

The Holbeach St Mark's Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	120549
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	380057
Inspection dates	17–18 May 2012
Lead inspector	Sarah Warboys

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	33
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Charles Worth
Headteacher	Karyn Wiles
Date of previous school inspection	09 July 2008
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Introduction

Inspection team

Sarah Warboys

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector observed seven lessons taught by four teachers. Meetings were held with parents and carers, senior leaders, staff and the Chair of the Governing Body. The inspector observed the school's work, talked to different groups of pupils and listened to them read. The school's safeguarding policies, improvement plans, samples of pupils' work, minutes of governing body meetings and records of pupils' progress were scrutinised. The inspector analysed the questionnaire responses from 29 parents and carers, 19 pupils and 10 staff.

Information about the school

Holbeach St Mark's Church of England Primary School is much smaller than most schools in the primary sector. It is part of a federation and shares various aspects of its work in partnership with another small village school. It has entered into collaboration with a third school. The proportion of pupils supported by school action plus is well below the national average. These pupils predominantly experience moderate learning difficulties. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is higher than that normally found. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly average. Most pupils are White British. Well below average proportions of pupils come from minority ethnic heritages and none speak English as an additional language. The number of pupils in each year group varies significantly. They are currently taught in three mixed-age classes. The number of pupils joining and leaving the school at different times during the year is well above that normally found. The school meets the current government floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

There is an Early Years provision on site that is in the process of being registered.

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	1
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school. It is not outstanding because the quality of teaching is not contributing to outstanding achievement for all groups of pupils. It is well led and managed by one headteacher over a federation of two schools. Most pupils, staff, parents and carers are positive about the shared federation because it extends pupils' experiences into the wider community.
- Behaviour and safety are outstanding. Pupils' conduct in lessons and around the school is exemplary and makes a strong contribution to learning and to their personal development. Their consistently polite and thoughtful behaviour means that lessons proceed without interruption. Pupils are enthusiastic learners and are extremely keen to come to school. Consequently, attendance is above average.
- Pupils' achievement, including that of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, is good. Attainment is above average in reading and mathematics but it is average in writing because teaching independent writing skills is not fully embedded. Most pupils make good progress, whatever their starting points, because extremely small class groups enable teachers to personalise learning on an individual basis.
- The quality of teaching is good. Positive relationships between staff and pupils support learning well. In most lessons, teachers' high expectations and imaginative teaching strategies ensure that all pupils, whatever their age or ability level are fully engaged. Occasionally, not all pupils are as actively involved as they might be.
- Leadership and management are good. They are not outstanding because the leadership of teaching and the management of performance are not yet leading to sustained and above average levels of achievement in writing. The headteacher and governing body, predominantly through the work of the federation, have empowered leaders at all levels to develop their leadership

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skills and as a result, the school has a good capacity to secure further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By July 2013, raise pupils' attainment in writing so that it is more aligned with above average standards in reading and mathematics by:
 - building on recent successful initiatives that enable pupils to apply their writing skills in other subjects
 - embedding good practice in guiding pupils' independent writing.
- Improve the quality of teaching to outstanding by:
 - extending pupils' active participation to all lessons
 - enabling teachers to share the very best practice that exists in the school, the federation of schools and beyond.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are broadly typical for their age, learn alongside Year 1 pupils and make good progress in their Reception year. They enjoy learning together and demonstrate high levels of interest and enthusiasm. Adults provide good role models and support all pupils effectively so that they are well-equipped with essential reading, writing and mathematical skills. In the Reception and Year 1 class, for example, vocabulary choices were broadened considerably through creative drama and role-play. This helped them to acquire and use a wide range of imaginative and descriptive language in their own writing.

Standards of reading at the end of Key Stage 1 are broadly average. By the time pupils leave the school in Year 6, they have made good progress so that they are the equivalent of two terms ahead of the national average. This is because younger pupils are systematically taught phonics (the links between letters and the sounds they make) and because the specific teaching of reading skills continues throughout the school, with good support from parents and carers. The attainment of pupils currently in the school varies significantly. This is due to the extremely small year groups and to an above average proportion of pupils arriving and leaving the school at different points in the school year. Although most pupils reach above average standards in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6, attainment in writing is not as high as it is in reading and mathematics and is broadly average. Recent initiatives to promote and guide independent writing, similar to those that are currently boosting standards in reading, are not as fully embedded in classroom practice.

The vast majority of parents and carers say that their children's learning is

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progressing well. One parent wrote, 'I could not wish for a better school'. The inspector found that most pupils, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, make good progress because of consistently good teaching. Those new to the school are welcomed and settle in quickly. Teachers personalise learning so that individuals receive targeted support and this is having a significant impact on pupils' attitudes, behaviour and levels of confidence. Consequently, all pupil groups are well prepared for their next key stage.

In lessons, all pupils show extremely positive attitudes to learning and their progress accelerates when they are actively involved. In a Year 2 and 3 lesson for example, creative teaching strategies and the use of information and communication technology helped pupils to use persuasive language effectively to present a convincing case for the inclusion of a new sport in the Olympic games. Similarly, in a Year 4, 5 and 6 lesson pupils worked exceptionally well together to identify the features of a descriptive text, share their ideas and write their own prose.

Quality of teaching

Most parents and carers who completed the questionnaire, are confident that their children are taught well and that the school is meeting their needs. Inspection evidence confirms that the quality of teaching is consistently good and promoting learning well in lessons for all groups of pupils.

