



The Honywood Community Science School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 115226
LEA ESSEX LEA
Inspection number 279547
Inspection dates 7 March 2006 to 7 March 2006
Reporting inspector Mr. Harmer Parr LI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to inspect any school in England. The inspection is to be treated as a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Westfield Drive
School category	Community		CO6 1PZ
Age range of pupils	11 to 16		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01376561231
Number on roll	943	Fax number	01376563067
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs. Jill Ward
Date of previous inspection	6 March 2000	Headteacher	Mr. Simon Mason

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors. The school completed a self-evaluation form which gave its view of its strengths and weaknesses. This accurate document was the starting point for the inspection, which also looked at data about the school and information provided by it. Discussions were held with pupils and staff and some lessons were observed. The inspector read all the questionnaires, well over 200 of them, returned by parents.

Description of the school

Honywood is a popular school with low proportions of pupils who qualify for free school meals or who have learning difficulties and disabilities. Few pupils are from minority ethnic groups and almost all speak English as their first language. In recognition of its continuing success, the school achieved 'Leading Edge' status in 2004, receiving extra funding to allow it to work with and support other schools. In September 2005 it was designated a specialist science school, and is already building actively on this to bring about further improvements.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Honywood is an extremely effective school which gives very good value for money. It has improved a lot since the last inspection and has a strong capacity to improve further. The visitor to the school is immediately struck by the warm, friendly atmosphere and the exceptionally positive attitudes of the pupils. Almost all of them really enjoy school, and are quick to point out how much the teachers do for them, both in and out of school time. They like making decisions about things that affect them and being given the money to carry them out. They have already improved the meals and the toilets; outside recreation areas are next on the list. It is not surprising that they respect their teachers and each other, and that bullying or poor behaviour are extremely rare. The vast majority of parents were very complimentary about the school and how well it cares for and guides the pupils. Several took the trouble to record their thanks for particular efforts made to help a pupil settle in or sort out a problem. They appreciate the regular information they receive. In fact, the only partner that did not rate the school as outstanding was the school itself: ample testimony to its self-critical approach, and another reason why it is likely to improve further. Because most pupils want to learn, the teachers have been encouraged to try out new ideas to make the lessons even more interesting. The headteacher has given a very strong lead in creating a climate where teachers want to improve and develop. As a result, teaching has got steadily better. Senior and middle managers have good systems to make sure the improvement continues. Not surprisingly, therefore, most pupils achieve very well and reach high standards. Some pupils with learning difficulties do not do as well as they should, and the most able pupils sometimes fail to gain the highest grades. The school knows this, and in order to improve further it should make sure that: - all pupils with learning difficulties have targets which help them to progress from lesson to lesson and from week to week; - all subjects provide challenging activities for the most able pupils to help them reach the highest levels.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The standards the pupils reach at ages 14 and 16 are high. They make very good, and sometimes exceptional progress. The profile of year groups is broadly average when pupils join in Year 7, but well above by the time they leave. At GCSE, around three quarters of the pupils gain a grade higher in their examinations than pupils nationally. Such progress does not happen by accident. As soon as they arrive, the pupils are set challenging targets based on how well they have done before and what tests show about their potential. Their progress is then regularly monitored against those targets and remedial action is taken if necessary. Parents are closely involved. Pupils achieve very well in the lower school: in mathematics, for example, progress between ages 11 and 14 for pupils taking national tests in 2005 was in the top one per cent of schools in the country. Progress in Key Stage 4 is less consistent. The school recognises that two groups of pupils have sometimes underachieved in the upper school. A few pupils with learning difficulties, including some with a Statement of Special Educational

