

Holly House Special School

Church Street North, Old Whittington, Chesterfield, Derbyshire S41 9QR

Inspection dates

2–3 April 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders have been too slow to take effective action to improve the quality of teaching following the last inspection.
- Leaders' checks on the quality of teaching lack sharpness. Consequently, they have not identified areas for improvement and staff training needs quickly enough.
- The quality of teaching is inconsistent. When teachers match tasks to pupils' abilities, pupils do well. However, too often, teachers underestimate the ability of pupils. Pupils do not make as much progress as they should.
- The most able pupils underachieve in writing. They do not develop their writing across different subjects.
- Pupils' behaviour, while improving, still requires improvement. There remain a high number of incidents of poor behaviour. Staff knowledge of some of the pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is not deep enough to enable them to have a full understanding of how to manage pupils' behaviour.
- The curriculum does not support the teaching of reading well enough. The pupils who have weak reading skills do not have enough support to help them improve.
- Pupils' knowledge of key mathematical facts and their ability to reason in mathematics are underdeveloped.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders have begun to improve the learning culture at the school. Since the last inspection, exclusions have halved, and attendance has increased to be in line with similar schools.
- The school has implemented a range of alternative therapies to meet pupils' social and emotional needs. The wide range of enrichment activities help to develop well pupils' social skills. Their personal development is good.
- Safeguarding is effective. Leaders work well with a range of agencies to keep pupils safe.
- The relationships between staff and pupils are positive. Staff work hard to motivate the pupils.
- Parents and carers are very supportive of the school. They are very pleased with the progress that their children make.
- The transition of pupils into mainstream schools is well planned. This enables pupils to have a good start at their new school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that all staff develop their subject knowledge in English and mathematics to improve the quality of teaching
 - sharpening checks on the effectiveness of the curriculum to identify areas for improvement
 - ensuring that the outcomes in the pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans are planned for in the curriculum
 - ensuring that there is time in the curriculum for pupils who have poor reading skills to develop their phonics skills.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and outcomes by:
 - ensuring that teachers demonstrate high expectations and provide opportunities for pupils to apply their knowledge and skills across all subjects
 - providing more opportunities for the most able pupils to write across the curriculum
 - developing strategies to support pupils to learn key skills in mathematics and to develop pupils' mathematical reasoning skills.
- Improve pupils' behaviour by:
 - providing training on the needs of pupils with SEND, particularly for autism spectrum disorder and mental health, so that staff can further develop strategies to meet pupils' needs and help to reduce the number of incidents of poor behaviour and exclusions
 - embedding the recent work on attendance so that it continues to be at least in line with, or above, that of similar schools nationally.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Senior leaders have not taken swift enough action to improve the quality of teaching. Their evaluation of the quality of teaching does not identify the weaknesses in the delivery of the curriculum. Staff training needs have not been identified to improve the quality of teaching. Leaders have not implemented the English and mathematics curriculum well enough. The quality of teaching is variable, and pupils do make as much progress as they should.
- Middle leaders, appointed in October 2018, for English and mathematics have not yet had an impact on improving the quality of teaching. The mathematics leader has led the introduction of a new assessment system which identifies pupils' abilities in mathematics, English and science. However, subject leaders have not checked whether teachers have used the assessment information to inform their planning and to improve pupils' knowledge and skills. The pace of improvement is too slow.
- Leaders have not ensured that teachers' expectations are consistently high enough. Subject leaders of all subjects, including English and mathematics, have not had enough opportunities to moderate pupils' work with other schools to check that they are challenging the most able appropriately.
- Leaders have not ensured that all the outcomes in the pupils' EHC plans have been included in the pupils' individual education plans. It is not clear how teachers are aiming to achieve the outcomes listed in the EHC plans to meet fully the individual pupils' social and emotional needs.
- Leaders have not planned the curriculum well enough to provide teaching for all those pupils who cannot read as well as they should. Many of these pupils do not have regular support to learn phonics to help them to improve their reading.
- Leaders have successfully implemented a range of alternative therapies, for example yoga, reiki and Lego therapy, into the curriculum. These activities have improved pupils' engagement at school and provided opportunities for pupils to mix with other pupils of different ages. In addition, the school plans a wide range of enrichment activities to help boost pupils' self-esteem and to develop their social skills. These include roller skating, crown green bowling and fishing, which pupils attend after school. Pupils say they like school and appreciate the support of staff. Pupils' attendance has improved. They are better prepared for moving on to their next school.
- Since the last inspection, leaders have started to change the culture of the school and reduce the high level of fixed-term exclusions. They have started to train staff to have a better understanding of pupils' social and emotional needs so that they can try to prevent situations where pupils become agitated and their behaviour is disruptive. Staff are aware of the need to improve their knowledge and understanding of the pupils' needs and would welcome more training in this aspect of the school's work to further reduce incidents of poor behaviour. Nonetheless, the number of exclusions and the number of physical restraint incidents have halved in the current academic year. Leaders have demonstrated their capacity to make improvements.
- The school has used the pupil premium funding to develop the range of enrichment