In the very best lessons, good relationships and teachers' secure subject knowledge support learning. Staff have high expectations and are skilled in asking pupils searching questions to assess their understanding and adjust tasks accordingly. Teachers use assessment information well to plan appropriate learning activities for the wide range of ability that exists in the mixed-age groups. In a Year 4, 5 and 6 lesson, for example, the teacher presented three numbers to the group and posed the question, 'Which is the odd one out?' As there was a wide range of possibilities, all pupils were able to contribute to the discussion at their own level. In other lessons, pupils spend too long listening to explanations from adults and are not as actively involved as they could be.

Support for all pupil groups, including for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, is highly personalised and tailored to their specific needs. Pupils appreciate this and say that they get 'lots of teacher-time' which helps them to learn well. Teachers' marking of pupils' work makes a strong contribution to their good progress. It consistently provides clear indications about what pupils have done well and what they can do to improve. Pupils reflect on their own learning, act upon the advice given and teachers regularly follow this up. Their clear enjoyment and curiosity about the world around them and their willingness to work collaboratively on a variety of projects are making good contributions to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This is helping them to develop key skills they will need for future life. Recent curriculum developments have increased the number of opportunities for pupils to apply their basic skills while learning about other subjects. Early indications are that this is having a positive impact on pupils' progress, but has

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not yet had an impact on standards, particularly in writing.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Underpinning the work of the school is the extremely strong sense of community and ethos of mutual respect. A particular strength is the way in which all pupils care about each other. Older pupils willingly look after the younger ones in whole school activities such as collective worship. Such strong relationships are helping pupils of all ages to develop into extremely responsible young people who are increasingly taking ownership of their own actions. Through highly effective personal, social and health education, pupils have an extremely well developed knowledge and understanding of how to keep themselves safe. As a result of partnership working with families, rates of attendance have improved so that they are now above the national average.

Most members of the school community hold highly positive views about the standard of behaviour in and around school. A few pupils, parents and carers expressed concerns that lessons are disrupted by poor behaviour. However, inspection evidence and the school's records, found that pupils are typically extremely polite and courteous to adults and to each other. Their outstanding behaviour in lessons is making a significant contribution to learning. In discussions, pupils say that incidents of bullying, such as name-calling are rare. They say they feel extremely safe at all times and are entirely confident that staff will deal swiftly with any concerns. Pupils have an excellent understanding of the school's behaviour management systems. They can clearly explain the rewards and sanctions and say that behaviour has much improved as a result of its introduction.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management and the school's capacity to secure further improvement are good. The headteacher's drive and ambition are sharply focused on school improvement and have secured a highly cohesive and fully committed staff team across the federation of schools. The governing body provide a good level of challenge, support and strategic direction to the school's leadership. They ensure that all safeguarding requirements are met. Senior leaders have taken deliberate action to maintain three very small class groups. They have ensured consistently good teaching, reviewed the school's behaviour policy and raised the profile of attendance with parents and carers. As a result, pupils' achievement by the end of Year 6 has improved significantly, their behaviour is outstanding and rates of attendance are above average.

Leaders at all levels know the school well and accurately monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of their actions. Staff professional development is being improved by the sharing of skills, knowledge and expertise that exists across the federation of schools. However, the impact of staff development and performance management has not been as effective in securing outstanding teaching and in maximising pupils'

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achievement in writing.

The school offers a broad and balanced curriculum that builds on pupils' skills year on year. It promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well as seen by pupils' outstanding behaviour and extremely positive attitudes. Joint federation projects provide a range of additional curriculum experiences, visits and visitors, which expand pupils' horizons and facilitate greater interaction with pupils from a range of different backgrounds. The school is fully inclusive and takes prompt action to tackle any form of discrimination. It is committed to equality of opportunity. Meticulous tracking of pupils' individual progress allows the early identification of those whose progress is in danger of falling behind expected levels. High pupil-teacher ratios mean pupils, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good and, at times, outstanding progress because staff are able to give high quality one-to-one time that is effective in addressing specific gaps in their knowledge and skills.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	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 to 31 December 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.
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.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
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.



21 May 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Holbeach St Mark's Church of England Primary School, Spalding, PE12 8DZ

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave me when I visited your school recently. I particularly enjoyed seeing you work so hard in lessons and play so happily with each other outside. Your school provides a good education and you make good progress. In your questionnaires, a few of you said that behaviour is not good in lessons. When I talked to you about this, you told me that occasionally, and mostly in the past, a few pupils call out inappropriately. You all commented on how effective the 'traffic light' system has been in preventing calling out and has improved the behaviour of all pupils generally. I found that you have excellent attitudes to learning and that your behaviour around the school is exceptionally good. I was especially impressed by the way you respect adults and each other and, in particular, how the older pupils looked after the younger ones in collective worship when you learned about Rogation Sunday. The activities you do jointly with the other schools in your federation help you to form more friendships and broaden your range of experiences in life. Those in charge lead and manage the school well, though there is always room for improvement as I am sure you know. To make things even better, I have asked your school to help you to:

- reach just as high standards in your writing as you do in reading and mathematics
- use your writing skills more when you are learning about different subjects
- spend more time being active in lessons
- give your teachers every opportunity to share what works best and work together in the schools across the federation.

You can all play your part by continuing to work hard and by doing your best every minute of every day. Keep up that excellent behaviour around the school and in lessons.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Warboys
Lead inspector

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