

# The Holy Brook School

145 Ashampsted Road, Southcote, Reading, RG30 3LJ

**Inspection dates** 22–23 October 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- The headteacher and governing body have developed very clear aims for the school and they work effectively towards achieving them.
- Other senior leaders and middle managers share these ambitions and provide strong support.
- Leaders and the governing body have maintained good quality teaching and high standards since the last inspection.
- Teaching is good across the school. Members of each class team work well together.
- Pupils make good progress in developing new skills, knowledge and understanding in lessons. All groups of pupils achieve equally well.
- The achievement of pupils who are eligible for additional funding is the same as other pupils in the school. Their achievement is typically higher than that of similar pupils nationally.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are good. They make good progress in their personal development and in learning to manage their own behaviour. Pupils enjoy being at school. Their attendance is high.
- The school has good procedures for working with pupils, their families and local schools to ease the transfer into secondary education.
- Safeguarding procedures are secure. Staff confirm that the school is safe. Pupils are well looked after and cared for. There are good relationships between adults and pupils.
- Pupils are prepared well for living in modern Britain. They make good progress in developing an appreciation of the differences between people and of the feelings, rights and needs of others.
- The school makes good use of its links with partners to provide pupils with a good range of learning opportunities.
- Staff are unanimous in their support for the school. They know what leaders are aiming to do and share their high expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- The school contributes much to the education of children with challenging behaviour throughout the local authority by supporting staff in local schools.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not consistently outstanding to result in pupils making excellent progress.
- Although staff routinely log instances of inappropriate behaviour, there is no clarity about what counts as a serious incident. Procedures for checking and managing these records are not wholly efficient in identifying patterns or trends.
- Plans to improve the school are not entirely focused on the most important priorities. Not enough use is made of the information collected on the quality of the school's work to develop precise targets that will move the school forward quickly.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited all classes, and was accompanied by either the headteacher or deputy headteacher in five of the six observations that took place. Five different teachers were observed. Other lessons were also visited for shorter periods. These included those taken by a part time music teacher, a visiting drama group that runs weekly sessions, a specialist literacy teacher and a physical education lesson run by a partner organisation.
- Meetings were held with members of the senior leadership team, the Chair of the Governing Body and the local authority's school partnership adviser.
- The online questionnaire, Parent View, could not be used to collect the opinions of parents and carers because too few completed it for the results to be displayed. None contacted the inspector directly and so parents' and carers' views could only be gathered from brief conversations with a few of those who attended the harvest festival.
- The views of pupils were collected from the conversations that were held with individuals over the course of the inspection.
- The inspector scrutinised 15 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- A wide range of documentation was examined. This included information about pupils' progress, attendance records, safeguarding procedures, behaviour logs, the school's own judgements about its strengths and areas for improvement, and development planning.

## Inspection team

Mike Kell, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Holy Brook is a very small special school for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. A significant proportion also has additional learning difficulties, such as autism.
- A small number of pupils live in local authorities other than Reading.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs, and almost all of them are boys.
- Pupils join the school in all year groups. Very few are there for the whole of a key stage.
- Almost half of the teaching staff have been appointed within the past 18 months.
- The school receives pupil premium funding for more than three quarters of its pupils, which is considerably higher than the national average. Pupil premium is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and for children who are looked after.
- The school also receives additional funding for primary school physical education and sport.
- Pupils represent a range of ethnic backgrounds, with White British being the predominant group. All pupils speak English as their first language.
- There are no children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- The school does not have any specific partnerships with other schools that involve pupils' attendance there. It uses other local facilities, such as the leisure centre, to provide additional learning experiences.
- The headteacher is a Local Leader of Education. The school provides a support service to local schools in advising them about working with pupils with challenging behaviour.
- At its own request, the governing body received an external review of its effectiveness in 2013.
- As it is a very small school, Holy Brook does not have middle managers with subject responsibilities other than a very newly appointed leader of mathematics. Class teachers are identified as having a middle management role in leading class teams.