activities after school and to increase pupils' participation in these activities. This has included funding taxis for pupils because activities continue into the early evening. Pupils' social skills have developed well, and the number of serious behavioural incidents has reduced in the current year. Leaders primarily use the SEND funding to employ teaching assistants to work with the pupils in lessons to support their learning. The relationships between teaching assistants and pupils are good and they support pupils well to try to regulate their behaviour. The school has not received any Year 7 catch-up funding.

- The primary school physical education (PE) and sport funding has been used well to develop pupils' cricket, basketball and football skills. The pupils have participated in competitions against other schools, and recently won the Derbyshire special schools cricket tournament.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is supported well. Pupils have visited a gurdwara and a mosque in Derby in order to gain a better understanding of different religions. This prepares them well for life in modern Britain. The pupils have baked and sold cakes to raise money for the Macmillan coffee morning. Pupils who participate in the school council suggest ideas for the reward trips pupils can earn for good behaviour.

Governance of the school

- The governors have a good understanding of the requirements to keep pupils safe. They ask challenging questions about how the views of pupils are taken into account when the school is devising strategies to keep pupils safe. Governors work closely with school leaders to complete the safeguarding audit and check that areas for improvement are actioned. The health and safety checks are robust, and the site is well maintained and secure.
- Governors have a wide range of skills and visit the school regularly to be kept informed about the school's work. They check that leaders plan for the transition of pupils to their next destination. They have received a presentation on the school's new assessment system and school leaders provide information about the progress pupils make. Governors are keen to know how much progress the pupils make at the school from their starting points. However, governors have not consistently challenged leaders well enough about pupils' progress to ensure that it is as good as it should be.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders are very proactive to keep pupils safe and take prompt action when a concern is raised. Leaders keep a detailed chronology of events and actions taken to protect pupils. They work with a wide range of agencies, including the youth offending team, social care and the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service, to ensure that the pupils have the right support. Leaders also work very effectively with parents to ensure that there is a joint approach to helping and supporting pupils.
- The staff are well trained. They have accessed training on peer-to-peer abuse, illegal substance use and dealing (county lines) and child sexual exploitation. Staff have

regular training on physical restraint. This training has focused more on using techniques which do not require a physical hold. In the current academic year, the number of physical restraints which required a hold has halved compared to the same period in the previous academic year.

