

Holly Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122727
Local Authority	NOTTINGHAMSHIRE LA
Inspection number	314375
Inspection dates	25–26 February 2008
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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	335
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Kath Erridge
Headteacher	Mrs Janet Miller
Date of previous school inspection	15 September 2003
School address	Holly Drive Forest Town Mansfield Nottinghamshire NG19 0NT
Telephone number	01623477280
Fax number	01623477280

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Holly Primary is a larger than average school that has grown since the last inspection. It serves the village of Forest Town, a former mining area on the outskirts of Mansfield. Almost all pupils are of a White British heritage. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. However, it is higher than at the time of the last inspection and significant numbers are in the juniors. The school has received the Healthy School award, the Basic Skills award and has Investors in People status. It has an eco-award and is involved in a Creative Partnerships project with other schools. There has been considerable staff change since the last inspection.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school that has undergone significant change since the last inspection. Pupils' lower skills on entry to school, an increase in the proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and widespread changes in teaching personnel have tested leadership. After a period in which standards dipped and pupils' progress in the juniors slowed, the school is back on track and performing well. It is a sign of the school's continuing ambition that it views itself as satisfactory. Although improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory, the success and vigour with which a dip in performance has been tackled give the school good capacity to improve further.

It has taken good leadership and management to steer the school through a period of change. The headteacher leads the school with passion and a clear set of guiding principles. She is ably supported by an effective senior leadership team and by key subject coordinators. For the most part governance is effective. However, parental confidence in the school has been shaken through a period of recent change. Whilst a sizeable majority of parents express confidence in the school, a significant minority are less satisfied. In the main the school establishes a good partnership with parents, putting on 'top tips' sessions for subjects and signposting parents to extended services within the community. Although the school seeks parental views, governors are not effectively involved in this process and are not as knowledgeable as they might be about what parents think about the school.

Pupils' achievement is good and, with the exception of mathematics in the juniors, standards are above average. The good progress noted in the last inspection has been maintained through the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2 and recently progress has accelerated in Years 3 to 6. Pupils do well in English and science but because fewer pupils reach the higher levels in mathematics, standards are not as high.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Relationships are positive and pupil behaviour well managed. Little time is wasted in lessons and there is little noise transfer between open learning areas. Pupils speak highly of the practical hands-on learning, which characterises much of what they do. Such learning is not always evident and in general teaching and learning and pupil progress are not as strong in Years 3 and 4 as elsewhere in the school.

Pupils and adults are valued as individuals. This is indicative of the good quality of care, support and guidance given to pupils. Pupils' varying needs are well catered for. Leaders do an effective job in ensuring that the curriculum is good and that it is implemented in a coherent and consistent way. It serves the acquisition of literacy skills particularly well.

Within this supportive environment pupils grow as individuals and their personal development is good. Some parents expressed concerns about how pupils behave. However, many pupils stated, and school records show, that behaviour is generally good. Incidents of bullying are rare and are dealt with effectively by known procedures. Pupils are generally well motivated in lessons. Pupils are very well aware of what they need to do to make progress and are well prepared for the future. The receiving secondary school is only too happy to report that pupils from Holly Primary are 'self disciplined' and possess 'a positive attitude.'

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

From knowledge and skills that are below national expectations on entry, especially in number and writing skills, children in the Foundation Stage achieve well. By the time they start Year 1 many have reached the expected standards, although standards in writing and aspects of number still lag behind other areas of learning. Children do well because there are good levels of interaction between staff and children, which promote language acquisition and support children well in their learning. The caring environment means that children are at ease and are active participants in learning. Their good behaviour helps in this. Children have positive attitudes to each other and their independence is nurtured well. A good balance is struck between learning inside and outside and between child and adult led learning. Resources for outdoor learning are particularly enticing. However, sometimes the activities that children choose to do for themselves leave them with too few decisions to make or equipment to select from. When this happens learning becomes too narrowly focussed for the wide age and ability of children.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards for higher attaining pupils in mathematics.
- Ensure teaching and learning, especially in Years 3 and 4, involve all pupils in the opening parts of whole class lessons and set them appropriate tasks to do.
- Make sure that the governing body joins with the school in seeking and acting upon parents' views.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The good progress evident in the Foundation Stage continues through Years 1 and 2. Standards are consistently above average. The school has found it more difficult to maintain this momentum through the juniors. Results in national tests, which were above average, fell back to broadly average in 2007. This dip is now behind the school, progress has accelerated this year and standards are rising, particularly in Years 5 and 6. The increasingly close attention given to pupils' individual needs sees those with learning difficulties doing well. An increasing number of pupils generally reach above average standards. Pupils are achieving well in English, with rapid improvements evident in writing lately. Standards have returned to above average and are approaching this level in science. Standards are nearer average in mathematics because fewer pupils than in other subjects reach beyond average standards.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

