

Holbeach Bank Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120413
Local Authority	LINCOLNSHIRE
Inspection number	291720
Inspection dates	28–29 March 2007
Reporting inspector	John Brennan

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	92
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Steve Ingham
Headteacher	Mr David Baldwin
Date of previous school inspection	24 June 2002
School address	Roman Bank Holbeach Bank Spalding Lincolnshire PE12 8BX
Telephone number	01406 423375
Fax number	01406 423375

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out over two days by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This small school draws pupils from the villages of Holbeach Bank, Holbeach Hurn and the surrounding area. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. A small number of children are from Traveller families. Children's skills on entry to school vary from year to year but are typically below average. They are lower than this in literacy. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and other disabilities is a little above average. There has been considerable staff change, including a new headteacher, in the recent past.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school has come through a turbulent period which saw standards and behaviour decline. Determined and intelligent leadership by the headteacher, working in concert with an effective deputy and the local authority, has turned the fortunes of the school round. It accurately assesses itself as satisfactory giving satisfactory value for money. Although the school has the growing confidence of parents and the local authority and has improved well of late, there is a satisfactory capacity for continued improvement. This is because other staff are still developing as leaders and the school continues to benefit from the support of the local authority. Leadership and management overall are satisfactory.

New appointments have brought vigour and vitality to teaching. However, several staff are relatively new to teaching and their enthusiasm still needs harnessing to bring teaching skills up to the quality found in Years 5 and 6. Pupils do better here than elsewhere because, as one pupil astutely said, the teacher 'can turn boring things into interesting lessons'. Elsewhere, teaching and learning are accurate but not as inspiring. Overall teaching and learning are satisfactory. This in turn leads to satisfactory achievement and to standards that, although rising, are below average. However, the teaching of writing lags behind that of other key skills and the curriculum is not well enough used as a vehicle for encouraging writing. Consequently, writing standards are low with pupils capable of achieving more. The school offers pupils a satisfactory curriculum. Recent investments in computers have had a positive impact and they are used well in many subjects. A move to learning through play helps make Foundation Stage education more fun.

Effective steps have been taken to improve behaviour. A firm stance has been taken over unacceptable behaviour and extended rewards encourage pupils to behave well. Relationships are good and staff are skilled at encouraging good behaviour. Everyone gets on well with each other. Pupils expend a good amount of energy at playtimes which is helping them to keep fit and well. Increasing numbers of pupils eat healthily. Pupils' personal development, though, is satisfactory. Apart from Traveller culture, pupils know too little about life in multicultural Britain. Older pupils know a lot about how to improve their work, and through the school council pupils have a say in the school. However, in general, there are too few opportunities for pupils to take responsibility.

The caring attitude of staff is a strong feature of what is otherwise satisfactory care, support and guidance. Improved assessment procedures help the school identify, and act promptly on, underachievement. Assessment information provides a good steer to teaching and as one teacher said, has helped us 'raise our game'.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing.
- Bring the quality of teaching and learning in the school up to that found in Years 5 and 6.
- Give pupils more responsibility and deepen their understanding of life in multi-cultural Britain.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Until recently, standards were low at the end of Year 2 and Year 6, as reflected in low national test results. This is no longer the case. Pupils make reasonable progress in acquiring the skills

