

Holmer Lake Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123429
Local Authority	Telford and Wrekin
Inspection number	314595
Inspection dates	28–29 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Graham Sims

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	237
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Roger Sly
Headteacher	Sian Deane
Date of previous school inspection	13 October 2003
School address	Brookside Telford TF3 1LD
Telephone number	01952 387580
Fax number	01952 87581

Age group	4-11
Inspection dates	28–29 November 2007
Inspection number	314595

© Crown copyright 2007

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 two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Holmer Lake Primary School is of an average size. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals and of those joining or leaving the school other than at the normal times is above the national average. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above the national average. The school provides six full time places for pupils with physical and other complex disabilities. The school has an average proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. Of these, very few are at an early stage of learning English. The school has two intakes into the Reception class, in September and January. Many children, therefore, spend only two terms in the Reception class. At the time of the inspection, six of the school's nine classes were taught by teachers who joined the school in September 2007. The headteacher was appointed in May 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The last 18 months have seen significant improvement at Holmer Lake, and the school currently offers its pupils a satisfactory education. The steely determination of the headteacher and the concerted efforts of the staff have halted the decline in pupils' achievement and behaviour and have improved the learning environment and the quality of the teaching. Pupils now behave well and they are achieving satisfactorily. However, standards are still below average at the end of Years 2 and 6 because of underachievement in the past. Writing is the weakest aspect of pupils' work as they lack basic skills in spelling, punctuation, handwriting and presentation. Pupils' ability to use and apply their knowledge and skills in mathematics and science is also underdeveloped. The school has recognised these weaknesses and is working to improve them.

New teachers have worked hard to familiarise themselves with the school's procedures, and the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. There is good teaching for children in the Reception class and for pupils at the top end of the school. These pupils are making good progress because the lessons interest and challenge them. In some classes, the teachers do not have an accurate enough assessment of what pupils can do, with the result that work is not always pitched at the right level and lacks challenge for some pupils.

The support provided for vulnerable pupils and the quality of pastoral care are particular strengths. As a result, pupils enjoy coming to school, even though they do not always enjoy having to work! Parents are particularly appreciative of the care provided by the school and of the improving links between home and school which are enabling them to become more involved in their children's education. Pupils with physical disabilities are integrated particularly well into the daily life of the school. The academic guidance provided for pupils is satisfactory. In some classes, teachers have implemented new marking procedures well and provide pupils with clear and helpful feedback in their English books. This good quality marking does not extend, however, to pupils' work in other subjects. In other classes, pupils are given encouraging comments, but not enough indication as to how to improve their work. Not enough attention is given to consolidating and reinforcing previous learning when marking their work.

The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide clear and uncompromising direction for the school. They have a good understanding of what is working well and what needs to improve. They have identified, for example, that the curriculum, whilst satisfactory, does not fully engage pupils' interest and is not planned well enough to support and consolidate the skills which are taught in English and mathematics lessons. They have provided a very clear focus on the five outcomes from the government's initiative 'Every Child Matters'. As a result, pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory and there are some particular strengths. For example, pupils are developing a good understanding of the importance of a healthy diet and exercise and of how to keep themselves safe through being aware of dangers and behaving well themselves. Because of the many changes in staffing, most subject leaders have not yet had time to have an influence on their subject areas. There is, however, a good sense of teamwork amongst the staff, who are keen to contribute to the further improvement of the school.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Provision for children in the Foundation Stage has improved this term; it is now satisfactory and has a number of strengths.

Children enter the Reception year with standards which are below those expected, particularly in communication, language and literacy. Good teaching enables them to make good progress in early reading, writing and mathematical skills and provides well-planned opportunities to improve their speaking and listening. In past years, standards have been well below those expected by the time children enter Year 1. Standards for the current group of children are broadly in line with national expectations for their age.

There is satisfactory provision for music and art, dressing up and role play. Displays show that children learn to observe the world around them and to experience first hand, for example, how to mix colours and to notice how trees change colour in the autumn. Children have limited access to the outdoor environment. Plans are in hand to install new doors to link the classroom with the outdoor area.

Children's progress is carefully noted so that suitable activities can be planned to help them to develop their skills. Children's personal and social development is satisfactory. Children are learning to work in groups and pairs and to complete their tasks with help. They are keen to learn and behave well. Links with parents are strong, and parents are kept well informed of their children's progress.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make better provision for the teaching, consolidation and reinforcement of basic skills of spelling, handwriting, punctuation and presentation.
- Provide pupils with clearer guidance when marking their work to show them what they need to do to improve and to help them consolidate previous learning.
- Make better use of assessment information when planning lessons, to ensure that work is pitched at the right level and provides sufficient challenge for the more able and sufficient guidance for others.
- Develop the curriculum to ensure that it covers all subjects in sufficient depth, motivates pupils to learn and contributes to the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

After a period of underachievement, pupils are now making satisfactory progress. The decline in the school's results has been halted, and results in 2006 and 2007 were an improvement on previous years. However, standards are still below average in Years 1 to 6.