Need, have failed to make the progress expected, and the most able pupils do not always achieve the highest grades. This is a relative weakness within a strong and improving picture.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Personal development is outstanding. The pupils are well behaved, polite, welcoming to visitors and extraordinarily positive about the school. They reserved particular praise for their teachers, who 'go the extra mile to help them'. Through a well-established system of year and school councils, they participate actively in making decisions about school life. This includes, for example, taking responsibility for a budget of seven thousand pounds for improvements and deciding how to spend it. They also participate in an unusually wide range of trips, visits, clubs, activities, fund-raising and community projects. They recognise and appreciate that the school does a lot for them, which explains their strong sense of allegiance to it. Last year, pupils complained about the quality of meals and said they wanted improvements. They got them: healthy options are now widely available, and cheaper than the few less healthy ones that remain. They are well prepared for adult life, with their strong foundations in literacy and numeracy complemented by increasing opportunities to work in teams and solve problems.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Learning is good because teaching is good. The school has an accurate view of the quality of teaching and undertakes research to make it better. As a result, most lessons are at least good and some are outstanding. A particular feature of good lessons is the planning. The teachers tell the pupils precisely what they will learn, time the fast-moving activities and check that the goals have been achieved. This creates a sense of progress and urgency for all concerned. Progress is also encouraged by a strong system of assessment. The teachers make continual reference to the targets that pupils are expected to reach and, where necessary, give extra advice about how to reach them.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is broad and varied and caters well for the needs of most pupils. The way they are grouped for their lessons generally motivates them to do their best. Most pupils take at least ten GCSEs, with additional options in mathematics and science for the most able. The vocational curriculum is less well developed. The school acknowledges this and is exploring joint arrangements with other schools and colleges to provide worthwhile options for the relatively small numbers who will benefit. The

rich and varied extracurricular activities make a strong contribution to pupils' enjoyment of school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Outstanding personal development is a direct result of high levels of care, guidance and support: a strength of the school. The pupils are well cared for and protected. Some new to the school remarked on how well they had been helped to settle in. Others who had experienced problems really appreciated the school's efforts to help them. They said that individual teachers were very approachable and helpful. The school's very strong systems for tutorial work and mentoring ensure that academic and personal guidance go hand in hand.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher has taken a dynamic lead in ensuring that a school that was already good is now even better. He has set a clear direction, and made the school more outward-looking through its involvement in Leading Edge activities and its designation as a specialist science school. He has been well supported by a knowledgeable and hard-working governing body. Senior and middle managers have established strong systems to make sure that all staff do their jobs as well as possible. Through self-evaluation and internal reviews that include the views of pupils, subject departments are held to account for the standards they achieve and given targets for improvement. Parents' views are regularly sought and they receive information weekly through the 'Honywood Gazette'. This is a school that knows itself well, consults others and keeps them informed. A particular achievement has been the creation of an unusually strong culture of improvement among the teachers. Research and development activities have raised expectations, improved teaching and benefited learners.

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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?	1	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	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?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	1	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	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?	1	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	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	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

I really enjoyed my visit to your school. Thank you for being so helpful. You are lucky because you go to a really good school. You know that because you told me so yourselves. Your teachers do a lot for you - like all the clubs and extra activities they put on - and you appreciate it. You reciprocate by behaving very well and trying hard. As a result, you make fast progress and get good results. One of the unusual things about your school is the amount of influence you have over things that affect you. The teachers ask your opinion about lots of things: the teaching, the food, the school environment amongst others. They give you money and let you decide how to spend it. I'd be very interested to see how you spend the seven thousand pounds you've got this year, but no doubt the improvements will be just as good as in previous years. Apparently, the toilets are a huge improvement. Your teachers talk a lot about how to improve their teaching, and I know you have benefited because I watched some lessons. Because your school has done so well, it has become a 'Leading Edge' school so it can share its good work with other schools. It has also become a specialist science school, and you are already feeling the benefits of that. You now get to work with pupils from other schools as well. I had lunch with some of you and asked how the school could be improved. You really struggled for an answer. Don't worry, so did I! I asked the school to make sure that those of you who have learning difficulties have targets for each lesson and each week so you know you are making progress. I also asked them to make sure that all of you who are capable of the highest grades achieve them: at the moment you don't do that in all subjects. Thank you again for your welcome, well done, and good luck for the future.