



Holmes Chapel Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 111035
Local Authority Cheshire
Inspection number 288834
Inspection dates 27–28 November 2006
Reporting inspector Anna Dawson

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Middlewich Road
School category	Community		Holmes Chapel, Crewe
Age range of pupils	4–11		Cheshire CW4 7EB
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01477 533336
Number on roll (school)	382	Fax number	01477 544556
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr A Thompson
		Headteacher	Mr P Rowbotham
Date of previous school inspection	21 January 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This large school serves the local area. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is lower than average. A below average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A very small number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds are learning English as an additional language. These pupils speak Cantonese or Spanish as their mother tongue. The school has the Basic Skills Quality Mark, Artsmark Silver, the Investors in People Award and the Schools silver Eco Award. The school is participating in a national project working on a curriculum for 21st century learners.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding and forward looking school. It provides a high quality education for all its pupils and gives very good value for money. The inspectors judge the school more favourably than the school modestly judges itself. The pupils learn very well in a happy and stimulating environment. They are challenged to develop their lifelong learning skills to the full. Parents' positive comments reflect that view: 'The teachers have created a lovely environment in which children can have adventures, be listened to and learn.' The school is very well supported by parents and is well thought of by the community. There is an outstanding partnership with other schools and outside agencies.

The provision in the Foundation Stage is good. The children get off to a good start in Reception. Activities are well planned to capture children's interest to motivate them to learn. Most attain the national standards expected for children of this age, and a minority exceed them. Although there are well planned outdoor activities, these are not fully extended across the curriculum. Pupils make very good progress in Years 1 to 6. By the end of Year 6, standards are exceptionally high in English, mathematics and science. Pupils' achievement is outstanding. Although other subjects were not inspected in depth, there are indications that standards are high in the arts.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Pupils have extremely good attitudes to learning. They enjoy school so much because the school takes exceptionally good care of all pupils equally well and provides them with an exciting and challenging curriculum. Pupils know how to lead a healthy lifestyle and stay safe. Pupils' basic skills of reading, writing, mathematics and information and communication technology, as well as their thinking and social skills, are exceptionally well developed to equip them for future learning. Attendance is above average and punctuality is good.

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Excellent teamwork ensures consistency in the management of pupils and in the lesson planning to inspire and challenge pupils. Staff are knowledgeable and skilled. The curriculum is outstanding and pupils enjoy the after-school clubs and visits and the residential trips on offer. The school provides exceptional care, guidance and support for all its pupils.

Leadership and management of the school are outstanding. The headteacher provides excellent leadership. The school is at the forefront in developing a '21st century' curriculum. Senior managers monitor the work of the school thoroughly. Any areas for improvement are spotted quickly and strategies put into place for improvement. The staff benefit from exceptionally good professional development, which enables them to continually enhance their practice. The governing body is very well informed. This enables them to challenge and support the school. Although there were no main issues for improvement from the last inspection, the school has not been complacent and has continued to improve its provision. There is exceptionally good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Extend the outdoor curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage to provide more opportunities to investigate the world around them.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Children start Reception with skills in language, mathematics and personal and social development that are generally above those expected nationally. They leave Year 6 with exceptionally high standards in English, mathematics and science. This represents outstanding progress and achievement. In Reception, children get a good start with varied and interesting activities. However, there are too few opportunities for them to work and explore outdoors, which tends to limit the progress they make in investigational work. Teaching and learning in Years 1 to 6 build very effectively upon this secure foundation, with progress becoming extremely rapid in Years 3 to 6. All groups of pupils achieve outstandingly well because the staff take care to plan for, and develop, all pupils' skills equally well. Pupils learning English feel welcomed and accepted and, because they get very good support, they make similar progress to their peers.

These standards have been maintained since the last inspection because the school carefully monitors pupils' progress and puts strategies into place to prevent pupils falling behind. This shows in targets that are consistently met or exceeded. Consequently, the trend for improvement has been faster than the national trend in recent years. The school promotes pupils' creative and personal skills equally as well as their academic skills. Although other subjects were not inspected in depth, there are examples of high quality work and very good achievement in the arts and in pupils' personal and social and problem-solving skills.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils enjoy school greatly and have exceptionally good attitudes to learning. This is because lessons take into account their interests and learning needs, motivating them to do well. Interactive learning is extremely well promoted and pupils exercise choice and initiative; for example, in science in Year 6, where they design their own fair tests to solve problems. Behaviour is good; pupils help to frame the code of conduct and are taught to care for each other. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Assemblies and religious education foster their moral and spiritual development particularly well. Attendance and punctuality are good. Pupils act as road safety officers and as 'eco busters'. They have a good awareness of healthy lifestyle issues and are encouraged to eat and drink healthily. The curriculum and after-school clubs provide plentiful opportunities to be active. Pupils help to raise funds for charitable causes and are encouraged to empathise with those less fortunate than themselves. The Children's Committee plays a role in decision making in school. Older

pupils act as playground buddies for younger children. Work with a partner or in teams is a well developed feature of many lessons, giving pupils a sense of responsibility towards each other and nurturing their cooperative skills. This, together with the very high standards they achieve in their basic skills, prepares them extremely well for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