Children make good progress in the Foundation Stage in developing their language and mathematical skills. In the rest of the school, pupils' basic writing skills are weak. Pupils struggle to spell words correctly, although they are improving their ability to write in different styles and to use a wider range of vocabulary. There are also weaknesses in their punctuation, handwriting and presentation. In mathematics and science, pupils find it hard to use and apply

the skills that they have been taught, although this aspect of their work is improving as staff place greater emphasis on it.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. Pupils, staff and governors comment how much the behaviour has improved over the last year, and the number of exclusions has fallen significantly. Pupils enjoy many of the school's activities, but some have yet to develop a real desire to learn and find learning English and mathematics very challenging. Rigorous procedures to follow up absence have improved the level of attendance which is now close to the national average. Some pupils make a good contribution to the life of the school by acting as play leaders, working on the school council or taking on additional responsibilities. They are proud of their playground and their involvement in suggesting the equipment and games to keep every one happy at lunchtime. In lessons, many pupils are willing to participate, but they are slow to take initiative and many are still very dependent on adult help when completing their work. Pupils are satisfactorily prepared for the next stage of their education and the future world of work. Their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills are improving and their ability to become team players is growing.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning varies from class to class. The good teaching in the upper part of the school is lively and interesting. It stretches the pupils and motivates them to learn. In the Foundation Stage, the teaching develops children's reading and writing skills well. In other classes, teachers plan their lessons thoroughly, make good use of their interactive whiteboards and relate well to the pupils. Some of the group activities do not always enable pupils to maximise their progress because the assessment of what pupils can do or what they need to learn is not precise enough. As a result, some more able pupils are not always challenged sufficiently, and some less able pupils are not always sure what they have to do. A significant amount of additional support is provided by the large number of teaching assistants. Some of the support is helpful and challenging. Some does not encourage pupils to work things out for themselves and pupils become too dependent on adult help.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The strong emphasis on developing English, mathematics and pupils' personal, social and health education means that there is little time left for developing pupils' understanding in other subjects to any significant depth. Plans are in hand to develop the curriculum by devoting more time to other subjects and ensuring that these subjects contribute more effectively to developing pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills than is the case at present. The emphasis on personal education has made pupils very aware of the importance of healthy lifestyles and safe practices, and pupils are becoming much more aware of how they need to take responsibility for their own learning and personal development. The school provides a satisfactory range of clubs and visits to enrich the statutory curriculum. The recently revised curriculum for children in the

Foundation Stage meets their needs well, although opportunities for children to learn in an outdoor environment are somewhat limited.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school provides effectively for pupils' health and welfare. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are robust and pastoral care is good. Members of staff know the pupils well and are sensitive to their individual and varying needs. Arrangements for pupils with physical disabilities are implemented skilfully and effectively and ensure that these pupils are fully involved in school life. There is good liaison with a wide range of external agencies and parents.

Academic guidance is satisfactory. A formal system for recording pupils' attainments is updated every half term and is used effectively to identify groups of pupils who need additional support. The quality of teachers' marking varies. In some classes, pupils are given constructive and helpful feedback on their English work, but this good practice does not extend to pupils' written work in other subjects. In other classes, the marking does not provide pupils with sufficient guidance on how to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher, with good support from the deputy headteacher, has given the school a very clear sense of direction and has been the driving force behind the significant improvements which have taken place. Support from the local authority through the Intensifying Support Programme has also been instrumental in improving the quality of teaching and learning. The school has a good awareness of the areas which require further development, and plans are already in hand to improve the quality of the curriculum, pupils' writing skills, the use and application of skills in mathematics and the quality of teachers' marking.

Governors are aware that the governing body did not hold the school sufficiently to account in the years following the previous inspection and have become more rigorous in their support for the school. Most subject leaders are new to their posts and have yet to have had much involvement in monitoring and evaluating their subject areas or in leading improvements. Because their skills are as yet unproven, the capacity for further improvement is judged to be satisfactory.

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.

Annex A

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
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	3

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	3
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	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

29 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Holmer Lake Primary School, Telford, TF3 1LD

My colleague and I enjoyed our recent visit to your school and would like to thank you for your welcome and for talking to us. Your school has improved a great deal over the last 18 months and is now providing you with a satisfactory education.

- These are our main findings.
- Although standards are lower than in many schools, you are making satisfactory progress in your work.
- Many of you need to improve your spelling and punctuation, and take greater care over your handwriting and the way you present your work.
- Your behaviour has improved greatly and is now good.
- You like coming to school to be with your friends and teachers, although you do not always enjoy some of the work you have to do.
- You are developing a good understanding of what you need to do to lead healthy lifestyles and keep yourselves safe.
- There is some good teaching, particularly at the top end of the school, but some of the work you are given to do on your own or in groups is too easy for some of you and too hard for others.
- A lot of effort is put into the teaching of literacy and numeracy, but not enough time is spent teaching other subjects, some of which you really enjoy.
- The staff take good care of you and make sure you are safe in school.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher have worked really hard to improve the school, and the staff are working well together as a team.

In order to help the school become even better, we have asked the staff to:

- help you improve the quality of your writing
- provide you with helpful guidance when marking your work
- ensure that the work they give you is just what you need to improve
- provide more opportunities for you to do interesting work in subjects other than English and mathematics.

You can help your school to improve by trying your hardest in lessons and developing an interest in learning new things. We wish each one of you every success and happiness in your future education.

Yours sincerely

Mr Graham Sims Lead inspector