

Holly Spring Junior School

Lily Hill Road, Bullbrook, Bracknell, Berkshire RG12 2SW

Inspection dates

5 to 6 March 2019

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is variable. Inconsistencies in provision between classes and year groups mean that not all pupils make the progress of which they are capable.
- Expectations of what pupils can achieve are not consistently high. In some classes and year groups, the activities that teachers set are not sufficiently well matched to what pupils already know, understand and can do.
- Published results for 2018 show that pupils' rates of progress in writing and mathematics were below national averages. In reading, pupils made rates of progress that were well below the national average.
- Disadvantaged pupils made overall progress that was well below that of other pupils with the same starting points in reading, writing and mathematics.

The school has the following strengths

- Since his arrival in April 2018, the headteacher has brought rigour, clarity and urgency to the school's work.
- Subject leaders have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and lead the various elements of the curriculum with tenacity and resolve.
- Where teachers have high expectations of what pupils can do, pupils rise to the challenge by working hard and completing work to a high standard.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They are polite and courteous to visitors and take pride in their work.
- Leaders ensure that pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Pupils are taught about British values and the need to understand and respect others' beliefs and ways of life.
- Pupils are safe and know how to stay safe. There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school. Rates of attendance are slightly above the national average for primary schools.
- Governors know the school well. They hold leaders to account for pupils' outcomes and for the impact of additional funding.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Reduce variability in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that teachers use information about pupils' learning to build on what they already know, understand and can do so that work set is neither too easy nor too difficult.
- Improve pupils' rates of progress in reading, writing and mathematics so that all pupils, including the most able and those who are disadvantaged, achieve in line with, or better than, other pupils nationally.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since his arrival in April 2018, the executive headteacher has worked with determination and effectiveness to transform the culture of the school. Simplified procedures and systems have been well received by parents, staff and pupils alike and have played a key role in improving pupils' behaviour and attitudes to their learning.
- The executive headteacher has not shied away from taking tough decisions in the interests of pupils' progress. He recognises that there is still more to do to ensure that expectations are consistently high across the school. Teachers are held stringently to account for how well their pupils do. At the same time, teachers and support staff benefit from training that is of high quality and well targeted to their needs. Teachers who are new to the profession benefit from well-received support.
- Many of those in leadership positions are recent appointments. However, they have quickly got to grips with their roles and, in a short time, have been able to demonstrate a positive impact on those areas of the school's work for which they are responsible. Consequently, pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are making better progress than previously in a range of subjects, including English and mathematics, because the quality of leadership has improved.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Pupils benefit from the opportunity to study the full range of national curriculum subjects. Subject leaders demonstrate considerable passion for their subjects. They have created coherent programmes of study in which topics and themes follow a logical sequence. They also ensure that teachers have the support they need to deliver the planned curriculum.
- Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Through the curriculum, assemblies and special events, pupils learn about and are taught to respect the views, cultures and traditions of others. For example, in the recent inter-faith and language weeks, pupils gained a rich understanding of the different religions practised and languages spoken in their own school community.
- Leaders demonstrate a strong commitment to equality of opportunity and diversity. For example, recent presentations on lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender (LGBT) rights and on the damage caused by homophobic bullying were well received by pupils and supported by parents. Similarly, pupils understand that racism and other forms of discrimination are not acceptable.
- Governors and leaders monitor closely the impact of the sport premium and also of funding for disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND. This additional funding is well used because leaders now have a sharper understanding of which interventions are most successful.
- The local authority provides strong and effective support to the school. This support has included seconding key staff from local schools and leading training for teachers and subject leaders. The executive headteacher and chair of governors value their regular monitoring meetings with local authority officers.

- Parents are strongly supportive of the school. Over 90% of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, indicated that they would recommend the school. Many of those parents who added written comments had high praise for the positive impact of the executive headteacher and for the quality of education provided by the school. For example, one parent wrote, 'Holly Spring Junior has exceeded our expectations, with a great leadership team that have made a real difference. My daughter is happy and making progress and I feel that the school has a very good attitude towards the pupils.'