From discussions with pupils and observations, behaviour in school is good. Pupils are aware that there are consequences for their actions, but also that they can share their concerns. Time is set aside for this during philosophy sessions. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils have a good sense of being respectful and tolerant of others and valuing all contributions. They have a good awareness of how to stay healthy and keep safe and they say they enjoy school and the range of activities provided. Attendance is average. Most pupils attend school regularly. However, a small number of families do not send their children to school as often as they could. Pupils contribute well to the life of the school, for instance by serving on the school council. Initiatives associated with the Eco award and efforts

to move learning outside, such as establishing an allotment, ensure that pupils become environmentally aware.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Staff are encouraging of pupils' efforts and behaviour is managed calmly and with clear expectations. Good use is made of interactive whiteboards to make demonstrations to pupils clear. In some classes they are used by pupils themselves to show and explain their work to their peers. It is this engagement and involvement of pupils that marks out the good teaching. This is commonly achieved through finding novel ways to hook pupils into learning. In Year 6, for example, pupils responded with relish to the opportunity to explore ratio through the different colours found in sweet packets. Whilst teachers elsewhere in the school have developed similarly imaginative ways, practice is not yet consistent. On occasion during whole class teaching there is too much teacher talk and too little pupil learning. This can lead to some overlong introductions. At times activities are not fine-tuned to pupils' differing abilities nor do they always build seamlessly on lesson openings. Although these features are not exclusively restricted to Years 3 and 4, they are more common here than elsewhere in the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum for pupils' personal development having traditionally been strong has been strengthened by the recent addition of programmes to help pupils understand their own emotions and their responsibilities. As a result, pupils make the most of their time at school. The thoughtful grouping of pupils, based on a rigorous and ongoing interrogation of pupil performance information, is working well. Close attention is given to the development of key skills. Good use is made of subjects such as history, to develop pupils' writing skills, but the acquisition and application of mathematical skills through other subjects is less well developed. A practical approach to learning, growing out of the Foundation Stage, has been rolled out to other year groups. Occasionally, this is made difficult to achieve in Years 1 and 2 because teaching assistants' support is spread rather thinly. Pupils benefit from a good range of visits, visitors and clubs, which add vitality and interest to the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils, including those who find learning difficult, are well supported in lessons. The very good tracking systems ensure that a close eye is kept on pupils' performance. Leaders are very effective in ensuring that assessment information is gone over with a fine toothcomb, that underachieving pupils of any ability are identified, and subsequent work adjusted. Pupils receive good feedback about how they can improve their work. There are secure systems for ensuring that pupils attend school regularly. Good attendance is acknowledged and rewarded and the necessary steps are taken to encourage all families to bring their children to school regularly and on time. Suitable procedures for keeping pupils safe are in place and they adhere to latest government guidelines.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

A strong sense of common purpose and teamwork permeates the school. Morale is high because the work of individuals is valued and supported. Performance management systems, including for teaching assistants, work well. Newly qualified teachers speak highly of the help they have been given and training is often given individually. Those in leadership posts have benefited from extensive leadership training. The school has a track record of 'growing' teachers and leaders and several staff have gone on to promoted posts elsewhere. Robust management systems ensure that the vision is transferred into action. The school development plan is pertinent and underpinning action plans are of a good quality. Leaders utilise a full range of monitoring approaches with direct observation of teaching and its impact on learning having a high profile. Governors strike the right balance between support and holding the school to account. Governors are not fully involved in analysing parents' views and responding to them.

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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	2
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	2
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

27 February 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Holly Primary School, Mansfield, Nottinghamshire NG19 0NT

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school recently. We very much enjoyed our visit. It felt like we were part of one big happy family. We would like to share with you what we thought about your school.

You go to a good school in which all adults are working together well in order to do their best for you. You play your part well too. For the most part you play and work well alongside each other. You are careful to work quietly in lessons so that noise does not transfer to neighbouring classes. You know a lot about your work and try harder to improve it. There were occasions when some children sat back when the teacher was talking to the whole class and let other children answer questions. It would be good if everyone joined in these sessions.

You told us, and we could see for ourselves, that for the most part teachers set you interesting work to do. We could see that in subjects such as history you were often asked to write in a thoughtful manner. This is helping you to do well with your writing. We have asked the school to think about how you could do more mathematics so that a larger number of you make even better progress in this subject. People help each other effectively in this school. Teachers, the headteacher and other school leaders are good at helping each other. We have asked the school to do even more of this so that everybody does the job equally well and that learning in all classes is made as interesting as possible.

The school knows a lot about what you think and about what parents think of the school. We have asked the governing body to ensure that it too finds out what your parents think and to reflect and act on this information.

Thank you once again and good luck in the future.

John Brennan

Lead inspector