

Holbeach Primary School

Boston Road, Holbeach, Spalding, PE12 7LZ

Inspection dates

12–13 September 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Too few pupils make consistently good progress over time. Progress in writing is good; in mathematics and reading it is less than many pupils would normally be expected to make.
- Teaching is inconsistent in quality. Sometimes teachers set very similar work for pupils who have different abilities. Too few lessons expect pupils to research or investigate actively or independently. This limits their progress.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are not always good. Teachers do not insist on a high standard of presentation. Some work is untidy.
- Leaders and managers have not made sure that teaching is consistently good or better, or that all pupils achieve as well as they should.
- Though appropriate systems for checking on learning are in place, including the performance management of teachers, they are not applied with sufficient robustness.
- Governors have not been rigorous enough in checking on the school's work. They are not meeting their responsibilities to challenge leaders and drive the school's work forwards.

The school has the following strengths

- This is a caring school which is valued by parents and the wider community.
- Children are given a good start to their learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- More able pupils are now reaching their potential.
- Pupils feel safe. They say they are well looked after by adults in the school. They are generally polite and friendly and have positive relationships with each other and with staff.
- The headteacher and senior leaders work hard and are fully committed to improving the school. Recent improvements in standards in mathematics of some pupils illustrate the school's capacity to improve further.
- The curriculum supports pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural education well.
- The school is creative and persistent in its efforts to improve pupils' attendance rates.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 20 lessons, four of which were joint observations with senior leaders.
- Inspectors listened to pupils reading.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and senior leaders, school staff, groups of pupils, two governors and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of 11 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), talked to parents who visited the school and received written commentaries from two of the school's working partners.
- Several internal school documents were examined. These included the school's self-evaluation, information about pupils' progress, the school improvement plan, and records of governors' meetings. Work in pupils' books and records relating to the quality of teaching, behaviour, safeguarding and attendance were also scrutinised.

Inspection team

Terry McDermott, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Mark Mitchley

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized primary school. The numbers on roll have reduced since the last inspection.
- The school has 10 classes, most contain pupils of mixed age groups.
- The large majority of pupils are of white British origin. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below average. The pupil premium is an additional sum of money provided by the government to support children in the care of the local authority, those known to be eligible for free school meals and other groups.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is above average, as is the proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which are the minimum levels expected for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school operates a daily breakfast club.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that many more pupils make good progress, by always:
 - ensuring that work is well planned to meet the different learning needs of individual pupils
 - making sure that lesson plans focus on what pupils will learn rather than what they will do
 - providing pupils with frequent opportunities to find things out for themselves
 - having high expectations of what pupils might be capable of learning
 - insisting on consistency, accuracy and quality of presentation and good behaviour in lessons.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, and particularly governance of the school by:
 - making more frequent checks on the quality of teaching and the amount of learning in lessons
 - making crisp and unequivocal evaluations of the progress children are making in lessons
 - refining systems for performance management by sharpening up targets for improvement and providing regular feedback on them
 - making sure that governors have the skills to hold leaders to account and to undertake their role in securing school improvement.

An external review of governance should be undertaken to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- From the time pupils enter school in the Reception Year, their progress is inconsistent. This is because the quality of teaching across the school is variable.
- Pupils' progress is uneven across Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 because teachers' planning does not always provide learning tasks which match individual learning needs or provide activities that are sufficiently challenging. Equal opportunities to learn are provided, but this results in a similar inconsistency in the progress and attainment for all pupils, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, and pupils from minority ethnic groups.
- By the time pupils left Key Stage 2 in 2012, their standards in writing were broadly average, but their standards in mathematics and reading were about two terms behind where they should have been. Pupils eligible for free school meals were significantly behind other pupils in reading and mathematics. Helped by the better writing performance, they were only about a term behind in English overall, and about a year behind, in mathematics.
- In 2013, pupils left Year 6 with standards very close to previous (2012) national averages in mathematics, but about two terms in advance for writing and about a term behind for reading. Though standards have risen from 2012, for this group of pupils, from their different starting points in Year 1, this represented inconsistent progress over time thus requiring improvement to be considered good.
- The presentation of pupils' work in all subjects is variable because some pupils' attitudes to learning are not consistently good. For instance, handwriting can vary from day to day. Layout in mathematics books is often untidy.
- The most progress is made in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children join the school in Reception class with knowledge and skills broadly in line with what is expected for their age. Because teaching is good at this stage, by the time they enter Year 1, their attainment is above average in reading, writing and mathematics. This has been the case for several years. They make good progress in shaping symbols and letters, and some make swift progress matching letters to sounds to spell and read words.
- The Year 1 national phonics check showed that pupils reached a little above the national expectation. In Key Stage 1, standards in writing are a little above average, and in reading and mathematics a little below average.
- Younger pupils can describe logically and in detail how mini-beasts develop, and the work these creatures carry out in the environment. They can thoughtfully discuss how their minds worked to calculate which two digit numbers are bigger or smaller than other two digit numbers. But the reading skills of some Year 1 and Year 2 pupils who inspectors heard reading had inaccuracies, in particular with small words, for example, reading 'of' as 'for', and 'his' as 'he', whilst correctly reading 'hissed' and 'ghost'. Reading records do not indicate that these mistakes are properly addressed.
- Pupils are currently making overall progress at a similar rate to other pupils of their age. Pupils make faster progress in writing than they do in mathematics, and much faster progress than they do in reading. Older pupils undertake extended imaginative writing with enthusiasm.

