

# Holmer CofE Academy

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	137731
<b>Local authority</b>	N/A
<b>Inspection number</b>	388269
<b>Inspection dates</b>	11–12 January 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Mark Mumby HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Academy
<b>School category</b>	Non-maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	305
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Colin Bramble
<b>Headteacher</b>	Judith Cecil
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	N/A
<b>School address</b>	Holmer Road Hereford HR4 9RX
<b>Telephone number</b>	01432 273301
<b>Fax number</b>	01432 342614
<b>Email address</b>	admin@holmer.hereford.sch.uk

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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
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<b>Inspection number</b>	388269



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## Introduction

Inspection team

Mark Mumby

Her Majesty's Inspector

Kathryn Raftery

Additional inspector

John Croghan

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classes in the academy, including lessons taught by specialist teachers. Eighteen lessons were observed; two of these observations were joint observations with the headteacher. Inspectors spoke informally with pupils in lessons and at break times. They observed the teaching of reading and listened to some pupils reading, including some who speak English as an additional language. Inspectors met with members of staff and three members of the governing body. They took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the academy's work, and looked at some of the academy's documentation including that relating to pupils' learning, behaviour, safeguarding and self-evaluation. They considered the responses to questionnaires from pupils, staff and 119 parents and carers.

## Information about the school

Holmer CofE Primary School converted to become an academy in December 2011. The academy is larger than the average primary school. Virtually all of the pupils are from White British backgrounds and few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than the national average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average, although there are fewer pupils receiving additional external support or with a statement of special educational needs than found nationally. Holmer Primary School exceeded the government's floor standards for attainment in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6 in 2011, although not enough pupils made the expected progress during Key Stage 2 to meet the standard for progress.

Holmer CofE Primary School attained Eco-School Status, Healthy School Status and Fair Trade Status. In July 2011, it was awarded a silver award in the Heart of England in Bloom, school grounds competition.

The academy operates its own breakfast club which was included as part of this inspection. A nursery and after-school care provision operate privately on the academy site and were not included in this inspection.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>3</b>

## Key findings

- This is a satisfactory academy. Children enter the Reception classes with skills and knowledge in line with expectations for their age. They enjoy their activities and make good progress in their learning and development. The progress pupils make throughout the remainder of the academy is satisfactory and they attain standards in line with expectations by the time they leave.
- Teaching is good in Reception and is satisfactory in the remainder of the academy. There are examples of good and outstanding practice enabling pupils to make more rapid progress on occasions. However, not enough teaching is consistently good or better to enable pupils to attain standards above the national average by the time they leave. This is because teachers do not use assessment sharply enough to challenge pupils enough to reach their potential.
- Most pupils behave well in and out of lessons. The academy manages any inappropriate behaviour effectively. Consequently, pupils feel very happy and safe in school. After a recent dip in attendance, the academy has implemented successful strategies to address this, and attendance figures have risen to be in line with the national average. However, there are still a few pupils who miss out on their education because they take holidays during term time. The academy is also taking action to address the late arrival of a few pupils.
- The senior leaders have a clear vision for improvement and provide good support to the teaching staff. They have a good understanding of the needs of the pupils and have provided appropriate learning opportunities to engage all groups of pupils in their education. The governing body is supportive, but it is insufficiently rigorous in its role of holding the academy to account for its work.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Ensure that all pupils make good or better progress so that attainment is above the national average by the end of Year 6 by:
  - ensuring that all lessons have a clear learning objective which is understood by the pupils
  - making good use of assessment to plan learning activities which challenge all pupils to reach their potential
  - assessing learning effectively during lessons to move pupils on in their learning as soon as they are ready
  - providing clear developmental guidance for pupils through marking and target setting so that they know how to improve their work.
  
- Improve the effectiveness of the governing body by ensuring that it:
  - holds the academy to account for its work through a rigorous level of challenge
  - takes an active role in planning school improvement
  - takes a rigorous approach to evaluating the effectiveness of school improvement work.
  
- Work with parents and carers to improve punctuality and attendance by:
  - reducing the number of holidays taken by pupils during term time
  - ensuring pupils are consistently punctual.

