



The Holy Brook School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 110193
LEA Reading LEA
Inspection number 278377
Inspection dates 14 March 2006 to 14 March 2006
Reporting inspector Margaret Goodchild AI

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

Type of school	Special	School address	145 Ashampstead Road
School category	Community special		Southcote
Age range of pupils	7 to 11		Reading RG30 3LJ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01189015489
Number on roll	22	Fax number	01189015488
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Ms Jenny Pickett
Date of previous inspection	14 June 2004	Headteacher	Mr Lee Smith

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a small special school for pupils in Years 3 to 6 who have a statement of special educational needs for their emotional, behavioural and social difficulties. Nearly all the pupils are boys. Most pupils are of white British heritage and no pupils are learning English as an additional language. Half the pupils are eligible for free school meals, and many pupils enter the school with attainment that is well below average. At the time of the last inspection, the school was found to have serious weaknesses in the curriculum and accommodation, in a number of subjects and in governance. The school experienced a number of changes of staff, together with a significant amount of staff absence and extensive building work during the last academic year.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The headteacher and other staff believe that this is a satisfactory school and inspection findings agree with their judgement. The school has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection and has the capacity to continue to improve. The headteacher has a clear awareness of how to move the school forward and is systematically working to raise pupils' achievement, which is currently satisfactory. Actions taken to raise achievement in English and mathematics have begun to have a positive effect. The school has recently improved the way that it records and checks the progress of individual pupils, but there is more work to be done on this. More regular monitoring of teaching is also needed, in order to ensure that all pupils are learning as well as they can. Governors provide satisfactory support to the school. A number of them have joined the governing body very recently and the school is working with them to develop their role. The school cares well for its pupils and makes sure that they are supported effectively. As a result, pupils make good progress in their personal development, and the school has had outstanding success in improving the rate of attendance. Those parents who expressed an opinion about the school are pleased with the quality of education. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- * Continue to raise achievement, especially in English and mathematics.
- * Ensure that the progress of individual pupils is recorded and tracked in all subjects.
- * Strengthen systems for monitoring teaching and learning.
- * Develop the role of the governing body and provide appropriate training for newly appointed governors.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The inspection supports the school's view that pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Standards are well below average overall, reflecting the low standards of many pupils when they join the school and gaps in pupils' previous learning as a result of their emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Progress towards pupils' individual education plan targets is satisfactory. In the 2005 National Curriculum tests that pupils take in Year 6, pupils did significantly better in science than in English and mathematics. Pupils are now making satisfactory progress in English, mathematics and science as they move through the school. The recent improvement in resources for information and communication technology (ICT) means that computers are now being used to support pupils' learning in English and mathematics: the school has clear plans for extending the use of ICT further. The school's own monitoring has identified that girls make less progress than boys. Staff

have already begun to provide additional personal support and rewards tailored to girls' interests in an attempt to remedy this.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress in their personal development and well-being. They have good relationships with the staff, mostly co-operate with what is expected of them and clearly enjoy many of the activities provided. There has been exceptionally good improvement in the rate of attendance: it rose from well below average in 2004 to almost average in 2005. This outstanding outcome is the result of a really concerted effort to get all pupils attending as regularly as possible. The school has also been successful in reducing the number of exclusions. Behaviour is satisfactory overall, reflecting good improvement during pupils' time at the school. Pupils' spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory; their moral and social development is good. The school has made some improvement in spiritual development since the last inspection and is working to improve it further. It is also improving the promotion of pupils' cultural development further: pupils have clearly enjoyed the activities in celebration of the Chinese New Year.

The school gained the Healthy Schools bronze award in 2003 and is working towards the silver award. Pupils have good opportunities to learn about healthy living and about how to stay safe. They are increasingly involved in decisions that affect them and the school is exploring the best way of collecting their views. Pupils take responsibility by helping around the school and contribute to fundraising for local, national and international charities. Emphasis on rewards encourages pupils to behave responsibly and to make positive choices. They make satisfactory progress in acquiring basic skills, which should stand them in reasonably good stead for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory with some good features. Where teaching is good, pupils are made aware of what is expected of them and tasks are tightly structured to ensure that they remain focused for most of the time. In these lessons, some pupils show evident pride in their achievement and most pupils apply themselves well. When teaching is satisfactory, staff provide effective support to pupils in the completion of their work, prompting and guiding them, but expectations for work and behaviour are not always as high as they should be. The topics that are to be covered in the long and medium-term are carefully planned and this provides a good framework for teachers when preparing lessons. However, tasks are not always matched as well as they should be to different needs. Teachers sometimes expect pupils, for instance, to write a different number of sentences if they are less or more able than one another, rather than providing some activities that are more challenging than others. Support assistants

are used well and make a good contribution to pupils' learning. Teachers' marking encourages pupils and also informs them about what they could do to improve.