- The most recent assessment information held by the school for those pupils who left in 2013 indicates that these gaps in attainment between pupils eligible for free school meals and those who are not, have been reduced markedly in all subjects.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching is variable. There is not yet enough good or outstanding teaching to ensure that pupils make consistently good progress across the school and in different subjects. This is in part because expectations of what pupils can do are not high enough, in standards, progress and presentation of work.
- Most lesson plans are detailed, but often focus on what pupils will do rather than what they will learn. This means that teachers then look for the completed task, rather than checking carefully on what pupils have actually gained in a lesson. This in turn reduces their ability to plan next steps in learning with precision, or to gauge exactly how well each pupil is progressing, particularly in reading and comprehension skills.
- Lessons do not always provide enough opportunities for pupils to find things out for themselves. Pupils reported that they sometimes have to listen to complicated instructions for long periods. They said they would like to do more investigating or researching, and they are very enthusiastic when describing work that is practically based.
- Usually, teaching meets the needs of all pupils even in mixed-age classes. Occasionally, however, teachers set the same task for the whole class, having given everybody the same explanation. This can lead to a dull lesson and inadequate learning.
- In some classes, good teamwork between adults circulating around tables means that pupils receive good support and sustain their concentration well. This enables all pupils to learn well.
- Sometimes however, supporting adults offer too much support. The pupils readily accept this and thus learn very little for themselves.
- All classrooms are inviting, comfortable and well resourced. Relationships are good, providing a well-founded basis for learning.
- When pupils of all abilities are challenged to work independently and creatively, they make serious and sustained intellectual efforts. These bring the positive rewards of improved self-confidence and self-esteem. These lessons have a distinct buzz about them, and classroom management is minimal. The resultant pace and excitement of new insights and understanding, being gained independently, underpins concentration and motivation. Learning can be rapid.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils' attitudes to learning are influenced by and reflect the quality of teaching. Too often they become a little restless when they have to listen passively for extended periods while teachers explain forthcoming tasks. Low-level inattention and chatting occur when work is uninspiring or lacks challenge. Pupils' levels of motivation, their curiosity and their thirst for learning are not always consistently held.
- Attendance remains stubbornly below average because of the persistent absenteeism of a few pupils. The school's energetic and innovative efforts are beginning to improve it.

- Behaviour is clearly good around the school. Pupils are polite and have good manners. They are considerate towards one another. They say that occasionally lessons are interrupted by 'silly' behaviour, but they say it is quickly dealt with and does not disturb learning.
- Pupils have a sense of pride in being pupils at this school, and value those things which they feel makes the school special. Older pupils talk with a sense of awe about the residential trips, and say that to win the 'Rex Self Award' for excellence in attitudes to learning, an award named after a former headteacher of the school, is perceived as an honour and a privilege.
- Pupils feel safe. They are aware of the different forms bullying can take, but do not perceive any form of bullying to be an issue in school. They insist that adults 'just won't have it'. Younger pupils spoke about the dangers on the internet and they knew which sites to avoid. Other pupils said they do not go onto computers without permission.
- They say that teachers look after them well, and they can confidently approach an adult for help if they have any issues to be resolved.
- No parent or pupil raised any concerns about safety or safeguarding.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Leaders do not always check that the information entered into their assessment systems, both for the progress of pupils and when monitoring the quality of teaching and learning, is rigorous and accurate. This has resulted in an evaluation of progress over time which presents too positive a picture of the school's effectiveness.
- Senior leaders have for some time and until very recently, attributed slow progress over time and below average standards to external factors and weaknesses in the curriculum, rather than to the root cause; inconsistency in the quality of teaching.
- The performance management of teachers takes place as required, and is linked closely to pupil progress meetings. However, objectives set are not always sharp enough, and as a result, the impact of performance management on the progress pupils make, is not easily measured.
- The school curriculum has undergone a number of modifications in recent times. Leaders felt that it required improvement because its impact was not all it might be in helping pupils to reach the highest possible standards, particularly in reading and other subjects such as physical education. The curriculum is now varied and provides scope for a wide range of well-liked and interesting extra curricular activities. Breakfast Club provides a welcoming start for those pupils who use it.
- Senior leaders know what they want to achieve and have the full support of the staff, whose morale is high. All adults work hard and give large amounts of their time to the school voluntarily. The school development plan rightly focuses on accelerating progress and raising standards.
- Good links with the local secondary academy led to several pupils gaining level 6 in mathematics in 2013. Equality of opportunity for all pupils, including those with disabilities or special educational needs, those eligible for free school meals, and those of the highest ability, is now in place. The school has also employed specialist physical education staff in advance of receiving its PE grant. The wider impact of the curriculum is sometimes diluted by mundane delivery.

■ The local authority has supported the school well in recent times. It has provided consultants to help the school strengthen several of its systems during recent staffing difficulties. However, it has not challenged the school with sufficient rigour to clarify anomalies in data.

■ Parents and staff overwhelmingly support the work of the school.

■ **The governance of the school:**

– Too many members of the governing body lack objectivity about the quality of the school's work because they are too close to its day-to-day operations. They know the school's strengths, but most simply accept the school's own perception of its weaknesses and the reasons for them. As a result, they are unable to meet their responsibilities for holding the school to account for its performance. As a whole, the governing body knows how the pupil premium is spent, and has a good understanding of the school's work in this area. Governors understand how the performance management of teachers links with progression through the pay scales. Their procedures for monitoring safeguarding meet requirements.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	120414
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	425000

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	216
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Isobel Hutchinson
Headteacher	Susan Boor
Date of previous school inspection	7 February 2012
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