

# The Holy Brook School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	110193
<b>Local authority</b>	Reading
<b>Inspection number</b>	378058
<b>Inspection dates</b>	29–30 May 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Linda McGill 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>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	25
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Jenny Pickett
<b>Headteacher</b>	Lee Smith
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	26 March 2009
<b>School address</b>	145 Ashampsted Road Southcote Reading RG30 3LJ
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<b>Age group</b>	5–11
<b>Inspection date(s)</b>	29–30 May 2012
<b>Inspection number</b>	378058



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## Introduction

Inspection team

Linda McGill

Her Majesty's Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector observed eight parts of lessons taught by five of the school's teachers and two visiting specialist teachers. She also observed an assembly and break and lunchtimes. She held discussions with the headteacher and other senior leaders, three members of the governing body and a group of pupils, and spoke to other pupils informally during lessons. The inspector took account of the views of 12 parents and carers as expressed in the questionnaires they returned and spoke to a parent by telephone. Questionnaires completed by 16 pupils and 13 members of staff were considered. The inspector examined a range of documents including the school's self-evaluation and forward plan, the governing body minutes, a number of policies and procedures, and the school's records of pupils' progress.

## Information about the school

The Holy Brook is a very small special school for pupils who have a statement of special educational needs for their behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. A substantial proportion of pupils have additional needs, such as learning difficulties or autism. The pupils come mainly from the Reading area and a few travel from neighbouring local authorities. The majority of the pupils are of White British heritage; about a third are from a range of minority ethnic groups but none is at the early stages of learning to speak English as an additional language. Over half of the pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals and a substantial proportion are looked after children. Boys greatly outnumber girls.

Since it was last inspected, the school has expanded its age range and begun to admit younger pupils. There are currently two pupils in Key Stage 1. Pupils join the school in all year groups throughout the school year. They are taught in four classes and are grouped by need, rather than age. Of this year's Year 6 pupils, only one has been at the school since Year 3.

**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>2</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>

## Key findings

- The Holy Brook is a good school. It is highly successful in providing its pupils with the stability, guidance and support they need to enable them to manage their particular difficulties and overcome barriers to learning. This has a marked impact over time on pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning. Overall effectiveness is not outstanding because teaching is not always of the very highest quality that is needed to make sure that all pupils make rapid and sustained progress in their learning.
- Pupils achieve well. During their time at the school, most make progress at a good rate and narrow the gap between their own attainment and typical expectations for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. A few pupils make excellent progress. The pupils are very well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Teaching is good, overall. The teachers and teaching assistants work seamlessly together, and are particularly adept at seizing opportunities to praise pupils and boost their self-esteem. Not all teachers, however, are equally skilled at using assessment information to make sure that work is consistently challenging for those pupils who have the resilience and confidence to tackle it.
- The curriculum makes a good contribution to pupils' learning and to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It rightly focuses on developing basic skills, and does this through stimulating and engaging topics and activities that put learning in context and broaden pupils' horizons.
- Pupils' behaviour is usually good; parents, carers, staff and pupils raised no concerns about behaviour and were unanimous in agreeing that pupils are safe. Attendance is excellent.
- Purposeful and determined leadership underpin the school's successes. Leaders, the governing body and staff share an ambitious vision for the future. Arrangements for managing performance are rigorous and a strong emphasis is placed on supporting staff to improve their practice. Parents and carers value the school's work greatly. 'The school is everything my child needs,' commented one, echoing the views of others.

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

- In order to further accelerate pupils' progress, raise all teaching to the level of the best by ensuring that:
  - all teachers' lesson plans focus precisely and specifically on what pupils are to learn during the lesson
  - teachers make clear to pupils how they will know when they have been successful
  - teachers use assessment information to plan tasks that are always suitably challenging for those pupils who have the resilience and confidence to tackle them.