needed for the future. Current data about their progress, and work in books show that standards are below average in reading, mathematics and science. The school has reversed a downward trend in standards and has improved achievement. Achievement is satisfactory overall and good in Years 5 and 6 where expert teaching helps pupils to do particularly well. A higher number of pupils than previously goes beyond expected levels in reading and mathematics but fewer achieve this in writing where standards are still low. Pupils who have learning difficulties and other disabilities are given prompt help and make steady progress. Those Traveller pupils unaffected by fragmented attendance achieve as well as other pupils. A revised curriculum, more focussed on play, in the Foundation Stage means children are making satisfactory progress. However, because they have a lot of ground to catch up, a significant number is yet to reach the expected level by the end of Reception.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils work hard and behave well. Most enjoy school but, despite the school's good efforts, attendance rates are below average. Pupils are keenly motivated by the array of rewards on offer and report that there is little bullying. They have a good knowledge of how to stay safe through programmes such as those about the dangers of drugs. Fruit and other healthy foods are increasingly popular and playtimes are active, social occasions. This has been aided by the effective work of the learning mentor who teaches pupils how to play together and make the most of new play equipment. The latter was chosen by the school council which has a strong voice in the school. Pupils take this responsibility seriously. However, there are few other outlets for pupils to take responsibility for the school or for their work. Assemblies help pupils consider moral issues and provide some opportunities for reflection. Pupils are helped to understand key features of the Traveller culture which makes for a harmonious community. Their knowledge of other aspects of life in multicultural Britain is weaker. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Good relationships pervade the school leading to calm and productive classrooms. Lessons have clarity of purpose and pupils are helped to know what is expected of them. In the main, work is well matched to pupils' differing abilities, although too little is expected of pupils' writing. This is not as well taught as other key skills. It is only in Years 5 and 6 that pupils regularly draft, reflect and redraft their writing. This is one of several features that leads to good teaching and learning. Here, practical learning dovetails well with key skills, for example, when pupils used a video camera and worked as scientific documentary makers. In addition, assessment is used well to help pupils reflect on learning for themselves to see how well they have done. Sharp questioning and the use of strategies such as talk partners, deepen thinking and makes sure no one can opt out of taking part. Elsewhere in the school, questioning is not as perceptive and there are occasions when teachers talk for too long without involving all pupils. This also sidelines what are otherwise effective teaching assistants.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Helped by a recent investment in resources, the curriculum in the Foundation Stage strikes a good balance between outside and inside learning. However, children are left to their own devices too much when deciding on activities for themselves and therefore do not always make purposeful choices. Good use is made of computers to link learning to other subjects. Greater emphasis on practical activities in subjects such as science, especially in Years 5 and 6, adds to pupils' enjoyment of school. However, the school is yet to harness the potential of other subjects to promote writing. Too much of what pupils write in other subjects is of a factual nature or is restricted by the use of worksheets. A thorough programme for pupils' personal development helps them to make the most of their time at school. There is a satisfactory range of clubs and visits out of school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The family ethos of the school can be seen in the caring and considerate relationships staff build with pupils. Vulnerable pupils are well looked after and given sensitive support. Termly pupils' progress meetings have helped to identify pupils, whose learning needs a boost, leading to early and widespread help. Tracking data are yet to be fully used to help pupils see for themselves how to improve their work. Older pupils talk confidently about key targets but in other classes pupils have only a sketchy idea and do not always know what their targets mean. The school has turned its attention to pupils who have particular talents and gifts by offering additional provision. Formal systems for ensuring pupils' safety, including those for child protection, are satisfactory. Whilst systems are clear there are gaps in staff knowledge and expertise which need addressing.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher aided by an able deputy headteacher has achieved a lot in a relatively short space of time. Staff new to the school have settled in well and benefit from the support of colleagues. Consistent approaches to planning and to the management of pupils have established a firm base for improvement, leading to a recent acceleration in pupils' achievement. There is a real sense of team spirit in the school; morale is high with a willingness among staff to learn. Parents have noted improvements in behaviour and more latterly in teaching and express confidence in the school. The close involvement of the local authority has helped the school refine approaches to assessing and tracking pupils' progress. This gives the school an accurate picture of how well it is doing, guides training and pinpoints areas for improvement. In the main, improvement plans are pertinent and well written. However, too little has been done to improve writing. Many subject coordinators are new but with the help of the headteacher and the local authority have made a good start in acquiring the skills needed to take a lead. Governors talk of having received a 'wake up call' as a result of standards and behaviour declining. They have responded well and are determined to see that the school continues to improve. They are increasingly asking searching questions and finding out for themselves how well the school is doing.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
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	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
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	3
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?	3
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.

Annex A

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	3
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	3
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

30 March 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Holbeach Bank Primary School, Roman Road, Holbeach Bank, Near Spalding, Lincolnshire, PE12 8BX

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your school recently. I would like to share with you what I thought about it.

Your headteacher, staff and governors are working hard to make this the best school it can be. You told me, and I could see for myself, that it has improved in some important ways lately. You too play your part in this. I was impressed by how much fun you had at playtimes and by how many of you were eating healthy snacks. I could see for myself how hard you try to earn the sought after 'yellow ticket' and to avoid the dreaded 'blue ticket.' You behave well and get along nicely with each other at playtimes and in the classrooms. You seem to know a lot about how children in your school live but I have asked the school to help you find out more about how people in other parts of the country and from other backgrounds live. I was impressed by how many of the older children knew their targets and I could see how much they enjoyed doing jobs around the school. I have asked Mr Baldwin and everyone to help other children to understand their targets and to find ways for them to help out in and around school as well.

Your teachers work hard to give you work which is just right for you. You use computers a lot and in interesting ways. I did feel that some of the writing you were asked to do was not interesting or hard enough and have asked the school to do something about this. There are lots of good things happening in your classrooms, especially in Class 4. I have asked other teachers to find out more about what happens here so as to help make their classes as interesting. You can play your part by continuing to work hard and enjoy playtimes too.

Once again thank you for being friendly and good luck in the future.

John Brennan

Lead inspector