



Holbrook High School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 124848
LEA SUFFOLK LEA
Inspection number 281823
Inspection dates 11 January 2006 to 12 January 2006
Reporting inspector Mr. Ken Shooter LI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Ipswich Road
School category	Community		IP9 2QX
Age range of pupils	11 to 16		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01473328317
Number on roll	492	Fax number	01473327362
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs. Jackie Fookes
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable	Headteacher	Mr. Robert Sherington

Age group 11 to 16	Inspection dates 11 January 2006 - 12 January 2006	Inspection number 281823
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Holbrook is a mixed comprehensive school situated in rural Suffolk. The current headteacher has been in post since September 2005. The school has 492 pupils on roll and is smaller than the average sized secondary school. Pupils transfer to Holbrook from the local primary schools at the age of eleven and most go on to other secondary schools with sixth forms or to further education colleges at the age of sixteen. Almost all the pupils are of White British background. None of the pupils speak English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is well below the national average. The school has a reasonably stable school population. The girls out-number boys by about 10%. The number of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) is in line with the national average, but the percentage with SEN is about 2% higher. The school is currently applying to the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) for designation as a specialist school in the combined specialism of humanities and modern foreign languages.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school judges its overall effectiveness to be good and inspectors agree with this. The school provides its students with a good education. A large number make good progress during their time at the school and most achieve good standards in a variety of subjects by the age of sixteen. They are well prepared for the next phase of their education. The standards achieved by the school compare well with similar schools. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall but more work is needed to ensure consistency in marking and assessment. Most students enjoy coming to school and feel valued and safe. The vast majority of parents and students are positive about the school and what it is trying to achieve. The school promotes a climate of inclusion, support and care. Much attention is given to students' personal development. Vulnerable students are supported very well by caring staff. Attendance is at least satisfactory. Good leadership by the headteacher and many other staff with management responsibilities is beginning to promote a climate of continuous improvement and high expectation. Strengths and weaknesses are now openly acknowledged and staff share a determination to raise standards. The current focus on improving literacy is a good example. Governors support the school well. They have a clear vision of its role, and, more recently, have been actively involved in monitoring progress to feed into strategic planning. The senior management recognise the limitations of the current curriculum in Years 10 and 11 and the need to create opportunities for vocational courses and work-related learning. The school is also trying to extend the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to raise standards across the curriculum. Spending is carefully matched to resource needs and priorities. By providing a good standard of education the school demonstrates good value for money. Partnerships with other local schools and agencies are good. The school displays the capacity to improve even further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality and consistency of marking, assessment practice and individual target setting across all years.
- Explore how the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 can provide more opportunities for vocational and work related courses.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The school's judgement that students who attend regularly make good progress is correct. Similarly, the judgement that overall standards reached by learners are good is also in line with the inspection team's evaluation. The majority of students come to the school with levels of attainment in English and mathematics which are comparable with national averages. Building on this, they continue to make good progress over their five years at Holbrook. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities also make good progress. By the end of Key Stage 3, standards of attainment in English, mathematics and science are good and higher than national averages. In 2005, GCSE

attainment was good across the majority of subjects and courses in the curriculum compared to national figures. Although the number of students gaining five or more GCSE higher grades has remained at about the same level for the last three years, the percentage of students gaining good grades in English and mathematics has improved. In 2005, boys performed better than girls in mathematics and science. However, there is some underachievement by boys in the middle and lower ranges of ability. The most able students achieve well at GCSE. Although overall, this paints a picture of relative success, the headteacher and staff are not complacent. There are several whole-school initiatives to raise standards further, including a focus on improving literacy and study skills, and raising boys' achievement. The school is now setting itself challenging targets taking account of the level of attainment students start from in Year 7.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The inspection team agrees with the school's judgement that the personal development and well-being of students is good overall. Students like coming to a small secondary school that is welcoming and enables them to develop positive relationships with teachers and friends. Attendance rates are never less than satisfactory and truancy is rare. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. The small number of students with the potential to be disruptive is well managed and supported. The vast majority of parents and students feel that the school is a safe and caring place to work. In what is a close knit school community, bullying and intimidation are very infrequent and resolved quickly and effectively. The new sports hall will support better provision for games and physical activity. Together with the current move to promote healthy eating, this is intended to encourage more students to adopt healthy lifestyles. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good overall. Social and moral development are strengthened by opportunities for older students to mentor those in Year 7 and by being school prefects. Even so, they would like to be given greater responsibility to match their increasing maturity. The school's council provides all year groups with an opportunity to suggest improvements in the school. Students' contributions to the wider community and their participation in extra-curricular activities are both satisfactory, though constrained by the school's rural location and the need to transport students home to outlying villages. The school's approach to developing economic understanding is satisfactory. Careers education and appropriate work placements help students prepare for the world of work, although the school recognises there is more to be done in this area.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The school's judgement that teaching and learning are good is shared by the inspection team. The action being taken to improve the quality of teaching is having a beneficial effect on students' learning in most subjects. There are examples of much good and