- At the end of each day, the staff team has a debriefing session to discuss any behavioural changes in pupils, both positive and negative changes. This ensures that all staff are aware of pupils' current needs and they share strategies to support the pupils. The liaison between the education staff and the residential care staff is robust. Staff observations of pupils are noted and shared to ensure that the transition is seamless and everyone is well informed.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teachers do not consistently provide for pupils to demonstrate their learning without adult support. Typically, adults support pupils in learning new skills and knowledge but do not check whether pupils can complete these skills or have retained the knowledge without adult support.
- Adults do not support pupils well enough to learn key facts in mathematics. Pupils lack strategies to calculate times tables if they do not know the answer. In addition, particularly in key stage 2, teachers do not ask enough questions to develop pupils' mathematical reasoning skills.
- Teachers do not challenge the most able pupils well enough to develop their writing skills across all subjects. Too often, pupils are not expected to write as well as they should in subjects other than English. In English lessons, pupils write more and some gain a good understanding of genre. For example, when pupils in key stage 3 wrote an extra scene for Macbeth, they continued in the same style as Shakespeare. However, the most able do not develop their structure of writing as well as they should.
- Pupils frequently investigate scientific concepts. For example, they have investigated which materials most effectively reduce the volume of sound. Teachers encourage pupils to record their results for investigations in charts and line graphs. However, there are fewer opportunities for the most able to write their conclusions and demonstrate their understanding of what they have learned.
- Pupils were enthused to locate cities across the world using an atlas. They calculated the difference in time between Greenwich Mean Time and the local time in the foreign cities.
- Some pupils who are weak readers do not receive regular support to help them improve. However, when pupils are provided with specific time to learn phonics, they make good progress. Pupils remember sounds they have been taught and blend the sounds to read new words. In addition, pupils' letter formation improves markedly.
- In PE, the teacher encouraged pupils to learn new skills and to practise these skills to become more adept. In basketball, pupils learned to dribble, pass and shoot. Pupils remembered the rules of the game and applied them well when they played a match.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils engage well in the alternative therapies. This provides opportunities for pupils to work with others of different ages. Pupils' social skills develop well and most participate keenly in the activities. In addition, at breaktimes, there are a range of activities, including board games, cricket and dodgeball, in which pupils can communicate and participate. In dodgeball, pupils played to the rules without adult intervention and were very fair at taking turns with the ball.
- Pupils respond well when given positions of responsibility. The science, technology, engineering and mathematics project has enabled pupils to plan and redevelop part of the school grounds. The first part of the project has involved clearing the ground and creating a firepit. Pupils have taken on different roles to manage the project. With the support of staff, they have created a display of the work and published newsletters. Pupils are rightly proud of their work.
- Pupils say bullying does happen at the school but teachers are very good at resolving the issues quickly. The school records show the incidents of bullying have halved in the current academic year compared to the same time in the previous year.
- Pupils benefit from careers education which supports their transition to their next place of learning. Pupils research different careers and, in Year 9, pupils discuss their aspirations with external professionals from the local authority. Pupils visit a working foundry in Sheffield to find out more about the world of work. Their aspirations inform the decision-making process about where they will transfer to in Year 10. Most pupils return to a mainstream school.
- The transition into mainstream school is managed well. Some pupils transfer before Year 9 to ensure that they can enrol on their chosen GCSE courses. Staff accompany pupils on visits and staff from the new school visit pupils at Holly House. Leaders from other schools compliment the Holly House leaders on the seamless transition.
- Pupils learn how to keep safe in a variety of contexts. They understand the dangers of illegal substances and of child sexual exploitation. They realise people online can try to groom them. They are also aware of peer pressure and know they should make their own decisions. Pupils feel able to talk to staff if they have a concern.
- Pupils feel safe at the alternative provision and are successful in improving their attitudes to learning. There is good communication between the school and the alternative provision. School leaders inform staff at the alternative provision about the pupils' needs.
- The overwhelming majority of parents are very pleased with the work of the staff and would recommend the school to other parents. A typical comment was: 'My son's attitude to learning has completely changed. I cannot thank the staff at Holly House enough.'

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.