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

- Raise the quality of teaching to outstanding levels by ensuring that staff routinely:
  - use their knowledge of all pupils' prior learning and current understanding when planning learning activities
  - provide all pupils with suitably challenging work that stretches them at all times.
- Make leadership and management more effective by:
  - developing school improvement planning with more precise targets so that it focuses on the few most important priorities that will move the school forward
  - ensuring there is clarity about what counts as a serious behavioural incident
  - improving procedures for checking records of unacceptable behaviour in order to identify more easily trends and patterns for individuals and in the school as a whole.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- Leaders have successfully established a climate that encourages pupils to take responsibility for their behaviour, rather than relying upon rewards, sanctions or exclusions. They make good use of the opportunity that this success offers to maintain a culture of high expectation of staff and pupils. Governance is effective.
- Leaders have established a calm and orderly school. As a result, pupils forge positive relationships with each other and with adults, and they also learn about tolerance and respect for others. The school is particularly effective in ensuring equal opportunities for all pupils. Leaders' success in establishing a whole-school approach to managing pupils' behaviour means that pupils who sometimes find it difficult to control their anger and emotions are dealt with consistently in the same way.
- Leaders use a good variety of processes to check on the quality of teaching, and they have a good understanding of what constitutes best practice. They use this knowledge effectively to support staff who are new to special education as well as to provide ongoing mentoring and guidance for all staff. Performance management procedures are used well to develop teachers' and teaching assistants' skills in supporting learning.
- Middle managers' good leadership of class teams is a key feature of teaching and makes an important contribution to pupils' learning.
- All staff express support for leaders and what the school is trying to achieve. The very few parents' and carers' views of the school that could be gathered indicated that they value the work that it does.
- The school has a very good grasp of how well pupils achieve and of how their performance compares with similar pupils nationally. Leaders' careful examination of pupils' progress enables them to provide additional support for those pupils who find learning difficult.
- Pupils receive a good range of learning opportunities, with a strong focus on literacy, numeracy and personal, social and health education. Visiting specialists, such as for drama and music, also provide pupils with new experiences.
- Good use is made of local facilities, such as the leisure centre and different places of worship, to support school-based learning and to give pupils a better sense of the community in which they live. These experiences help to prepare pupils for living in modern Britain. They are supplemented well by activities in school that consider issues such as fair trade, celebrating individuality and community responsibilities. As a result, pupils make good progress in all aspects of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Leaders have made a good start in developing and implementing the new National Curriculum, along with procedures for checking how well pupils are doing.
- Leaders' procedures for checking the school's effectiveness do not routinely highlight the most important areas for development. Therefore, not all of the development areas in the school improvement plan are needed to raising standards.
- Additional funding that the school receives for disadvantaged pupils is spent wisely. Currently, it is being used to pay for intensive booster sessions for pupils who are having particular difficulties with reading and writing. This is beginning to have a significant impact on raising the level of their skills.
- Additional physical education and sport funding is used well to employ an external organisation to provide active lunchtime activities and to teach some physical education lessons. More pupils are now participating in sport and their self-esteem and ability to work with others have improved as a result.
- Close liaison with families, schools and local authority staff minimises pupils' anxiety in Year 6 and eases their transfer to secondary school.
- Local authority visits have minimal impact on helping the school to improve. Leaders are not challenged enough or supported appropriately in developing key priorities for further development.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body ensures that all statutory requirements are met. Governors check that pupils have a good range of learning opportunities, and ensure that all safeguarding measures are in place and working efficiently.
  - Governors are known to staff and are frequent visitors into school.
  - The governing body holds leaders to account very well. Governors question and challenge both written and oral reports that they receive. There is a shared understanding of how well the school is performing.
  - The governing body knows about additional funding and the impact that it has on pupils' achievement and personal development. Governors understand well how the school measures pupils' progress and

attainment.

- Governors receive regular reports about the quality of teaching, and they know about teachers' performance management and how it links to pay.

## The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They make good progress in responding positively to instructions and requests. This contributes to their ability to benefit from planned learning opportunities in the community.
- Behaviour is not outstanding because the behaviour of a small but significant number of pupils does disrupt learning on occasions. Staff manage these situations efficiently, but such disturbances can influence the mood of other pupils and learning suffers temporarily as a result.
- Pupils develop good attitudes to learning. They learn to follow routines and to become accepting of change. They are generally motivated to do their best.
- Virtually all of the staff agree that pupils behave well. Staff provide good role models of how to interact with others and communicate properly. As a result, pupils form constructive relationships as they become increasingly tolerant of the needs of others and of the impact that their actions have on others.
- Conversations with pupils showed them to be generally courteous and respectful, which they demonstrate by actions such as holding doors open for adults to pass through.
- Pupils attend as often as they can and they enjoy what the school has to offer. They generally respect the school grounds, building and equipment as well as the many wall displays around the school.
- Pupils usually move around the school in an orderly way, and they play together energetically, but safely.

### Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Effective safeguarding arrangements are in place and all staff apply them rigorously. Staff training is up to date in aspects such as child protection, physical restraint, first aid and safer recruitment. The single central record meets requirements.
- Secure risk assessments ensure pupils' safety when they are out in the community.
- The staff confirm that pupils are safe and well looked after. They take the view that all instances of bullying or other forms of intimidating behaviour are dealt with immediately and effectively. Pupils agree that some bullying and other types of unpleasant behaviour take place, but the staff deal with it. Overall, pupils work without fear of intimidation. No parents or carers expressed concerns about safeguarding arrangements.
- Pupils make good progress in understanding how to stay healthy and safe. The school is particularly vigilant in working with pupils and their families in stressing the importance of safe internet use and alerting them to the risks associated with social media.
- Staff routinely log incidents of inappropriate behaviour. However, incidents recorded range from the fairly trivial to the much more serious as there are no clear guidelines about what counts as a serious incident. The school responds effectively to all incidents at the time they occur, but leaders do not check the records thoroughly enough on a regular basis in order to identify trends and patterns for individuals and in the school as a whole. This is why the school's work to keep pupils safe is not outstanding.

## The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching across the school is typically of high quality. As a result, pupils learn quickly and make good progress.
- Teachers lead their class teams well so that all adults are well briefed to support pupils' learning and manage their behaviour.
- Teaching helps manage pupils' attitudes to learning in a variety of ways, including adults talking with each other in a quite deliberate, scripted way in front of pupils. This successfully draws pupils' attention to desired responses and actions without addressing pupils directly.
- Pupils' behaviour is generally managed well. Staff stick closely to the school's behaviour management policy and so there is a consistent approach to dealing with pupils throughout the school. Teaching makes a strong contribution to pupils' personal development by providing opportunities for them to make informed choices and to become increasingly aware that their actions have consequences.
- Teaching generally makes a good contribution to developing pupils' communication and literacy skills. Pupils are given many opportunities to practise and develop their speaking and listening skills, and their

reading and writing skills are encouraged routinely. This includes supporting pupils who are at the early stages of recognising letters and the sounds letters make (phonics).

- Pupils make good progress in mathematics lessons because teaching encourages them to explain their thinking and their understanding of number and mathematical operations.
- Staff frequently pause lessons to check pupils' understanding. Staff also use these opportunities effectively to explore with pupils what they might do next. When teaching is most effective, this includes consideration of more challenging activities for the most able.
- Pupils are supported and encouraged well. Adults are generally skilled at knowing the level of guidance or prompting that is required when pupils encounter difficulties, and praise is used appropriately to retain pupils' motivation. As pupils' work is checked regularly during lessons, the pupils themselves can celebrate their successes as well as joining with staff to identify elements of their work that could be improved.
- Teaching is not outstanding because when planning learning activities, staff do not consistently use well enough their knowledge of what each pupil has already learned. Pupils in most classes span a wide range of age and ability and not all tasks are always entirely suitable for every pupil. The tasks pupils are given when they finish their initial work does not always take their learning forward. The work which is set routinely for the most able pupils is not always challenging enough.

### **The achievement of pupils** is good

- Pupils make good progress overall, and much of this is due to the improved attitudes, behaviour and attendance that they demonstrate once they become settled in the school. The staff agree that pupils learn at a good rate, and the small sample of parents and carers support this view.
- Achievement is not outstanding because expectations in a few lessons are not high enough. At these times, pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable because they are not challenged to do so.
- Pupils' performance in English indicates good achievement compared with similar pupils elsewhere of the same age and starting levels. They make good progress in speaking and listening, reading and writing. Pupils who attend additional booster sessions make particularly good progress in developing their literacy skills.
- Pupils achieve equally well in mathematics. A majority exceed the progress that is expected of them by the time they leave.
- Pupils' achievement overall is such that they are beginning to close the gap between their attainment and that of mainstream pupils nationally. This includes pupils who are supported by the pupil premium.
- No group of pupils does less well than any other. The very few girls make similar progress to boys, and pupils from different ethnic backgrounds perform equally well.
- There is no difference between the achievement of pupils who receive additional funding and others. Pupils who are eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after make similar progress to their classmates in English and mathematics.
- Pupils' good achievement and the feeling of success that they gain from this contribute much to their positive attitudes towards leaving the school.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	110193
<b>Local authority</b>	Reading
<b>Inspection number</b>	447950

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	26
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Jenny Pickett
<b>Headteacher</b>	Lee Smith
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	29–30 May 2012
<b>Telephone number</b>	0118 937 5489
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