## Main report

### Achievement of pupils

Children get a good start in the Early years Foundation Stage. They enjoy their activities because they are planned well to meet their needs and interests. Consequently they make good progress in their learning and development. They feel secure with the adults who work with them and also work well on activities initiated by themselves. On a few occasions, children are not able to extend their independence fully as they cannot always access resources because they are out of reach. The development of children's early reading skills is a particular strength. Children that were heard reading demonstrated good strategies and a high level of enjoyment.

Attainment is broadly average. Pupils make satisfactory progress from Year 1 to Year 6. They attain standards in reading, writing and mathematics in line with the national average by the end of Year 2. Standards in English and mathematics are in line with the national average at the end of Year 6. More pupils than average attained the higher Level 5 in national tests in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6 in 2011. The progress made by lower ability pupils is slower than that made by those of higher ability. Although pupils with special educational needs perform less well than all pupils nationally, the academy is successfully narrowing the gap between these pupils and all pupils. Pupils who speak English as an additional language are provided

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with good support. They develop good reading strategies and are able to decode text effectively.

Although pupils enjoy their lessons, they are not always clear about what they are supposed to be learning or what they need to do to improve. This prevents them from making better than satisfactory progress over time. On occasions, pupils make more rapid progress. For example, they made outstanding progress in a mathematics lesson in Year 3 because they were very clear about what they were learning and the level of challenge was high. Consequently, pupils were enthused and focused, and enjoyed their learning. Parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire were overwhelmingly positive about the progress their children are making.

The presentation of pupils' work is inconsistent. Most of the older pupils set their work out neatly, using correctly formed handwriting. However, younger pupils do not demonstrate the same pride in their presentation. Work in their books does not show a consistent approach to handwriting. There are also occasional lapses for older pupils when they do not draw tables or diagrams carefully, using a ruler when appropriate.

### **Quality of teaching**

Consistently good teaching provides children with a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. In the remainder of the academy, teaching is variable, but not enough of it is better than satisfactory to enable pupils to make good progress. Parents and carers are very positive about the quality of teaching in the academy.

The very best teaching is carefully planned to meet the pupils' needs well. For example, outstanding teaching was observed in a Year 3 mathematics lesson which had a clear learning objective that was fully understood by the pupils. This kept them focused throughout the lesson while the teacher used assessment very effectively to check pupils' understanding before moving learning on. Information and communication technology (ICT) was used well to enhance the learning, contributing to high levels of enjoyment. In a Year 5 writing lesson pupils made good progress as a result of high expectations and clear modelling of writing by the teacher. Pupils used their imagination well as they empathised with a character as they developed their writing skills.

Teaching is no better than satisfactory in the majority of lessons because the learning intentions are not clear and pupils do not have a good enough understanding about what they are supposed to be learning to support good progress. In these lessons, teachers frequently do not use assessment well enough to match learning activities to pupils' individual needs or do not monitor their learning accurately during the lesson. Consequently, the work is occasionally too easy and repetitive such as laboriously completing a long series of questions in a textbook, or the tasks simply lack challenge to enable the pupils to make more rapid progress.

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When teaching is most effective, pupils understand what they are learning about and what they need to do to improve. An effective target setting system has been implemented in mathematics. No such system exists in English. Consequently pupils are not always clear about what they need to focus on. The quality of marking is variable. At its best it provides pupils with helpful guidance or questions to enable them to improve their work. However, this good practice is not consistent throughout the academy.

Teaching provides good opportunities for pupils to work together. On these occasions they demonstrate good skills of cooperation and support for one another. For example, when asked to evaluate each other's work they make critical, yet supportive, comments. They have good opportunities to explore their creativity and to use their imagination, for example when empathising with a character during a writing lesson.

The academy has successfully planned a curriculum which engages pupils in their learning well. Teachers use ICT effectively to provide opportunities for pupils to extend their learning. For example, they make good use of video conferencing to enhance teaching, such as through a link with a school in France which enables pupils to practise their French as well as develop their cultural understanding. The science curriculum provides good opportunities for pupils to develop their independence, work collaboratively and hone their investigative skills.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Pupils, parents and carers all feel that behaviour is good in the academy. Pupils said in their questionnaires and in discussion that it is better in lessons than at break times. They say that pupils get on well with each other most of the time, although a very few pupils expressed concern about isolated incidents of poor behaviour. Nevertheless, they say that adults deal with behaviour issues effectively. The academy's behaviour records support this view, with clear evidence that the academy has managed issues of inappropriate behaviour well. Consequently, the academy provides a calm and safe environment for learning where pupils are considerate, respectful and courteous to others.