- Until recently, the number of fixed-term exclusions has been very high. Leaders have reviewed the behaviour policy and have tried to ensure that staff have a better understanding of pupils' needs to help them manage pupils' emotions and behaviour. This work has started to have an impact and the number of exclusions has halved in the current academic year compared to the same time in the previous year. However, the number of fixed-term exclusions is still well above average, and instances of poor behaviour are high. Leaders are taking action to better inform staff of the pupils' particular SEND.
- Until very recently, pupils' attendance has been persistently below the national average for similar schools. The pupils' key workers focus on attendance and this has had a positive impact. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent has reduced significantly in the current academic year.
- Pupils sometimes struggle to listen to each other's views. This sometimes detracts from the quality of learning and the degree to which pupils' views are respected by their peers.
- Each pupil has a risk assessment, and these contain useful strategies for staff to use if a pupil's behaviour deteriorates. Staff regularly review the risk assessments and discuss strategies to manage behaviour. This is helping to reduce the number of incidents of poor behaviour.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils do not achieve as well as they should in mathematics. Too many pupils have gaps in their knowledge, which means that they struggle to make good progress from their starting points. However, when pupils are confident in mathematics, they solve problem-solving questions with increasing accuracy.
- In food technology, pupils cook a variety of dishes and enjoy the subject. However, their evaluation of how they could improve their recipes is weak. Pupils do not focus well enough on this task and evaluate their work effectively.
- Pupils include adjectives in their writing to add interest for the reader. An example of this, in key stage 2, was 'Joey heroically and bravely jumped over the German tank.' However, the most able pupils are not developing effectively enough the structure of their writing to ensure that an extended piece of writing is well written, with a beginning, middle and end.
- In art, pupils make good progress and produce artwork to a good standard. Pupils have completed drawings of the human face, which were half human and half android, in detail. They have mastered basic brush techniques using traditional Chinese brushes. Finally, pupils take pride in glazing their pottery work to ensure that it is finished to a good standard.
- The majority of pupils read well. They demonstrate a good understanding of their reading by answering comprehension questions. However, a significant minority of pupils have reading ages well below their chronological age and insufficient action has been taken to improve their reading.
- In design and technology, pupils have made stilts and wooden seating benches to a good standard.

School details

Unique reference number	131322
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	10083936

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	7 to 14
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	44
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Stephen Pacey
Headteacher	Iain Williams
Telephone number	01246 450 530
Website	www.hollyhouse.derbyshire.sch.uk
Email address	info@hollyhouse.derbyshire.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	26 September 2018

Information about this school

- The school has provision for pupils with severe social, emotional, mental health and behavioural difficulties. Prior to admission, pupils have been excluded from mainstream education or have had a disrupted education.
- All pupils have an EHC plan. Many have complex needs, including attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, attachment disorder, pathological demand avoidance disorder, autism spectrum disorder and communication and language difficulties.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is well above the national average.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The school makes residential provision for up to eight pupils a night. There is a rotating programme of enrichment activities in which pupils participate. This provision was last inspected by Ofsted in February 2019 and received an outstanding judgement.
- The school uses one alternative provider, Chesterfield Community Care Farm.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed a range of lessons in both key stages. Some lessons were jointly observed with senior leaders.
- Inspectors reviewed pupils' work and met with two groups of pupils: a group from key stage 2 and a group from key stage 3. Inspectors listened to pupils read and observed them over breaktimes.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the leaders of English and mathematics, the coordinator of the provision for pupils with SEND, a group of teachers, a group of teaching assistants and a senior adviser from the local authority. Inspectors met the chair and vice-chair of the governing body and one other governor.
- Inspectors reviewed the school improvement plan and the school's self-evaluation. They also reviewed tracking information regarding pupils' progress and documentation related to behaviour and safeguarding.
- Inspectors reviewed the 10 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, the school's own parental survey and the seven responses to the Ofsted free-text service for parents. Inspectors also spoke with two parents.
- Inspectors reviewed the 11 responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Martin Finch, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Karen Lewis

Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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