## Main report

### Achievement of pupils

Pupils' achievement is good. When they join the school, most pupils have not had a successful prior experience of schooling. Some who join in the later years of Key Stage 2 have not made progress since the age of seven and some have regressed; their attainment is often substantially below what is expected for their age. The pupils tend to have limited confidence in their abilities, are reluctant to accept support and find it hard to persevere with tasks. In response to the skilled guidance of teachers and teaching assistants, pupils settle in to school quickly and become positively disposed towards learning. This in turn means that their progress in reading, writing and mathematics accelerates and they narrow the gap with what is expected nationally for their age. Most make progress at a faster rate than is expected of their counterparts in mainstream schools. However, their short time at Holy Brook means that many do not make up all of the ground they have lost previously. The school's assessments show that the longer pupils are at Holy Brook, the more their progress accelerates. There are no differences in the progress made by different groups; pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and looked after children make the same good progress as others, and girls do as well as boys.

The work in pupils' books shows that they make good progress in writing. This was confirmed in a literacy lesson, where pupils concentrated well on correcting 'silly sentences', successfully applying their secure knowledge of simple punctuation and spelling. Others wrote about what they had learned about rivers, using interesting vocabulary and connectives. One pupil proudly showed his work and said how much his handwriting had improved since joining the school. He read what he had written with confidence and fluency, and offered the inspector a useful tip to remember how to spell 'because'. From being reluctant readers and writers, pupils develop a love of books and reading, and learn to express themselves well in writing. In a mathematics

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lesson, pupils worked with interest and concentrated intently when calculating the perimeter of shapes; two older pupils confidently added decimal numbers and one challenged himself to do the calculations in his head, with some success.

In discussions, pupils said how much they enjoy school and that they learn a lot. Their parents and carers agree that their children are making good progress in developing their skills in reading, writing and mathematics. The findings of this inspection endorse that positive view.

### **Quality of teaching**

The teaching of school staff and visiting specialists is typically good. Some teaching is outstanding; for example, during this inspection, pupils made excellent progress in a lesson where they worked together to find a way to cross a 'river' in the school hall, thinking deeply, trying things out and offering their ideas and opinions. This was because the session was carefully planned to meet pupils' needs, included an appropriate level of challenge, was well paced and encouraged active participation. The staff strive to capture and keep pupils' interest and enthusiasm. Teaching is brisk, lively and engaging, and good use is made of technology to enhance presentations. Teachers and teaching assistants are vigilant, spotting potential problems or misconceptions and dealing with them swiftly and unobtrusively, changing the tack of the lesson if necessary. They are also swift to see when pupils are doing things well and give much praise and positive feedback. All adults constantly model appropriate behaviour and language so that pupils see all the time how they should respond in different situations. The teaching has a consistently positive impact on pupils' social and emotional development. The impact is not always so strong on pupils' academic progress, however. This is because the objectives for learning in lessons do not always pinpoint exactly what individual pupils need to learn next, which means that ways for pupils and teachers to judge success lack precision. Teachers assess pupils' learning accurately and have a wealth of information about pupils' progress in their social, emotional and academic development. Not all use it equally successfully to make sure that pupils make the best possible academic progress, by planning tasks that contain just the right amount of challenge.

Teaching and the curriculum have a strong impact on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, before learning about the Second World War, pupils considered the question, 'Is it ever right to fight?' In another class, a pupil watched, entranced, as a mealworm pupa transformed into a beetle.

