

Holmwood School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110392
Local Authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	356730
Inspection dates	16–17 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Mike Capper

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	179
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rob Cottingham
Headteacher	Janet Newman
Date of previous school inspection	25 September 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 12 lessons taught by seven teachers. Meetings were held with parents and carers, members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at school documentation, including teachers' planning, assessment information, safeguarding policies and samples of pupils' work and the results of the school's recent pupil survey. Inspectors analysed 70 questionnaires from parents and carers and 15 from staff.

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

- The difference between the attainment of boys and girls.
- The impact of strategies to improve pupils' progress in mathematics.
- Pupils' understanding of how to stay healthy and their knowledge of how to improve their work.
- Pupils' attendance and how well it is being improved.

Information about the school

About a third of pupils come to this average-sized infant school from the local community, with the rest travelling from other parts of Milton Keynes. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. The majority of pupils are from White British families, but about one in five pupils speak English as an additional language. The main home languages for these pupils are Punjabi, Urdu and Tamil. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in two Reception classes. The school is part of a hard federation with another nearby infant school. The headteacher divides her time equally between the two schools. The school has several awards including Healthy School accreditation and a Basic Skills Quality Mark for its work in literacy and numeracy.

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

This is a good school where pupils flourish both socially and academically. The school has moved forward quickly since the last inspection because the headteacher's drive and ambitions are fully shared by all staff. Teamwork is strong and together members of staff have developed Holmwood into a school where pupils develop a love of learning and a deep appreciation of the wonders of the world around them.

Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and then build on this well in the rest of the school. Consequently, pupils' attainment rises to high levels by the end of Year 2. In the last year, the school has successfully closed the gap between boys' and girls' attainment. They have achieved this by taking greater account of the need to make activities even more interesting to boys and by linking subjects together so that learning is always purposeful.

There are many contributory factors to pupils' excellent achievement. Teaching and learning are good and there is a rich and vibrant curriculum. The school's excellent partnership with others, including the positive way that the two federated schools work together, also contributes enormously to its success, because good practise in teaching and leadership can be shared.

Pupils are a credit to the school. They behave well and develop an excellent awareness of the importance of staying healthy. They are very clear about the value of exercise and they diligently eat healthily, making comments such as, 'I eat fruit to help me concentrate.' Pupils' very good attitudes towards learning are supported by an innovative and exciting curriculum that promotes basic skills in literacy and numeracy very effectively. This is reflected in the school's well-deserved Basic Skills Quality Mark. The excellent Forest School supports learning very effectively, giving them many opportunities to develop basic skills in an exciting and motivating way.

Pupils take responsibility enthusiastically, helping them to make an excellent contribution to the school and wider community. Although pupils greatly enjoy school, rates of attendance are broadly average and despite the efforts of the school have remained stubbornly so for some time. While the school engages exceptionally well with the overwhelming majority of parents, a very small minority do not support the school well enough by ensuring the regular attendance of their children.

The school is successful because senior leaders and the governing body have created an ethos in which all pupils and staff are valued and respected. Leaders have good self-evaluation systems and there is a clear picture of priorities. This means that they have already identified and made a start to improving their assessment and systems for tracking pupils' progress. At the moment, they do not always give a clear enough picture

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of progress across the school, making it difficult for leaders to be certain whether apparent dips in progress are genuine or are merely due to overcautious assessments.

Leaders have significantly improved the curriculum since the last inspection, and have successfully tackled a minor dip in progress in mathematics in 2010 by ensuring that all groups are being fully challenged and supported. These significant successes demonstrate the school's good capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve attendance to above average levels by:
 - working with the very small minority of parents and carers who do not already do so to ensure that they understand fully the importance of their children's regular attendance at school
 - ensuring that good attendance has a higher profile in the school's work with pupils.
- Improve assessment and tracking systems to ensure that they are giving an accurate picture of pupils' progress over time.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

When they start school in the Reception classes, the majority of children are working at the levels expected for their age. Pupils' learning builds well on these starting points and their good behaviour and enthusiasm contribute well to their good and sometimes outstanding progress in lessons. In a Year 1 physical education lesson, pupils made very quick progress in learning throwing skills as they were given good opportunities to practise and improve. In a Year 1 science lesson, pupils learnt well because they were encouraged to think like scientists as they explored what plants need to grow. In Year 2 literacy, pupils quickly improved their skills because there was good challenge in the work which taught them to use 'wow' words to enliven their writing.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well, ensuring that they make the same good progress as others in lessons. Pupils who speak English as an additional language quickly improve their skills. In lessons, a sharp focus on teaching new vocabulary ensures that pupils understand fully what they are doing.

Pupils develop a very clear understanding of the difference between right and wrong and show good self-control nearly all of the time. In group activities in the 'Kaleidoscope Room' they happily share their feelings with each other, showing excellent respect for the views of others. Pupils greatly enjoy having a 'language of the month' and this contributes enormously to their cultural development. Pupils feel extremely safe at school. They are very confident that staff will deal with any worries as soon as they arise.

Although attendance is broadly average, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. They make good progress in developing and using basic skills and grow enormously in confidence and self-esteem.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	1
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	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

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?

Adults place pupils' well-being at the centre of their work and they willingly go the extra mile to make school a happy and safe place to be. Well-planned support outside lessons for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities or for those who speak English as an additional language has a good effect on learning. There are effective systems for promoting good behaviour and these are well understood by pupils. The school has been striving to improve attendance but with only limited effect and leaders know that this continues to be a priority for improvement, especially for the small number of pupils whose learning is affected by frequent absences or extended holidays. The school promotes good attendance by giving certificates to pupils in assembly at the end of each term. However, the need to improve it further does not have a high enough profile in the school's day-to-day work with pupils by, for example, celebrating the best-attending class of the week.