A very small minority of parents and carers responding to the inspection questionnaire expressed concerns about bullying in the academy. Inspectors investigated this issue in depth and concluded that incidences of bullying are rare. The tiny minority of pupils who sometimes behave inappropriately are being managed very well by the academy with good support from outside agencies as necessary.

The academy has acted effectively to address the recent dip in attendance. Work with pupils, parents and carers has been successful in raising attendance levels to be in line with the national average. The very large majority of pupils are punctual and attend well. However, there remain a very few pupils who do not consistently arrive at the academy on time or who miss out on too much learning because they take

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holidays during term time.

The breakfast club provides a safe and welcoming start to the day for the pupils who attend. They socialise well together and treat adults and other pupils with courtesy and respect.

## **Leadership and management**

The headteacher and deputy headteacher have a clear vision for the development of the academy. In particular they have instigated initiatives to provide a curriculum which enables all pupils to learn and develop. They have planned activities to target the needs of particular groups of pupils. For example, Forest School is used as an effective strategy to improve speaking and listening skills, cooperation, concentration and to build self-esteem for pupils throughout the academy. Older girls, who have been reluctant to participate in competitive activities, have been enthused by specially planned opportunities such as African drumming, dance and taking on responsibilities such as being mathematics ambassadors. Cultural development is enhanced through effective partnership links, such as working with a Sikh visitor to enrich learning about other faiths. Year 5 pupils talked enthusiastically about this experience.

Leaders track the learning of all pupils rigorously. As a result, any underperformance is identified quickly and appropriate intervention strategies are put in place swiftly. Consequently, all groups of pupils are given an equal chance of success. The academy is successfully narrowing the gap between the attainment of pupils with special educational needs and other pupils.

Since the previous inspection, the academy has identified weaknesses in mathematics and implemented effective strategies to remedy them. Staff speak highly of the quality of the training and support they have received through this initiative. The effect can be seen as attainment in mathematics is beginning to rise. The school's track record in improving outcomes for pupils demonstrates that the school has the ability to continue to improve.

The governing body receives accurate and detailed information about the work of the academy through reports from the headteacher. However, governors, although supportive, do not challenge the academy by asking searching questions. The governing body does not play a significant enough role in the development of the academy, for example in the preparation of the improvement plan or in evaluating the effectiveness of development work.

Arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils are rigorous. Procedures for staff recruitment and the maintaining of accurate records are well organised. Procedures for fire safety and visits out of the academy are robust.



## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



13 January 2012

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Holmer CofE Academy, Hereford, HR4 9RX**

Thank you for making my colleagues and me so welcome when we visited your academy this week. We enjoyed talking with you and observing your lessons.

Your academy is satisfactory. Although you get off to a good start in Reception, you do not learn quite as quickly in Years 1 to 6. This is because it is not always absolutely clear what you are learning about in each lesson and, sometimes, the work is too easy or too hard. This isn't always the case and you sometimes make faster progress. For example, one of my colleagues visited a mathematics lesson in Year 3 where you made excellent progress because it was very clear what you were learning, the activities were challenging and you obviously enjoyed your learning. We have asked your teachers to make sure that more of your lessons are as good as this.

You told us that behaviour is mostly good in your academy and that you feel safe. You are absolutely right and this is because the teachers care for you well and sort out any behaviour which isn't good enough quickly. However, a few of you miss out on your learning because you go on holiday during term time. A few of you are also late to school on occasions. Please try to get to school on time every day and encourage your parents and carers not to take you on holiday during term time. Surely you don't want to miss out on all of the exciting activities and get behind in your learning.

Your headteacher and her staff are doing lots of good things to make your academy even better. The governors encourage them with this, but I have asked them to challenge the academy's leaders more so that it gets even better more quickly.

With very best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mark Mumby  
Her Majesty's Inspector

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