Governance of the school

- The current governing body was put in place following a period of turbulence in 2018 and is ably led by a national leader of governance.
- Governors are committed to the school and have a clear understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. Governors make good use of local authority reports and evidence from their own visits alongside the detailed reports provided by senior and middle leaders to inform their views. They use this information to hold the executive headteacher and his team accountable for the progress that pupils make.
- Governors have ensured that the governing body has an appropriate range of skills and experiences. They are assiduous in attending relevant training put on by the local authority or by school leaders. Governors also check that additional funding is used wisely, and they ensure that the school's safeguarding action plan is implemented in full.
- The governing body has been working closely with the local authority and with governors at the neighbouring infant and nursery school to ensure a smooth transition when the two schools amalgamate later this year.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- On his arrival in April 2018, the executive headteacher lost no time in strengthening the school's approach to safeguarding. For example, when a local authority audit highlighted weakness in record-keeping, he addressed the issues quickly and thoroughly. Consequently, all child-protection records are now detailed and accurate.
- There is a warm and nurturing culture in the school. The pastoral and emotional support for vulnerable pupils provided by staff in the 'Den' is valued by parents and pupils. Staff know their pupils well and are vigilant when it comes to their safety and welfare.
- Appropriate checks are made on the suitability of all who work or volunteer in the school. Staff benefit from up-to-date training on how to identify the signs that a child may be at risk of harm and what action to take if they are concerned. Leaders check that staff understand this training.
- Leaders work closely with external agencies to make sure that any child or family that is in need of help receives timely and effective support. Leaders are tenacious in following up all referrals to ensure prompt action.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inconsistent between classes and year groups. As a result, pupils across the school do not make the overall progress of which they are capable.
- Teachers do not make enough use of assessment information to plan activities that meet the needs of all groups of pupils. Consequently, the most able pupils find the work too easy, while low prior attaining pupils struggle to keep up.
- Similarly, in those classes and year groups where teaching has not had enough impact on pupils' rates of progress, teachers' explanations are not clear and their questions lack precision. This means that pupils develop misconceptions that teachers do not identify and address quickly enough.
- In some classes, teachers have high expectations of what pupils can do. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to plan sequences of lessons that challenge all pupils to try hard to achieve their potential. For example, in an outdoor science lesson, pupils were able to work out how sound travels because of a well-designed practical activity.
- Typically, where teaching is effective, teachers give pupils precise feedback on what they need to do to improve their work and then give them ample time to make the necessary changes. Pupils say that this helps them to develop their skills and to remember key facts and concepts.
- A growing strength in the school is the high-quality support provided by teaching assistants. Leaders have invested wisely in training for teaching assistants, and so they provide effective support to pupils who might otherwise fall behind or who have SEND.
- Across the school, most pupils are enthusiastic about their studies, take pride in their work and enjoy warm relationships with their teachers.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development is good.
- Pupils are proud of their school and keen to talk to visitors about their learning. They are confident and polite and act as good ambassadors for the school.
- Leaders make sure that pupils have opportunities to develop their wider interests through extracurricular clubs and activities. Sport is a particular strength. Staff and pupils are rightly proud of the school's strong performance in local sports competitions.
- Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Through the curriculum, assemblies and other events, pupils learn about other cultures, religions and lifestyles. They are taught to respect the rights of different groups of people, and they know that all forms of bullying are unacceptable.
- Pupils feel very safe in school. They know that if they are worried about anything they can speak to staff in the 'Den'. Teachers make sure that pupils know how to take care of themselves in a range of situations. Pupils understand how to stay safe when using the internet.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave well in classrooms and around the school. They look after their classrooms well and play sensibly in the playground. They enjoy chatting politely to staff and to each other while eating their lunch.
- Some pupils and parents expressed concerns about behaviour in the Ofsted surveys. However, the school's own records show that the number of behavioural incidents has fallen sharply in the last year, particularly since the arrival of the executive headteacher. Inspectors found that the atmosphere in school was calm and orderly.
- Pupils say that on the rare occasion that a pupil bullies or is mean to another pupil, teachers deal with it promptly and effectively.
- Attendance overall is slightly above the rate seen in primary schools nationally. Pupils enjoy coming to school and so rates of persistent absence are low. However, leaders are not complacent. They work closely with families and with the local authority if a pupil's rate of attendance dips in order to remove any barriers to regular attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- For the last two years, pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics have been below national averages. In 2018, pupils made particularly weak progress in reading. Disadvantaged pupils also made progress that was well below the national averages for other pupils in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Since taking up his post in April 2018, the executive headteacher has moved swiftly to strengthen the progress of pupils currently in the school. As a result of improved approaches to planning and more rigorous schemes of work, pupils in most year groups are now making much stronger progress than hitherto. However, important gaps in pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding remain because of a legacy of weak teaching over time.
- In mathematics, pupils develop their fluency, reasoning and problem-solving skills because they get frequent and sustained practice. In English, focused work on improving pupils' handwriting and spelling is beginning to have a positive impact on the quality of their writing. At the same time, a more sharply focused approach to reading comprehension means that pupils are better equipped to understand what they read.
- In response to pupils' weak performance in reading in national tests in 2018, teachers have given reading a high priority. Pupils say that the school promotes reading well. Most pupils read out loud fluently and say that they enjoy reading in school and at home. Less confident readers are able to use their phonics knowledge to help them to read unfamiliar words. One pupil said, 'Reading takes me into a world of imagination.'
- Pupils with SEND and those who are disadvantaged are now making strong progress in those classes and year groups where the quality of teaching over time is effective. Leaders make increasingly effective use of additional funding to support these pupils.
- Over time, too many pupils have moved on to secondary school without the basics in reading, writing and mathematics that they need to succeed. However, as a result of