At the heart of the successful teaching are the very positive relationships that exist in all classes. This generates a very good atmosphere for learning. Teachers aim to get the best out of pupils, planning work that challenges and interests them. The teachers hold high expectations of what pupils can achieve and motivate them to work hard and develop academic and lifelong skills. For instance, teachers' questioning skills and strategies used, such as cooperative learning techniques, work very well to promote pupils' social and thinking skills. Topics and themes are combined extremely well to plan enjoyable lessons. The teachers make full use of the interactive whiteboards to capture the pupils' interest and to demonstrate teaching points. This is particularly helpful to the few learning English as an additional language. Pupils consequently enjoy learning and in the words of one, 'Lessons are fun and we play and learn together'. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are given very good support from the teaching assistants and, as a result, they make similarly outstanding progress to their peers. Teachers make very good use of information about pupils' progress to plan work. Written work is marked conscientiously and with comments that help pupils improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum addresses the interests of the pupils. Lessons are planned to give opportunities for learning based on experience and investigation. In the Foundation Stage, activities are varied and interesting. Although there are well planned outdoor activities, these are not sufficiently developed from day to day which tends to limit children's investigational skills. Children are encouraged to develop thinking skills and this enables them to become reflective and evaluative in their learning. Many areas of the curriculum are taught through topics and themes, enriched by exceptionally good use of ICT and creative arts. Planning is rigorous and ensures that all areas of the National Curriculum are covered and that a progression of skills is taught. The development of communication skills is given a high priority. Further enrichment is provided through a wide range of visits and visitors to the school and all pupils in Key Stage 2 enjoy a residential visit each year. All staff contribute to a variety of support groups, which focus on an ongoing review of curriculum provision and on designing innovative approaches to the curriculum. The positive professional culture this creates

adds value to the school and underpins the rich curriculum experience provided for the pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school gives its pupils exceptionally good care. Procedures are in place for child protection and for pupils' safety and security on site. Good support is given to vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Parents are kept extremely well informed about their children's progress through newsletters and a very informative website; they are regularly consulted through questionnaires and meetings. The school tracks pupils' progress very carefully against individual and class targets. Continuous informal assessment and regular formal testing take place through the year and the outcomes are fed into review and planning for the next stage in learning. Pupils are given good guidance to improve their work. Extremely well planned learning opportunities support pupils at all ability levels and enable very good curriculum access. The good quality of the partnership between teachers and support staff also contributes to assuring this access. The school has strong links with the local high school and pupils are prepared well for transition at the end of Key Stage 2. This link also provides for valuable inter-school curriculum partnerships and collaborative curriculum research projects.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher leads the school extremely well with the help of the very able deputy and assistant headteacher. He has the full confidence of the staff and the school community, and is constantly seeking ways of improving provision. The school is managed exceptionally well. The senior leadership is responsive to change and is forward looking. Effective subject managers give leadership and support to colleagues. A particular feature of the success of the school is the development of pupils' lifelong learning skills for the 21st century. This is helping pupils to become confident and independent learners with highly developed personal and social skills. The continuing professional development for staff is especially well established. As a result, the staff continually enhance their teaching skills and keep abreast of new initiatives. The exceptional teamwork and thorough monitoring of teaching help to improve pupils' performance. Results of national tests in English, mathematics and science are carefully analysed to identify weaknesses and subsequent action ensures improvement.

The school's self-evaluation procedures are rigorous, albeit modest in their judgements of its effectiveness. Parents are very supportive of the senior management and say they feel fully involved in the life and work of the school. The knowledgeable governing body is very well informed. Its members challenge, support and fully embrace the current vision for innovation to further improve school provision.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

As you know, a team of school inspectors visited your school recently to find out if the school is giving you the education you should receive.

First of all, thank you very much for welcoming us to your school so well. We all enjoyed talking to you about your work and finding out about all the things you like doing.

I am pleased to say that your school is outstanding. It has many strengths as well as one thing to improve. Here are the things that we felt were particularly good.

- Your school is an exciting and happy place where you really enjoy your lessons and taking part in after-school activities and trips out.
- Your school has outstanding leadership and management and you benefit from extremely good teaching.
- You work hard to reach high standards in English, mathematics and science.
- You work very well together in lessons and, when asked, find things out on your own.
- Your school cares for you all equally well and you become confident and independent learners.

We have asked your teachers to plan more opportunities for the children in Reception to work outdoors so they have more chances to investigate the world around them.

You can help your school to keep being outstanding by continuing to enjoy your lessons and by doing the best you can.