

The Holbeach St Mark's Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120549
Local Authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	313665
Inspection date	9 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Sue Hall

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	44
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Nicholas Worth
Headteacher	Ms Karyn Wiles
Date of previous school inspection	26 April 2004
School address	Main Road Holbeach St Mark's Spalding Lincolnshire PE12 8DZ
Telephone number	01406701266
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This very small school serves the village of Holbeach St Mark's and the surrounding area near Spalding in Lincolnshire. The number of children eligible for free school meals is average. All children are of White British heritage. The proportion with additional needs is slightly above average and the proportion with a statement of special educational need is higher than usually found. The school holds a Healthy School award, Eco schools silver status and an Activemark award. The school is part of a federation with another local school and shares the recently appointed headteacher and many activities and procedures with its partner school. All the teaching staff joined the school within the last two years.

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 provides a good quality of education. As one parent notes 'there has been a big improvement in the overall management and running of the school'. Parents share the pupils' belief that this is a happy school where they can flourish.

Children enter the Foundation Stage with a mix of early experiences and skills that are slightly below expectations for their age. In the Reception group the children make satisfactory and improving progress although when they enter Year 1 skills are still slightly below expectations in some key areas. In Years 1 and 2, pupils make generally good progress and standards are above average. In Years 3 to 6 pupils make excellent overall progress. The standards reached by older pupils have recently improved considerably and the unconfirmed results in the 2008 national tests show them to be above average and the highest for some years. Several older pupils did not do well in Key Stage 1 assessments but are now making much better progress than previously, with several attaining the higher levels. Overall, pupils of all abilities and from all backgrounds grow in confidence and achieve well, which helps prepare them for their future.

The personal development of pupils is good, as is their behaviour. Most say they enjoy coming to school, that they feel safe and there is no bullying. As a church school, everyone has the opportunity to pray and reflect on what they can do to help others, which aids moral and spiritual development. Pupils know and look after each other well, with older ones happily caring for younger ones ensuring they stay safe. Pupils have a good understanding of how to be healthy and they enjoy active playtimes. There are satisfactory opportunities for pupils to make a contribution to the school community, with clear plans to extend the role and effectiveness of the school council.

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. There is outstanding teaching in Key Stage 2, where much is expected of pupils. Teachers work well together to plan open-ended activities that interest and challenge all pupils. However, some staff, including those in support roles, could be more effective in indicating what pupils need to do to improve further. Curriculum planning is good. Staff have been very successful in developing activities to promote mathematical and problem solving skills, especially for older pupils. However, while the same approach is effective for Key Stage 1 there is not enough recording of such work to act as a reference for subsequent activities or to use for accurate assessments of progress. The care, guidance and support of pupils is good. The pastoral care of all pupils is a strong feature and, even with recent staff changes, pupils feel they are known and looked after well. The careful tracking of what pupils know and what else they need to learn has been instrumental in matching work to their needs and raising standards but more could be done to embed procedures and involve pupils in assessing their own work.

The leadership and management of the school are good. The senior management team has a strong grasp of its role and a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement. As all teachers share a determination to keep moving forward by questioning what is provided and building on recent improvements, there is good capacity to improve further. Governance is good. Experienced governors are well informed about areas for improvement and keen to further develop their programme of focused visits.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory and has some improving features. On entry, several children have limited knowledge and understanding of the world and a fairly restricted vocabulary. They have very mixed early experiences, with some having no formal pre-school education. The behaviour of some is also very mixed and at times not very mature for their ages. Children enter the Reception group alongside pupils in Years 1 and 2, who act as good role-models. This helps the younger children to make good progress in their personal development. The ratio of adults to children is good, which helps children to settle quickly and make at least satisfactory progress. Teaching, learning and curriculum planning are satisfactory with good elements. Currently planning indicates some activities are a little formal for the age of the children and staff miss opportunities to develop skills through more structured play and imaginative activities. However, newly appointed staff are working with great commitment to improve facilities, resources and planning for the youngest children and provision is clearly set to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Record more evidence of work in numeracy in Key Stage 1 to aid learning and assessment.
- Embed many of the recent changes and improvements and utilise the strengths of all staff in meeting the needs of pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress in Years 1 and 2. Most start to read and write with enjoyment and success. They also make similar progress in their mathematical understanding and other areas of learning. At the end of Year 2, standards are above national averages. Most of the pupils in Key Stage 1 achieve well, although relatively few attain the higher levels. In Years 3 to 6, pupils make excellent progress. The sample of recent work shows that in the last year some pupils have made outstanding gains in their learning and current standards are slightly above average. All of these pupils are fully challenged in all subjects and unvalidated data from national tests indicates that standards in 2008 will be the highest for several years. In Years 3 to 6, pupils of all abilities achieve very well. The school has been known in the local community for doing a good job in supporting those who find learning difficult and some families choose to bring their children here from some distance. Parents recognise that the more able pupils are also now fully challenged.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development of pupils is good, as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This helps them to grow in confidence and develop the skills that will equip them for later life. While initially the behaviour of some of the youngest pupils causes concern and some do not listen and join in discussions, most settle well and behaviour is good overall. Most pupils have good attitudes to learning and many of the older ones work very well together in pairs and small groups. Pupils understand how to develop a healthy lifestyle and enjoy physical education activities in the village hall. Pupils have satisfactory opportunities to assume responsibilities in school and to work as part of the local community. Attendance is average