the unrelenting work of teachers and leaders over the last year, pupils are increasingly well prepared for their next steps in education.

School details

Unique reference number	109806
Local authority	Bracknell Forest
Inspection number	10052906

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	331
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mark A'Bear
Headteacher	James Lacey
Telephone number	01344 422 367
Website	www.hollyspringjunior.co.uk
Email address	exechead@hsjs.uk
Date of previous inspection	13 to 14 July 2016

Information about this school

- This is a slightly larger-than-average three-form entry junior school where two thirds of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is in line with the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is similar to that found nationally.
- The school runs a breakfast club.
- The previous headteacher left in April 2018. At that time, the headteacher of Holly Spring Infant and Nursery School was appointed to the role of executive headteacher over both schools.
- The local authority has consulted parents and other stakeholders on the amalgamation of Holly Spring Junior School with the adjacent Holly Spring Infant and Nursery School. The schools are due to merge on 1 September 2019.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all year groups, in all cases jointly with members of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors also reviewed pupils' learning over time by looking at a sample of pupils' work alongside leaders.
- Meetings were held with a range of senior and middle leaders to discuss the impact of their actions in aspects of the school's work for which they were responsible.
- Inspectors spoke informally with parents at the start of the first day of the inspection.
- Inspectors also spoke with pupils informally and in formal meetings to discuss their views of the school.
- An inspector listened to a group of pupils read from books that they had chosen and spoke to them about their reading.
- The lead inspector met with three members of the governing body, including the vice-chair of governors, and spoke with the chair of governors on the telephone.
- The lead inspector also met with the assistant director for education for the local authority and with the standards and effectiveness partner linked to the school.
- Inspectors took account of parents' views by reviewing 60 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, which included 56 written responses.
- Inspectors also analysed 24 responses to the staff survey and 43 responses to the pupils' survey.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation provided by the school, including the school's self-evaluation and school-development plan.
- Safeguarding arrangements at the school were reviewed.

Inspection team

Gary Holden, lead inspector

Jonathan Shields

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Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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