

Hollins Green St Helen's CofE (Aided) Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111364
Local authority	Warrington
Inspection number	378290
Inspection dates	12–13 March 2012
Lead inspector	Jennifer Platt

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	119
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Edward Alan Domville
Headteacher	Christine Gail Smith
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2006
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Introduction

Inspection team

Jennifer Platt

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector visited nine lessons and parts of lessons taught by five teachers and led by teaching assistants. Pupils from Years 2 and 6 read to the inspector. A meeting was held with pupils and this, plus informal chats at playtimes, obtained their views of the school. Pupils' work was scrutinised with a close analysis of writing in Years 2 and 6. Meetings were held with members of the governing body and senior leaders. Informal discussions were held with parents and carers as they came to school with their children. The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school improvement plan, records on safeguarding, attendance, behaviour and pupils' progress data. It was not possible to take account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection as insufficient responses have been registered. The inspector examined questionnaire responses from pupils and staff as well as 50 completed by parents and carers.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average-sized primary school. Most of the pupils are taught in mixed-age classes. The Early Years Foundation Stage includes a few Year 1 pupils. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The great majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is slightly above average. The school meets the current government floor standard for pupils' progress and attainment. The headteacher has been in post for two years. The school holds several national awards including the Eco bronze award and the International School Award foundation level, and has achieved Healthy School status.

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

Overall Effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- This is a good school. It is not yet outstanding because: in Key Stage 1 more-able pupils do not make enough progress in writing; handwriting is not always neat; and teaching is not yet outstanding.
- Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 is well-above average and is especially high in mathematics. Pupils' writing is extremely imaginative although not always presented neatly. Achievement is good, but stronger in Key Stage 2. Attainment is more variable at the end of Key Stage 1 but has risen to above average in reading and mathematics. It is average in writing because more-able pupils do not always make enough progress. Progress is good in the Early Years Foundation Stage, although writing is a weaker area of learning.
- Teaching is good with many strengths and only a few weaknesses. A common effective feature is the variety of activities that make learning enjoyable. Pace is often brisk but occasionally pupils sit listening for too long. The challenge in writing is not always sufficiently high in Key Stage 1. Teaching is effective in the Early Years Foundation Stage, although at times the purpose of the activity is unclear and an adult is not readily available to interact with the children and extend learning.
- Parents and carers appreciate the ways the school keeps their children safe. Behaviour overall is good. Pupils leave Year 6 as responsible young adults.
- The school is effectively led. The headteacher and deputy headteacher form a strong team and changes put in place are moving the school forward at a brisker pace. Performance is managed well through robust tracking and staff are held accountable for the progress of pupils in their class. Monitoring of teaching is conducted solely by the headteacher and not yet fully effective in ensuring teaching is consistently good and better.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in writing by:
 - applying the school's handwriting policy across the school
 - improving pupils' ability to structure sentences in Key Stage 1
 - ensuring that more-able pupils always make enough progress in Key Stage 1.

- Raise the quality of teaching from good to outstanding by:
 - increasing the pace and challenge in lessons
 - ensuring that in the Early Years Foundation Stage the learning outcomes are always clear and staff are readily available to promote learning especially in writing
 - extending the monitoring of teaching to gain as wider view as possible of how to make teaching better.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

In lessons learning is good. In the Early Years Foundation Stage children enjoy learning through activity and fun. They made good progress learning numbers using games and the computer. Their pace of learning slows when they are unclear about what is expected of them. Letters and sounds are introduced well. Children are starting to blend their sounds together with more evidence of improvement in reading than in writing. In lessons in Key Stages 1 and 2, learning is most effective when pupils are active. In drama in Year 6, music set the scene for pupils who quickly took on the roles of the witches in Macbeth showing a good understanding of the plot. When too much time is allocated to inactivity and listening, pupils' learning and performance slows. For example, in Key Stage 1 when a session on letters and sounds precedes a literacy lesson, pupils quickly lose interest.

The vast majority of parents and carers agree with the inspector that progress is good. Attainment overall is well-above average. Achievement is good and stronger in Key Stage 2. From starting school with broadly typical skills for their age children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress overall. They often reach and exceed the level expected by the time they enter Year 1. Writing is not always as high as other areas of learning. Attainment is rising in Key Stage 1 as a result of closer tracking and targeted interventions. In Year 2, attainment in mathematics and reading is above average and progress is good. Progress in writing is satisfactory and attainment is average in this area. Although pupils use their knowledge of letters and sounds to spell new words, they are not writing imaginatively or constructing sentences with sufficient care. More-able pupils do not always make enough progress. This is not the case in Key Stage 2 where the results of national tests at the end of Year 6 are impressive, especially in mathematics. Reading in Year 6 is well-above average. A much higher than usual number of pupils reach the higher Level 5 in reading and mathematics and this has currently extended to their performance in writing.

Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress. Several of these pupils have difficulty in sustaining concentration and good behaviour. Although it occasionally takes time for these pupils to settle, the majority eventually learn effectively in lessons. Given the small number of pupils in the school, there is no sustained evidence of difference between the progress of other groups of pupils, including boys and girls.

Quality of teaching

The vast majority of parents and carers agree with inspectors that teaching is good. Pupils cited enjoyable lessons as their favourite feature of the school. Social skills are promoted well through good relationships and pupils have confidence in their teachers. They try hard and there is always a good show of hands to answer questions. Management is positive and firm, although on occasions more needs to be done to ensure that pupils do not respond to the inappropriate behaviour of a very small minority. Support for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is often effective when led by teaching assistants in small groups.

