

Holmer Green Senior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110499
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	356759
Inspection dates	17–18 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Peter Limm HMI

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

Type of school	Modern (non-selective)
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	867
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	117
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Penny Todd
Headteacher	Mr Michael Jones
Date of previous school inspection	14 May 2008
School address	Parish Piece Holmer Green High Wycombe HP15 6SP
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Twenty four teachers were seen teaching 25 lessons. Inspectors held meetings with two parents, groups of students, members of the governing body, a representative from the local authority and staff. They observed the school's work, and looked at school improvement plans, policies, monitoring and self-evaluation records, and minutes of meetings of the governing body. Inspectors analysed 206 responses from parents and carers to the questionnaire and took into account the views of 150 students and 70 staff who responded to their respective questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The effectiveness of the sixth form.
- The achievement of different groups of students to see whether outcomes are as good as the school suggests.
- How well teaching contributes to students' learning and progress.

Information about the school

Holmer Green Senior School is a very popular smaller-than-average secondary modern school, with a small, but growing, sixth form. The number of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. The school is in a county where there is a selective authority and so the majority of very high-ability students attend grammar schools. The proportions of students from minority ethnic backgrounds, and who speak English as an additional language, are slightly lower than in most schools. The proportion of students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. These include students who have academic or social and emotional problems. The proportion of students with a statement of special educational needs is above average. The school has a Speech and Language Resource base designated by the local authority. The school gained specialist status in business and enterprise in 2006, and has held the Investors in People award since 2002. It was awarded Healthy School status in 2010.

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: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Holmer Green is a good school with many strengths. It justifiably sustains its good reputation in the local community. Attainment is broadly average and improving. All groups of students make good progress in their learning, and those with a statement of special educational needs make extremely good progress. As nationally, boys' performance lags behind that of girls', but not significantly so. The more able make good progress but are not always stretched fully enough in lessons. The rigour of monitoring and tracking students' progress is also good. Students develop into confident and articulate young people as a result of the many and varied opportunities provided within the curriculum. Students' behaviour is good. Instances of bullying and racist behaviour are few; students are clear that neither are tolerated and are confident that any incidents are dealt with swiftly and effectively. Relationships between the different groups of students are harmonious. Students' awareness of safety, and their understanding of how to live healthy lives, are both outstanding. They contribute extremely well to the school and wider community. They are happy at the school. They enjoy learning and respond enthusiastically to the good range of extra-curricular activities on offer. Most parents and carers are justifiably very positive about the school and many wrote glowing endorsements of the education it provides. The school provides a curriculum which meets the needs of its students well, although in the sixth form the school recognises the need to explore further, with its local partners, how best to broaden the courses offered to students. Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Teaching is predominantly good, and some is outstanding. However, teachers do not always use assessment information effectively to quicken the pace of learning in all subjects.

The headteacher has succeeded in communicating a clear and unequivocal vision for the continued improvement of the school and he enjoys the support of a committed leadership team in making this happen. The headteacher relates very well with all stakeholders and staff morale is high. The school is making good use of detailed data about its performance to inform self-evaluation, planning for improvement and the setting of challenging targets. The governing body is appropriately informed about the performance of the school and carries out its duties well. This is particularly the case in relation to safeguarding. Middle leaders have a good understanding of the strategic priorities and daily routines are effective and carried out efficiently. The school has made particularly effective use of its specialist status to improve the quality of its provision in business and enterprise subjects and raise attainment in these subjects. As a consequence, the development of students' work-related skills is good. Very good account is taken of the views of students and parents and carers when making decisions about changes and improvements to the school.

Leaders and managers know that, while progress in the sixth form for some students is good and sometimes outstanding, the vast majority of students continue to make

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satisfactory progress and attain broadly average results. Partnership working with local schools is improving, but has not been exploited well enough over recent years to maximise the curriculum offer made to students post-16. Sixth form provision and outcomes are thus satisfactory. The school works extremely well to keep parents and carers informed about developments. The school provides good value for money and demonstrates good capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure the effectiveness of the sixth form is improved by:
 - exploring further, in partnership with local schools, how best to improve attainment and curriculum provision.
- Ensure all teachers use assessment information consistently well across the school to increase the pace of students' learning and progress, especially that of the more able.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Students' attainment on entry is broadly average and, although attainment remains broadly average by the end of Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, this masks the improvements that have been made this year. There are clear signs of a rising trend of better results in key subjects, such as English and mathematics and those subjects related to the business and enterprise specialism. The school has accurately predicted the grades students attain in recent years and predictions for 2011 in the current Years 11 and Year 13 show that students are making better progress than their counterparts last year. All groups of students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make at least good progress. This good progress was also seen in the vast majority of lessons observed by inspectors.

Their good achievement enables students to enjoy their experiences at school. Students have very positive views of their school. Their behaviour and attendance are both good. High numbers are involved in extra-curricular activities that make a good contribution to their social and cultural development. The school places an equally strong emphasis on students' spiritual and moral development, to good effect. A large proportion of students are involved in charitable works, particularly in the sixth form, giving significant amounts of their time in community service. Sixth form students are frequently involved in coaching and mentoring students from lower age groups. Students readily adopt safe practices and healthy lifestyles and they also indicated that they felt very safe at school. Their improving levels of attainment, along with the excellent opportunities they have for work experience, mean they are prepared well for the future.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

In the majority of lessons, there is a range of interesting activities and purposeful questioning to challenge students and extend their thinking. Such lessons have a brisk pace, which encourages good behaviour and attitudes to learning. Even here, though, the more able are not always stretched fully. Assessment information is not used consistently well across the school to plan teaching at an appropriate level so that the pace of learning is sometimes slower than it could be. This is particularly the case in the few less successful lessons. Students think the marking of their work is regular and helpful but a review of students' work indicated that teachers' comments are not always clear enough to explain how weaknesses can be overcome.

