



Holywell Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 117290
Local Authority HERTFORDSHIRE
Inspection number 290784
Inspection dates 17–18 October 2006
Reporting inspector Alan Lemon

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Tolpits Lane
School category	Community		Watford
Age range of pupils	4–11		Hertfordshire WD18 6LL
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01923 225188
Number on roll (school)	251	Fax number	01923 440408
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr E James
		Headteacher	Ms M Mistry
Date of previous school inspection	9 July 2001		

Age group 4–11	Inspection dates 17–18 October 2006	Inspection number 290784
--------------------------	---	------------------------------------

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school serves the culturally and socially diverse community of West Watford. The majority of pupils live on a local council estate where social and economic deprivation is higher than average. Two thirds of pupils come from minority ethnic groups, the largest of which has Pakistani origins. Over one third of pupils do not speak English as their first language. Children's level of knowledge and skills when admitted to the Nursery is well below average. The number of pupils with learning difficulties is average and the school also has specialist provision for pupils with hearing impairment. These pupils spend most of their time in class with other pupils.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Holywell is a satisfactory school. The school's own evaluation of its performance is confirmed by inspection findings. Over the past eighteen months the new headteacher, with the support of the local authority's Intensifying Support Programme, has invested much time, energy and skill into eliminating significant causes for concern. As a result the school is effectively tackling the causes of low standards. It is successfully improving the quality of education, teaching and learning. The staff are dedicated, look after every pupil and work hard to ensure that all pupils are fully included in learning opportunities. Pupils' personal development is good. The headteacher provides the staff with inspired and determined leadership. She is supported by the effective governing body in moving the school forward. Actions are guided by the use of accurate analysis of the school's strengths and weaknesses. As a result, leadership and management are satisfactory overall and the school has good capacity to improve further. Not all parents are aware of the school improvements as several raised concerns over issues that have been dealt with successfully, such as improving pupils' behaviour.

Standards are broadly average having risen over the past two years but results of national tests are uneven. Children in the Nursery and Reception make good progress and achieve well, as do pupils with learning disabilities and those for whom English is not their first language. Although standards at Key Stage 1 have been well below average for several years the indications are that pupils' progress is beginning to pick up. Signs of improvement are stronger in Key Stage 2, particularly in mathematics and science. Consequently pupils' achievement across the school is satisfactory, although skills in English writing are weak. The extent to which pupils' progress is tracked is much more limited at Key Stage 1 than at Key Stage 2. Therefore, the support given to pupils to help them progress well does not have as sharp a focus in Key Stage 1 as in Key Stage 2. This has contributed to the differences in attainment.

Teaching and learning are adequate. They are improving because some teaching is good. This is helping pupils enjoy school more. One pupil commented, 'Teachers are really helpful and make lessons fun'. One parent captured the essence of the transformations taking place in teaching, 'The staff are very well suited to the school. My son has a new teacher who is interesting in her approach so the children really enjoy going to school'. The curriculum is good and pupils find school work interesting. There are plenty of enjoyable additional activities such as clubs, choir and sports. Pupils contribute well to enriching the life of the school and keenly support initiatives that are of benefit to others. The school has resolutely tackled what has been historically a high level of absence so that attendance is now about average. Behaviour is good because the school now gives pupils good incentives to cooperate and behave well. Pupils say they feel safer and act in considerate ways towards others. Pupils know the importance of having a healthy lifestyle and how to achieve it. Some mentioned that their parents now leave out of their lunchboxes unhealthy things like crisps and fizzy drinks.

Considering the many improvements beginning to permeate the school and the impact these are starting to have on standards, value for money is satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement in Key Stage 1 by monitoring and evaluating pupils' performance to accurately inform teaching and pupils' targets.
- Improve the standards of pupils' writing across the school by setting challenging targets on the aspects of writing that are weak.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children start in the Nursery with knowledge and skills that are well below those typically found for their age. This is most pronounced in communication, language and literacy skills. However, all children in the foundation stage are well supported and taught effectively so they make good progress. Pupils in Key Stage 1 make adequate progress and better standards are beginning to emerge as a result of improved teaching and learning. In 2006, although standards were below average more pupils at Key Stage 1 reached the level expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics than in previous years.

At Key Stage 2 in 2005, pupils made good progress in mathematics and science reaching standards expected for their age. This has been the result of some effective teaching and close tracking of each pupil's progress. Such good achievement was less obvious in English as standards remained below average. The school responded by introducing several initiatives to strengthen the teaching of literacy. As a result, the picture has improved as shown by work in lessons and indicated in 2006 results. Nevertheless pupils' writing is the weakest aspect of English. Pupils whose first language is not English receive good support, as do those with learning difficulties and hearing impairments. These pupils achieve similar standards to their peers but in doing so make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. This is due to the effective development of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. Most pupils behave maturely. Pupils have a good involvement in the school and wider community. They are thoughtfully redesigning a nearby playground in partnership with two local companies. Members of the school council gather concerns from other pupils and work together well to solve them. Pupils really enjoy school. They like the drama activities which include staging plays where they often act, sing and dance. The pupils learn effectively about their own and other cultures. One pupil said, 'I love school because lots of people help me'. Pupils take on safe and healthy lifestyles well. For example, they know about the dangers of taking medicines without permission. Attendance is satisfactory and, although the school effectively encourages all pupils to come to school every day, a few families take holidays in term time.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory, overall. There are good elements particularly in relation to planning what pupils should learn, which results in the identification and the effective use of learning objectives. Most lessons are interesting and meet pupils' needs. In the Nursery and Reception class, high expectations of what the children can do, combined with clear planning, help to ensure that teaching and learning are good.