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

Pupils typically behave well. During their time at Holy Brook, they learn how to consider the needs of others and to think about the consequences of their actions. They make excellent progress in learning to manage their own behaviour. Parents and carers, staff and pupils raised no major concerns about behaviour. During the inspection, pupils were friendly, polite and welcoming. Given the nature of some

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pupils' difficulties, there are times when they find situations hard to manage. Pupils will sometimes take themselves out of class and into the 'harbour' area or 'safe room', for example. However, any instances of frustration or inappropriate behaviour are usually short-lived and pupils return quickly to their lessons. The learning of other pupils is not disrupted. The staff deal with pupils in a patient, calm and measured way, and no pupil has been excluded in the past 10 years. Pupils are not punished for inappropriate behaviour nor rewarded for behaving well. The staff have high expectations of consistently safe behaviour and pupils respond very well to this. All staff, pupils, and parents and carers who returned a questionnaire agreed that the pupils are safe at all times. In discussion, pupils were clear that they knew about different types of bullying, including cyber-bullying, and said that they had been taught what to do should such situations arise. They were confident that adults would help them sort out problems or worries. They recognised that sometimes people fall out or have disagreements, but were also adamant that bullying does not happen at Holy Brook.

### **Leadership and management**

The school's leaders have successfully maintained and built on the strengths noted in the previous inspection report and have tackled areas for improvement with vigour, confirming that there is a strong capacity for further improvement. Leaders have ensured that pupils' achievement continues to be good while managing a challenging reorganisation of staffing, for example. There is a very strong sense of purpose and teamwork, and much joy and celebration of success. It is clear that the pupils' needs are at the forefront of everything the school does. Case studies of individual pupils illustrate the marked impact that the school's work has on pupils' social and emotional development, and on removing barriers to learning. The school's performance is evaluated carefully and accurately, and the school's forward plan shows clearly the next steps that need to be taken to reach the stated goal of 'outstanding provision that removes the emotional barriers to learning for all'. There is a clear understanding that excellence in teaching is the key to this, and strong emphasis is placed on the professional development of teachers and teaching assistants. Leaders and teachers are also held to account for the progress of their pupils through robust arrangements for performance management. Nevertheless, leaders recognise that there is still some work to be done to ensure that all teaching consistently matches the very best.

The deputy headteacher has worked to substantially revise the curriculum. The curriculum takes full account of pupils' academic and developmental needs, and includes a broad range of stimulating topics that link learning effectively. It also promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well. Pupils said how much they enjoy lessons, but also the range of visits and experiences they have, such as canoeing.

The governing body plays a strong role in determining the school's strategic direction and holding leaders to account. Its detailed annual plan ensures that policies and procedures are reviewed and updated in a timely way, and arrangements for

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safeguarding pupils are thorough. Risk assessments are carried out assiduously. The school's success in enhancing the life chances of its pupils and preparing them for the next steps in their education clearly illustrates the strong commitment to equality of opportunity.

The school enjoys the strong support of parents and carers. Several had high praise for the leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher, and the commitment of staff, and mentioned the great benefits that they saw the school had brought to their children.



## 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](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.
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.**



31 May 2012

Dear Pupils

### **Inspection of The Holy Brook School, Reading RG30 3LJ**

Thank you for welcoming me to your school. It was good to see you in lessons and playing outside in the sunshine. A special thank you goes to the pupils who spoke to me, and told me about their work and what it is like at Holy Brook.

I looked at a lot of things and spoke to different people as well as visiting your lessons, because I wanted to know how well you do at school. This is what I found out.

Holy Brook is a good school. This is because the adults teach you very well, help you with any problems and keep you safe, so that you are able to learn. I could see that you are making good progress with your reading, writing and mathematics. I was very impressed by how hard all of you worked when you were thinking about how to be a problem solver. I could also see that you make excellent progress in learning how to behave properly and think about other people. I have said in the report that your behaviour is good. Your attendance is excellent, too. Well done!

Lee, Dawn, the other adults and the governors all want you to do as well as you possibly can. They have a clear plan for the future that will help with this. My report includes ideas for how they can ensure that in every lesson you make maximum progress. I have asked the teachers to make sure that they use the information they have about your learning so that lessons focus sharply on the next steps you need to take. I have also suggested that they push you a little bit harder, when you are ready.

You can all help by listening carefully to your teachers and letting adults help you when you need it.

I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Linda McGill  
Her Majesty's Inspector

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