but affected by the unauthorised absence of a small number. The school works hard to resolve this.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good overall, with outstanding provision for the older pupils. Teaching throughout the school meets the needs of mixed age and ability classes well because teachers are meticulous in their planning and provide different activities that provide an appropriate level of challenge for all groups. There is a good number of support staff, some of whom cover several roles in school, which occasionally results in some lack of preparedness in activities. Teachers liaise very well and have a willingness to share ideas and welcome professional dialogue on how to improve provision even further, particularly for the younger pupils. The staff rightly recognise the need to now embed some of the many changes and to utilise the strengths of all staff, including across the federation, in meeting the needs of all pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good overall and an area that staff have worked very hard to improve. Staff share a determination to enthuse the pupils by making activities practical and interesting. This is very successful in motivating pupils and ensuring they are not restricted by work sheets that require only brief answers. Throughout the school, teachers have been successful in widening the scope of the curriculum, especially in mathematics, with a good focus on open-ended problem solving activities. This is outstandingly effective in Key Stage 2. There are also many strengths in such work in Key Stage 1, but staff do not ensure enough of these activities are recorded to help pupils' subsequent work or to aid the tracking of their progress. Staff enrich learning well through visits and visitors and through links with the federated partner school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The pastoral care of the pupils is a strength of the school. Even though the whole of the teaching and leadership team has changed in the last two years, parents think their children are well known to staff and well looked after. The school has good systems to safeguard the pupils, including risk assessments and checks of those who work and help in school. The tracking of pupils' progress has improved considerably in the last year. There are now good systems to track the small steps of progress and to use this information to provide effective support for those with additional needs, including the small number with hearing or sight difficulties. The school now recognises those identified as able, gifted and talented and provides additional activities to meet their needs. Staff in support roles are generally effective, although on occasion could make even more of the opportunities to help in lessons and at lunchtimes.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The recently appointed headteacher is very effective in recognising strengths in school provision and diligently pursuing areas for further improvement. This clarity of vision and an understanding of how improvements are to be achieved, coupled with the excellent teaching skills of the senior teacher, is leading to considerable and rapid improvement. This has particularly ensured a very effective focus on mathematics but there is more to be done in other areas and staff recognise the need to embed and rigorously monitor the effectiveness of many recent changes. The senior management team are well supported by other newly appointed teaching staff who have a clear willingness to further improve provision for the younger pupils. The school works well with other groups and organisations, particularly the federated partner school. Governors are well informed and keen to ensure that all, including those linked to the partner school, are fully involved in focused visits to further their understanding of provision.

Annex A

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
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?	2

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?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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	2
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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

10 July 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Holbeach St Mark's Church of England Primary School, PE12 8DZ

Thank you very much for looking after me when I visited your school recently. I really enjoyed meeting you in lessons, assembly, at lunchtime and when I spoke to several of you, including the school council. I think your school is good.

These are some of the best things I found:

- Miss Wiles and the rest of the staff work really well together and understand what works well in school and what there is to be improved.
- Those of you in Key Stage 2 make excellent progress because teaching is really interesting and challenging for you.
- The staff care for you really well and ensure you are safe and happy.
- You like coming to school and you get on really well together.
- The teachers work well with other schools and organisations to enrich your learning.

This is what that I think should be improved:

- Staff working with the younger pupils could make sure you record your work a bit more so that you can use your books to check how to do things.
- Staff need to make sure that many of the recent changes are followed up and that everyone works to their best to help you.

To help your school even more please try to make sure you attend regularly and behave well and try hard in all lessons.

Yours sincerely Sue Hall Lead inspector