Teaching assistants work closely with teachers, especially in providing support for those pupils who find learning difficult because their first language is not English, or they have a hearing impairment. In one literacy lesson in Year 5, the new 'talking partners' approach, encouraging discussion between pupils, helped them to clarify their thinking and supported learning well. The teaching of basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics is satisfactory. Resources are used effectively and teachers are increasingly confident in the use of information and communication technology to enhance pupils' learning.

The school has a range of assessment data but agrees that it is unable at present to track pupils' progress well enough in Years 1 and 2. Marking helps pupils to celebrate their successes but does not always provide them with a clear understanding of how to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It supports pupils' awareness of the importance of being safe and healthy through, for example, physical education and team sports. The school has recently gained a Healthy Schools Award. Work set in lessons and other activities reflects the diversity of pupils' cultural backgrounds and show that the school values these differences and promotes understanding effectively. It supports learning with increasing effectiveness in literacy and numeracy in particular. In literacy, this is being helped by the recent introduction of several new initiatives.

There is a good range of interesting after-school activities such as clubs for French, Spanish, cookery and gardening. The school choir is a popular choice. The school has opened up to the community by providing a summer school for gifted and talented children, and extended opportunities for parents to learn to use computers.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Pupils are well cared for and they know of someone in school to turn to whenever they need help. As one pupil said, 'Lots of people help me'. The 'Worry' and 'Thoughts' boxes provide a good means of allowing pupils to share their ideas and concerns with the staff. The school works closely with

other agencies and makes sure that pupils who find learning difficult, have a hearing impairment, or whose first language is not English are quickly identified and supported. Child protection arrangements are good and pupils feel safe and free from bullying.

The support given to pupils to help them make progress is effective in Key Stage 2. Older pupils have a good understanding of what they have achieved and what steps to take to improve on this. They know their targets and these play a prominent part in learning, encouraging these pupils and sharpening their focus on the work they need to do. Here, pupils' progress is rigorously tracked and the information is used to plan teaching and set targets. However, in Key Stage 1, pupils' progress is not so closely analysed and this makes it more difficult for the Key Stage 1 leader and her teachers to gain a focus on the areas of the pupils' work that need more attention. As a result, pupils are not given the level of support and guidance available for older pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher has galvanised staff into working together as an effective team with common aims and determination to improve provision. They are making a concerted effort to push standards upwards. This is being accomplished satisfactorily in most parts of the school. Difficulties in recruiting a suitable Key Stage 1 coordinator until recently have limited the school in its ability to bring about improvements in this key stage. However, leadership across the school has a clear direction and management roles are well defined, such that the school continues to go forward effectively. This is beginning to apply in Key Stage 1 with the recent appointment of a teacher to take charge here. The leadership of the Foundation Stage is good as a result of the effective monitoring carried out by the teacher in charge. Monitoring and evaluation is increasingly part of everyone's job and is becoming rigorous and accurate, especially in how teaching is being improved, and in tracking the progress of pupils in Key Stage 2.

Governors exert a strong influence on school improvement by staying well informed and closely involved in its work. They have a clear understanding of immediate priorities and help effectively by asking searching questions. The governors' Standards and Achievement working group in particular is enabling governors to keep close track of pupils' performance and the factors that contribute to the results pupils achieve.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	-----------------------

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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
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	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

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

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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

19 October 2006

Dear Pupils

Holywell Primary School, Tolpits Lane, Watford, WD18 6LL

Many thanks for your contributions to the inspection of your school and especially to those of you who had the opportunity to speak to inspectors. You all made the time we spent in school pleasant and enjoyable thanks to your friendliness and politeness.

Your headteacher is doing such a good job of making the school better in so many ways. A number of the pupils we spoke to have recognised the school is becoming more interesting, rewarding and enjoyable.

The school is changing and you are now achieving more and beginning to reach higher standards especially in Year 6. I have asked your headteacher to make sure pupils in Years 1 and 2 get more help to improve their progress by taking a closer look at what they have achieved and asking if this is enough.

I have also asked the school to help you improve your writing. You can help by continuing to behave well, work hard and come to school each day.

Do tell your parents about the good things you enjoy and what has changed at school

Many thanks.

Alan Lemon

Lead inspector