some outstanding teaching, but areas where further improvement is needed. The better teaching is suitably challenging and matched to students' needs. Resources are used imaginatively to make lessons interesting and to extend learning. Students' attention is gained and retained well by engaging them skilfully in discussion, and by providing varied and well-planned activities. Teachers use effective strategies for managing behaviour to develop a calm and purposeful atmosphere in their classrooms. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities are supported effectively in lessons. Staff use detailed individual learning plans which set clear targets for improvement. A minority of parents raised concerns about the consistency of marking and the setting of homework. The marking and assessment of students' work have improved since the last inspection, but need further attention to achieve consistency across the school and to show students how to improve. The setting of homework is also variable, as is the use of student planners for recording it.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Inspection evidence confirms the school's judgement that the curriculum is satisfactory and meets statutory requirements. The curriculum for Years 7 to 9 is sufficiently broad to provide a good basis for work in the next two years. Given the size of the school, the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. There is a satisfactory range of traditional subjects and option choices to meet their needs and aspirations and to prepare them for the next phase of education. Opportunities are provided for high attaining students to take GCSE exams early in specific subjects and there are arrangements for identified students to take alternative courses to GCSE. The school is now investigating ways of broadening and extending the range of vocational courses and work related learning. Religious education and citizenship are not taught to sufficient depth and improvements are underway to address this. The school is also taking steps to eliminate weaknesses in provision for and use of ICT in Years 10 and 11. The development of healthy lifestyles is taught effectively through physical education, food technology and personal, social and health education.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care, guidance and support systems are good overall. The school made the judgement that they are outstanding. However, while recognising the considerable strengths in care and support, the school has yet to embed a whole school approach to individual target setting and monitoring students' academic progress. Holbrook is a very caring and supportive school. Child protection checks and health and safety risk assessments are carried out thoroughly. Students talk positively about the support they receive from their heads of year and tutors and they value the personal, social and health education provided. The school library is a valuable study support and plays an important role in the school's network of care and guidance. Provision for students with learning difficulties and disabilities is very good and helps them make good progress. The school also provides effective support for vulnerable students. Good

careers advice and course guidance, supported by the local careers service, enable most students to make successful choices at the end of Year 11.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The inspection team judges that leadership and management are good. The school estimated that they are satisfactory. The school runs well on a day to day basis. Members of staff work well as a team and increasingly share the new headteacher's vision for the school's future. The headteacher and governors have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Recent action to improve the school is already having an impact, particularly through use of increasingly robust procedures to evaluate how well the school is performing in order to raise standards further. Assessment data is evaluated rigorously to set whole school targets and the action needed to make improvements. The work of teachers is closely monitored and carefully targeted support and training are provided to improve their performance. Inconsistencies in classroom practice are beginning to be eliminated. Shortcomings in current procedures to plan for the school's improvement are being tackled so that priorities and action to be taken are clearer. Areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection have been tackled with some success, although the school recognises that more needs to be done to make assessment effective and to improve provision for ICT in Years 10 and 11. Governors are supportive of the school and have a clear vision for its future. They are fully involved in planning for the school's development and set the headteacher and senior staff challenging targets. Prudent financial planning ensures that the school's funds are targeted carefully to meet its identified educational objectives and to provide good value for money. The provision of new technology and other resources to support learning are satisfactory, and used well. The school is adequately staffed and deployment is generally effective. There is a strongly expressed commitment to meeting the needs of all students and to ensuring equality of opportunity. Liaison with outside agencies supports the achievement of many students well. The opinions of parents are sought. While the vast majority of parents feel that the school educates and supports students well, a significant minority feel that the school does not take full account of their views.

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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?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	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?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	3	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	3	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?	2	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?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	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	2	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

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. We enjoyed the chance to talk with you about your work, values, interests and hopes for the future. This is a summary of what we think you might like to know about our view of the school. You will also be able to read the full inspection report when it arrives at the school. What we liked about your school: - the majority of you make progress and achieve good standards in your work - those of you with learning difficulties and disabilities are very well supported - your school provides a calm and safe environment in which you can learn - you behave well and support each other - most of you like coming to school and attend regularly - overall the quality of teaching is good - the staff provide good levels of care and guidance, and you can get help when you need it. What we have asked your school to do now: - for teachers to mark your work consistently and show you how to improve - introduce some opportunities for you to study vocational and work related courses in Years 10 and 11. We know that your headteacher is committed to improving the school for you and he has the full support of all staff in doing so. You can help teachers to make this a successful school by attending regularly, behaving well and continuing to work hard.