The curriculum is well designed to ensure students are provided with a good level of academic challenge. There is a good range of subjects available at Key Stage 4, and in the sixth form the curriculum is enhanced by courses provided through partnership with local schools, though this is limited as yet. The curriculum includes a good range of activities that capture the interest of students, including work experience. A good programme of extra-curricular activities makes a significant contribution to students' enjoyment of the school and their achievement.

Support for the few students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is both sensitive and highly effective. Health and safety procedures are carried out regularly and all necessary child protection and safeguarding requirements are met well. Policies to

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ensure equal opportunities are in place. Students are given good support when they enter the school in Year 7, when they progress into the sixth form and when they subsequently move on to future education and employment. The school sets challenging targets and the tracking of students' progress has improved since the last inspection. Parents and carers are kept very well informed of students' progress and are involved promptly if there is any underachievement.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The senior leadership of the school has been successful in driving forward plans for school improvement, such as better monitoring of teaching and learning, together with raising attainment in some key subjects. The headteacher was appointed from within the school and he has successfully strengthened many good initiatives that had been introduced earlier, with a sustained focus on improving teaching and learning. This has helped students to make better progress. He has ensured that parents and carers are kept very well informed about developments. Middle managers play a vital and effective role in helping to ensure new procedures make a positive impact on students' learning and achievement. The school's self-evaluation processes are effective. Senior leaders monitor the work of the school carefully and are committed to improving school effectiveness. Departmental monitoring and review, led by senior staff, involve work sampling, staff interviews and lesson observations, and are effective in identifying further areas for improvement. The governing body provides a good balance of support and challenge for the school. It has successfully improved the school's safeguarding arrangements and ensures that the school promotes equality and tackles discrimination well. The school promotes community cohesion well. The school has used its specialist status very effectively to improve attainment in subjects related to business and enterprise and strengthen the school's curriculum provision. As a consequence of all these developments, the school provides good value for money.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

The sixth form accepts students with a wide range of ability and by the end of Year 13 attainment is broadly average. Most students make satisfactory progress in their learning, but an increasing minority make extremely good progress. The curriculum is adequate and is extended by the school working in partnership with other schools in the local area to allow students to choose from a wider range of courses to meet their needs. However, such links are limited at present. Teaching is satisfactory overall but some is outstanding where students are involved fully in lessons and stretched to produce good quality work. This high quality is not consistently evident in all lessons. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good and this helps to explain why there has been an improvement in attainment in some subjects this year. There are increasingly robust procedures in place to monitor the quality of teaching and learning and to track student progress. Systems for attendance are satisfactory. Students think they are consulted well and are regularly provided with systematic and well-informed guidance. They enjoy being in the sixth form and play a full part in the life of the school.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account: Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

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Views of parents and carers

The very large majority of parents and carers were very positive about the work of the school. They were particularly positive about how safe the school keeps their children and also about the good quality of teaching, leadership and management. A very small minority considered that the school did not do enough help their children to have a healthy lifestyle or deal effectively with poor behaviour. The inspectors discussed these aspects with the headteacher and judged that behaviour is good and that arrangements for enabling young people to live healthy lifestyles are extremely good.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Holmer Green Senior School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 206 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 867 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	84	41	110	53	11	5	1	0
The school keeps my child safe	83	40	120	58	3	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	76	37	120	58	5	2	3	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	75	36	114	55	13	6	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	70	34	128	62	7	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	53	26	132	64	13	6	1	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	40	19	139	67	20	10	2	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	68	33	118	57	10	5	1	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	69	33	125	61	8	4	1	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	63	31	119	58	17	8	4	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	38	18	125	61	14	7	5	2
The school is led and managed effectively	96	47	102	50	4	2	1	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	112	54	84	41	3	1	3	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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.



21 March 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Holmer Green Senior School, Holmer Green HP15 6SP

Thank you for talking to me and my colleagues and making us welcome when we visited your school recently. We spoke to you in lessons, around the school and in groups, looked at your work, read the results of questionnaires filled in by your parents/carers and spoke to some of your teachers. Here is a summary of our main findings, which I hope will be of interest to you.

Holmer Green is a good school. It is very popular with you and your parents and carers. You achieve well, attain expected results and make good progress. This is the result of the good, and often excellent, teaching you receive and your good behaviour. Outcomes in the sixth form are less good, but are satisfactory and improving. Your attendance is above average. You enjoy the range of extra-curricular activities on offer and these make a good contribution to your personal development. In particular, you feel extremely safe at school and have an excellent understanding about how to live healthy lifestyles. You contribute extremely well to the school and wider community. The school provides you with outstanding care, guidance and support.

The headteacher and the staff at the school know what needs to be done to make things even better. You are taught well, but some of you, and especially the more able, could be stretched further in lessons. We have asked the headteacher and staff to ensure that all of you are challenged appropriately in all lessons. The sixth form curriculum meets the needs of sixth form students adequately, but we have asked the headteacher to make sure that the school works with other local schools to broaden the curriculum choices for sixth formers in the future. Many of you already make an important contribution to the school and I am sure all of you will want to do everything you can to support the staff in making Holmer Green an even better school.

Yours sincerely

Peter Limm

Her Majesty's Inspector

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