Assessment is satisfactory and continuing to develop in English and mathematics. Limited assessment takes place in other subjects, with no coherent records of the progress of individual pupils in these subjects. The inclusion of specific and detailed targets for English and mathematics within pupils' individual education plans, alongside targets for improving their behaviour, is a positive development. The school has begun to analyse how well pupils are doing in meeting their targets to improve its understanding of their overall progress. It has more work to do to arrive at a clear picture of how much progress individual pupils are making overall.

Parents are kept well informed about how their children are doing. Some parents have requested that regular homework should be set but providing this on a regular basis remains a development priority. It is important that homework is provided without further delay as a way of raising pupils' achievement and promoting independent learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory curriculum that is generally matched to pupils' needs. An increase in the length of the school day means that subjects are now covered in sufficient depth, including those subjects that did not receive enough attention at the time of the last inspection. The school provides pupils with satisfactory opportunities to develop skills in English and mathematics, and increasingly so ICT. Good attention is given to promoting an awareness of health and safety. Pupils are given opportunities to contribute to the community and the school makes good use of the locality, for instance, involving pupils in a survey of public opinion within a local history project. The school provides satisfactory enrichment opportunities through visiting professionals - such as an artist-in-residence and providers of specialist football training, drama coaching as part of multi-cultural week, drug awareness sessions - and some educational visits. It provides a number of lunchtime clubs, rather than after-school clubs because of the distance that pupils travel and their difficulty in staying on after school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school cares well for its pupils and makes sure that they feel safe and supported. Staff make themselves readily available to support pupils who are anxious or distressed. Pupils have detailed behaviour support plans and individual education plans. Effective systems are in place for dealing with difficult behaviour so that its impact on learning is kept to a minimum and pupils are made aware of their behaviour targets. The school recognises that pupils and parents need to be made more aware of pupils' academic targets as a way of raising achievement. Pupils receive good feedback on how to improve their work in English and mathematics, but they are not so well informed by assessment in other subjects. The school has introduced a system for identifying pupils'

attainment when they join the school and uses the findings of this to place pupils in the class where their needs can best be met. Pupils are supported well in class and a high level of supervision is provided at break times to ensure that pupils are kept safe and have an adult to whom they can turn. The school works closely with other agencies to ensure that pupils are protected and their needs identified. A speech and language therapist works on the school site, providing support for those pupils who have communication difficulties.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school is led and managed satisfactorily. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory, slowed to some extent by changes of staff, and during the last academic year by an unusual level of staff absence and extensive building work. All staff are now involved in school self-evaluation and the school is exploring ways to include the views of pupils and parents increasingly in evaluating overall effectiveness. A comprehensive development plan details what actions are to be taken to bring about further improvement: this shows that the headteacher is clear about the way forward and is focusing appropriately on raising achievement. Teachers' planning is checked regularly but lessons are not observed often enough. As part of its staff restructuring, a deputy headteacher is to be appointed, in order to help future development move at a faster pace. Teachers responsible for co-ordinating English and mathematics have worked very closely with local authority advisers in identifying how to bring about improvements in their subjects and as a result standards have begun to rise. Since the last inspection, the school has made good use of external support from the local authority and other schools to increase staff expertise in a number of areas and this has begun to have a positive impact on pupils' achievement. The school is well staffed and satisfactorily resourced to meet pupils' needs. Improvements in accommodation mean that it is now satisfactory. Satisfactory links with mainstream schools contribute to pupils' learning, with good links in physical education.

A number of governors left towards the end of 2005 and the school was without a chair for a time. A new chair, experienced in governance, has been appointed recently and a number of new but inexperienced governors are now in place. The governing body receives regular information from the headteacher about the workings of the school and has contributed to school self-evaluation. Governors have not yet begun to collect independent information from which to make judgements about the school's effectiveness and some governors are awaiting training.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	NA
The behaviour of learners	3	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Pupils

I enjoyed my visit to your school and would like to thank you for making me feel welcome. This letter is to tell you about some of the important things that I saw in your school.

I was pleased to see that you are making good progress in your personal development and learning how to control your behaviour. I could see that the staff care about you and you get a lot of support in class and at break times. The school has done really well to make sure you all attend as regularly as you can. The teaching is satisfactory and sometimes good. In the lessons I looked at, it was good to see how some of you take a pride in what you've achieved - this is important. You are achieving satisfactorily: if you worked really hard, you could sometimes do better. The teaching also needs to be checked more often to make sure you are learning as much as you could. The headteacher knows what to do to improve the school and has done a lot recently to make it better for you. Teachers are now checking your progress carefully, especially in English and mathematics, and need to do this in all your subjects. There are several new governors and some are waiting to be trained in the things that governors have to do so that they can work more closely with the school.

Try to make the most of the rest of your time at The Holy Brook School.

Yours faithfully

M J Goodchild

Lead Inspector