Close links across subjects add purpose to learning. Pupils' work improves when a theme runs for a while, enabling them to become immersed in the topic. For example, pupils in Year 2 produced better quality writing in their booklets on Jack and the Beanstalk, although many still lack confidence in structuring their work. Expectations are high at the end of Key Stage 2. In Year 6, the teacher insists on accurate terminology and the consistent application of previous knowledge. As a result, their descriptive writing about the witches in Macbeth included impressive description and accurate use of similes and metaphors. The expectation of presentation is not always as high and handwriting is often not neat enough. Challenge in lessons is more variable in Key Stage 1, especially for more-able pupils in writing. The pace is not always sufficiently brisk to sustain interest. Although teaching is effective overall in the Early Years Foundation Stage, there are relative weaknesses that restrict learning. Adult support is not always effectively deployed to ensure children understand what is expected of them and to interact and extend their skills.

Spirituality is promoted well in lessons by the creation of excitement, as seen in science when pupils saw the bulb light as they completed a circuit. Teachers use the curriculum effectively to extend basic skills in other subjects. Although good use is made of computers in the suite, the lack of resources in class leads to some chances to extend skills being missed.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

This is a welcoming school. Pupils have firm friendships and enjoy school. Older pupils organise daily sporting activities for the younger ones. It is a delight to see the relationships established at this time. A few parents, carers and pupils expressed concern about the behaviour of a few affecting learning. This is in the minority and staff are reducing this to the minimum. Overall behaviour is good and records indicate this is usually the case. In the daily act of worship behaviour is excellent and reflects the school's value statement 'In His footsteps let us shine'. Pupils appreciate

time to reflect and enjoy singing. The new approach to earning Praise Points is having a positive effect on pupils' self-discipline.

Almost all parents, carers and pupils who returned the questionnaire said the school offers a secure environment. Pupils say they feel safe. They understand about different types of bullying but feel this is rare in their school and is mainly name-calling which is dealt with effectively by staff. As one pupil put it, 'We are all friendly and if we fall out, next day we are friends again.' In response to concerns raised by parents and carers, the school targeted successfully the safe use of the internet, including an awareness-raising evening for parents and carers. Records indicate there are no racist incidents. Attendance is average and rising. With small numbers absence by one pupil due to ill health leads to data not presenting a true picture. The vast majority attend regularly and arrive punctually.

Leadership and management

During her two years, the headteacher has shown great determination to bring practice more in line with current expectations. Positive behaviour and mutual respect have been a focus. New procedures ensure all pupils feel valued, with rewards at a weekly 'shining star' presentation. Academic progress is tracked closely. Interventions are targeted accurately to those most needing support. Data indicate the success of these procedures. Teaching is monitored regularly. As yet, this role is not shared among the senior management team to gain a broad picture of teaching and some relative shortcomings require attention to make teaching even better. Senior leaders do not ensure policies, for example, on handwriting, are being effectively interpreted in practice. Nevertheless, monitoring has effectively led to improvement through staff professional development. Success is clear in the improvement in writing at the end of Key Stage 2. Although the school improvement plan is a lengthy document, which makes it difficult to locate the school's major priorities, it does show a school that clearly understands its strengths and areas to develop. Although there remains work to be done, the school has extended the high attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 with a marked improvement in writing. Therefore, the capacity to improve is good.

The governing body is effective. It ensures the school is safe and procedures meet requirements. Governors have an informed picture of pupils' progress and work closely with leaders and managers to promote equality of opportunity effectively. Success is evident in Key Stage 2 but less so for the more-able in writing in Key Stage 1.

Strong leadership ensures the needs of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are fully met. The curriculum is carefully balanced. High quality art on display and opportunities for music and sport reflect the many experiences available. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is woven creatively through the curriculum. Pupils appreciate the world in which they live and recognise their role in helping others. Many charities have benefited from the hard work of pupils at this school. Pupils celebrate their own faith but also value opportunities to learn about other cultures and religions.

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).

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.
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.



14 March 2012

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Hollins Green St Helen's CofE (Aided) Primary School,
Warrington WA3 6JS**

Thank you so much for the warm welcome you gave me when I recently visited your school. I was very grateful for your friendly smiles and willingness to talk to me about your school.

You have every right to be proud of your school. It is a good school and you make good progress. Your attainment is high, especially in mathematics, by the time you leave school. As you told me, teaching is good and your lessons are often interesting and enable you to enjoy learning. I was pleased to hear you feel safe and know how to look after yourselves. Most of you behave well and support the few who sometimes have difficulty sustaining good behaviour for a length of time. You raise considerable amounts of money for charities. Congratulations! The headteacher, leaders and governing body manage your school well and it continues to improve. I think there are a few changes that the school can make to become even better and these are:

- making sure you all write as neatly as possible
- checking that in Years 1 and 2 your writing tasks are always set at the correct level for you and that you learn to write in sentences correctly, remembering your punctuation
- monitoring your lessons carefully to make sure they always go at a brisk pace and that in Reception enough help is available for all children.

It was a real pleasure to visit your school and the singing in your act of worship was the highlight of my days there. I have every confidence that you will make your school a happy place to learn. I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Jennifer Platt
Lead inspector

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