Teachers provide good challenge in lessons and make learning exciting. Skilled teaching assistants are deployed effectively and have a good impact on learning, working with different groups of pupils throughout the day. There is a good pace to learning most of the time, but occasionally pupils sit for too long at the start of lessons, limiting time for independent work. Pupils are given targets and most know their next steps in learning, although this is not yet consistently strong in all classes.

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The curriculum takes excellent account of pupils' interests and aptitudes. Teachers link subjects together very effectively and this helps to make learning very purposeful. There is a very imaginative range of activities outside lessons, with the Forest School providing pupils with many opportunities to learn through practical activities. High quality displays reflect the school's excellent work in fostering pupils' creativity.

Clubs and visits support pupils' personal development extremely well, as is demonstrated by the school's success in gaining Healthy School accreditation.

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	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

This is a school that is not resting on its laurels. Senior leaders are passionate about getting the best for the pupils and their excellent determination and drive for improvement are firmly embedded across the school. This has ensured that the school continues to move forward quickly. Senior leaders have worked with great determination to improve provision and there is a very good understanding of remaining priorities. The monitoring of teaching is mainly carried out by the senior leadership team. This has had a positive impact across the school, although some subject leaders do not get enough opportunities to visit lessons to help them contribute even more to the management of teaching and learning. The governing body provides good challenge to leaders and provides good quality support to the school.

The school promotes equality and tackles discrimination successfully. The school has a wealth of data, although this does not always give a clear enough picture of pupils' relative progress over time because some assessments are overcautious. There is no discrimination because pupils learn to respect different beliefs, reflecting the school's excellent contribution to community cohesion. Leaders are responsive to local needs and use partnerships extremely well to support pupils' learning and personal development and to achieve excellent value for money. Pupils are becoming very aware of their place in the world through purposeful links with a school in Swindon and fund raising for various national and global charities.

The school engages extremely well with parents and carers. They support the school extremely well through fund raising and by participating enthusiastically in community events such as the recent 'Book Day'. They are regularly consulted and are kept well informed about how they can help their children. This helps them to make a very positive contribution to their children's learning.

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The school has good safeguarding procedures. Pupils' safety is given a high priority and this is reflected in every aspect of school life.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
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	1
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	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

A parent summed up why provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is successful when writing, 'My child loves going to school every single day.' Children are taught well in the Reception Year and this means that they make good progress.

Consequently, their attainment improves to above-average levels by the start of Year 1. Adults give children sensitive support, taking good account of children's interests and their different starting points. There is a delightful atmosphere in lessons and children are very well cared for. Teachers plan work thoroughly and give children many opportunities to explore their own ideas and to choose for themselves where they are going to work. This means that children develop good independence and high levels of self-confidence. The teaching of reading and letter sounds is especially strong, and children make outstanding progress in this area of the curriculum. There is a very structured approach to teaching letter sounds and children respond very well to this, enthusiastically echoing the teachers' spelling and rapidly improving both their reading and spelling skills. There is a good pace to learning most of the time, but occasionally when children are working independently there are missed opportunities to move learning on more quickly. The Forest School significantly enhances provision. For example, children showed great enthusiasm and made good progress as they explored logs and other 'dark places' to hunt for bugs.

Leaders work very closely with parents and carers and activities such as the regular pre-school gym club ensure that children are well prepared for starting school. Leaders have a good picture of where further improvements are needed and they monitor children's progress carefully. Although the outdoor area is relatively small for the number of children,

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leaders compensate well for this by ensuring that adults make good use of the playground to give children opportunities to work on activities such as bike riding.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The overwhelming majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire are very pleased with every aspect of the school's work. The many positive comments included, 'Concerns are always dealt with quickly' and 'I could not have asked for a better school for my child.'

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

The inspection team received 70 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 179 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	56	80	13	19	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	56	80	14	20	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	54	77	15	21	1	1	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	51	73	17	24	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	57	81	12	17	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	56	80	12	17	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	52	74	18	26	0	0	0	0
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)	48	69	16	23	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	52	74	18	26	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	43	61	24	34	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	43	61	22	31	1	1	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	57	81	13	19	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	62	89	8	11	0	0	0	0

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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 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 2010/11 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.



18 May 2011

Dear Children

Inspection of Holmwood School, Milton Keynes, MK8 9AB

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. You were very polite and we enjoyed talking to you. We found that this is a good school where you do well.

Here are some of the things we found out about your school:

- You do well in the Reception classes. You are happy, make good progress and have smiling faces when you come to school!
- Good teaching means that you make good progress in the rest of the school and have developed excellent skills and knowledge by the end of Year 2.
- Your behaviour is good and you take responsibility very well.
- You know who to turn to if you have a worry and rightly feel that you are kept very safe.
- You have an excellent understanding of how to stay healthy. We thought the Forest School was super and you are very lucky to have it.
- All adults in school are very kind and caring and they give good help when you have problems with your work.
- The headteacher, teachers and governors are leading the school well and they know what still needs improving.

This is what we have asked your school to do now:

- Try to make sure that all pupils attend school as regularly as possible.
- Make sure that the school is measuring and recording your progress accurately so that they know how well you are doing.

We wish you all well for the future. You can help your teachers by continuing to work hard all of the time.

Yours sincerely

Mike Capper

Lead inspector

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