presented. Teachers take great care to present work and lessons in very creative and attractive ways, and this reinforces the standards which they expect from the pupils.
- The pupils are sometimes too talkative during whole-school activities when the adults do not capture their attention effectively and the pupils are not stimulated sufficiently. However, when teaching is effective, pupils sit sensibly and listen carefully.
- The majority of parents are confident that the school manages pupils' behaviour effectively. However, leaders have not communicated the school's approach to the management of pupils' behaviour effectively enough with parents. Consequently, the school has not secured the confidence of a significant minority of parents about how leaders deal with the relatively few instances of poor behaviour which occur.
- The attendance of pupils is good and is above the national average. Leaders are passionate about the importance of all children and pupils attending Nursery and school regularly, and communicate this effectively to parents through their policy very clearly set out in the school's 'Attend to achieve' document.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- The achievement of pupils at Hallcroft has risen steadily over the past three years. In 2015, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected level of attainment in English and mathematics by the end of key stage 1 was above the national average. The work in pupils' books currently suggests that attainment is rising still further. This is the result of higher expectations of teachers and a more consistent approach to the teaching of communication skills and mathematics across the school.
- The pupils in Year 2 are currently making good or better progress in reading and writing, and even better progress in mathematics.
- The leaders are confident that the pupils' accelerated progress in mathematics is due to the skilled way in which teachers now pose questions to pupils, and the more consistent way in which mathematics is taught across the school. The pupils are now more able to give clear reasons for their answers and to solve problems effectively.
- Children make good progress from their starting points in the Nursery class to the end of the Reception Year and pupils' progress accelerates even more during their time in key stage 1. As a result, the gaps which children often show in their reading skills at age four have typically closed by the time they leave the infant school.
- In 2015, the proportion of children reaching the expected levels in their learning by the end of Reception was just below the national average. However, these outcomes demonstrated good or better progress from the children's individual starting points. The school's information for this year indicates that children are achieving in line with that expected nationally overall, and are doing particularly well in their communication and personal and social skills.
- The disadvantaged pupils in the school make good progress because leaders use pupil premium funding effectively. The leaders closely track what difference specific activities are making to the progress of individual pupils. In 2015, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils achieving above expected levels by the end of key stage 1 was higher than the national average in reading and writing.
- The most able pupils make good progress because they are taught well and teachers have increasingly high expectations of what they should achieve.
- The very large majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, feel that their children make good progress during their time at the school and particularly praise the quality of the teaching of reading.
- In the 2015 phonics screening check for pupils in Year 1, the proportion of pupils who achieved the expected level was above the national average for all groups of pupils, including those who were eligible for the pupil premium. The boys at Hallcroft did better than boys nationally but not as well as the girls in their school. This year pupils have done even better and the boys have done as well as the girls.

The early years provision

is good

- The leader for the early years is a skilled teacher and has a sound understanding of the foundation stage curriculum. She ensures that all children experience a rich diet of exciting play and investigative experiences covering all the different areas of learning. She helps the children develop the skills needed to think for themselves and make links in their learning. For example, during an activity in which the children were exploring different types of fruit, a boy pointed out a hole in a pineapple. He then remembered that they had recently looked at a banana that was in his words 'decaying', and made the link that this was the same process.
- The children have daily opportunities to explore a wide range of books and stories. As a result, by the end of the Reception Year, they talk confidently about their favourite authors, are well on the road to becoming confident readers and are beginning to write their own stories.
- The children make good progress during their time in the early years. Teachers track the progress of all the children very carefully and identify targets for each child to ensure that they make the best possible progress.
- The teachers in the early years plan activities and specific questions which stimulate children's interest and which also require the children to think for themselves, to make predictions and to persist with an activity.
- The provision is not currently outstanding because leaders do not ensure that all the adults who are supporting the children have the training needed to challenge and extend children's learning effectively.
- The governors and leaders have worked successfully since the previous inspection to improve the quality of the outdoor-learning environment. This area now provides a range of exciting activities to promote children's development. It has been particularly successful in providing boys with the challenges and stimulation they need to develop their physical and social and emotional skills, as well as those in communication, numeracy and literacy. As a result, the gaps which existed between boys' and girls' achievements in learning in 2015 have now closed.
- The children are well prepared for their time in key stage 1 because they become confident and determined learners during their time in the early years. The leaders also ensure that there is a consistency in the way that lessons are planned in the early years and Year 1, and this contributes to the accelerated progress that pupils make as they move through the school.

School details

Unique reference number	122556
Local authority	Nottinghamshire
Inspection number	10009086

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	136
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Adele Mumby
Headteacher	Jo Cook
Telephone number	01777 702728
Website	hallcroft.schooljotter2.com
Email address	head@hallcroft.notts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	11 March 2014

Information about this school

- Hallcroft Infant and Nursery School is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Children in the early years are taught in two classes. Nursery children attend on a part-time basis and Reception children attend full time.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for the pupil premium is smaller than the national average. This funding provides support for pupils who are eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage and there are very small numbers from other backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is much smaller than the national average.
- The school works in partnership with the Elizabethan collaboration of schools, which comprises one secondary school and 10 primary schools. It also works closely with six primary schools as part of the Adastra Primary Partnership.
- The school provides a breakfast club each day.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed lessons in every class in the school and carried out one observation with the headteacher. She also heard pupils read, looked at work in books and observed pupils during playtimes and in their school assembly.
- The inspector held meetings with leaders, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector looked at the responses to Parent View, spoke with some parents at the start of the school day and took account of the school's own surveys.
- The inspector looked at a range of documentation, including the school improvement plan, safeguarding information, minutes of the governing body meetings and pupils' progress data.

Inspection team

Clare Cossor, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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