

Holmbush First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125908
Local Authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	315349
Inspection date	27 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Eira Gill

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

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–8
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	261
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Bruce Spottiswoode
Headteacher	Rebecca Jackson
Date of previous school inspection	10 November 2003
School address	Hawkins Crescent Shoreham-by-Sea BN43 6TN
Telephone number	01273 592471
Fax number	01273 592660

Age group	4–8
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: •provision and achievement in the Foundation Stage •the impact of initiatives to improve standards and teaching and learning especially in writing •how effectively leaders and managers bring about improvement by using and setting targets linked to accurate analysis and tracking of the pupils' attainment and progress. Evidence was gathered by observing lessons, scrutinising documents and pupils' work, and from discussions with staff and pupils. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The majority of pupils have a White British heritage. A very few are at an early stage of speaking English. Pupils come from a range of social backgrounds. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is higher than that found nationally. The current headteacher has been in post for one year. In September 2008, the school will become a primary school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Holmbush is a satisfactory school. There are, however, positive signs in this busy community that sound improvement is taking place in every aspect despite the upheaval of major building works. Parents express support for the school with many sharing the view: 'We are extremely pleased. The new headteacher has hit the ground running and is leading the school well.' Links with parents are good. Their views on several aspects of the school have been collected and acted upon in the last 12 months using several lines of communication.

Children's attainment on entry is below average. Several children, especially boys, start school with poor communication and language skills. Progress in the Reception classes is good and children begin to catch up although attainment remains below expectations in some aspects of their language development. Good progress continues in Years 1 and 2. Standards are broadly average overall and this reflects the pupils' overall lower starting points. The 2007 national assessments saw an improvement in the achievement of all pupils in reading and mathematics although, in writing, their progress was satisfactory. This year, achievement has improved in writing owing to the implementation of better teaching strategies and a strong focus given to improve pupils' learning. Standards in English, mathematics and science in Year 3 are broadly as expected for pupils of that age. While achievement is largely satisfactory in Year 3, progress slows during the year and, in spite of the good progress made in earlier years, this leads to satisfactory overall achievement.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall with good and, occasionally, outstanding elements. The school has successfully extended the good provision in the Reception classes into Year 1. Very imaginative planning with a strong challenge is particularly evident in this year group and pupils make good progress. In those classes where teachers include drama opportunities and plan time for pupils to work together there is a keen sense of enjoyment. In Year 3, teaching is satisfactory overall as, sometimes, a lack of challenge is evident and teachers do not always engage the pupils sufficiently in their learning, particularly when too many worksheets are used for recording work. Teachers' questioning skills vary. A few demonstrate effective skills of assessment and quickly give extra help to pupils who have not grasped the learning intention. Sometimes, insufficient attention is given to probing pupils' understanding, particularly for those who do not have their hands up.

The school provides a broad curriculum. Planning, however, does not always include enough opportunity for pupils to be independent when recording their work. Pupils are given too many worksheets, particularly in mathematics. This practice restricts their learning skills and ability to apply their knowledge. It also reduces pupils' opportunities for redrafting and improving their work. Enrichment of the curriculum is good with opportunities for pupils to participate in several after-school sporting and other activities organised by teachers, assistants and other providers. A range of visits and visitors also contributes well to pupils' good understanding of how to keep safe and healthy. In response to good care, several aspects of the pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils behave well and enjoy good relationships with each other and all staff. Positive links and visits with the special school on the same site widen pupils' knowledge and extend their emotional understanding. They make a satisfactory contribution to the community, for instance as members of the school council. The skills they will need in later life are developing in a satisfactory manner. While pupils enjoy school, attendance remains below average as some parents allow their children to miss school unnecessarily. Letters are sent home and there are weekly rewards for good attendance. The

chair of governors is aware of the need to encourage good attendance but, so far, the governing body has yet to discuss the action needed for improvement. Academic guidance is satisfactory. Teachers mark work regularly and give advice to pupils about the 'next steps' in learning but do not often give them time to improve their work. Assistants in all classes give specific and often skilled help, teaching small intervention groups of pupils who find learning difficult. One parent writes, 'I am impressed with the effort my son's teacher has made to ensure he receives the extra help he needs. His progress has dramatically improved.'

Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. Subject leaders are now beginning to develop their roles. Their capacity is developing satisfactorily as a result of improved professional development and support. The headteacher monitors and evaluates the school effectively and knows exactly where improvement is needed. She has worked closely with governors and local authority representatives who have given considerable support during the last two years and the school is now in a satisfactory position for further improvement to take place. The school's use of long-term targets to secure better progress for all groups of pupils is satisfactory. The newly implemented tracking system is proving useful to track pupils' progress from year to year. As yet, not all teachers have the skills to use the data to identify underperformance of pupils in their classes, particularly the higher attaining pupils.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is good. Because of the outstanding care provided by teachers and the skilled assistants, children settle very quickly. Several parents expressed views such as, 'I am very impressed with the high standard of care my daughter is receiving.' The majority of children make good progress and, from a starting point that is below that normally found, meet most of the goals set for children of their age. However, there is still some way to go before they meet expectations in their writing skills.

The quality of teaching and learning is good with very well planned activities that ensure the children's sustained interest. Teachers are very skilled at using drama to teach reading and writing skills. Children listen intently and some are able to guess words correctly from the context of stories. They enjoy their learning immensely. A recent initiative for play in the outside environment is proving successful. Children are encouraged to become independent and plan their own sequence of physical activities. The school wants to improve the use of tracking systems to inform teaching and to ensure continued progress in Year 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all teachers adopt effective questioning skills to assess more accurately pupils' understanding and misconceptions during, and at the end of, lessons.
- Make it clear to those parents who allow their children to miss school unnecessarily that they could do more to support their children's education.
- Ensure that overall planning includes better provision for pupils to record their work to give them independence, a sense of pride in what they achieve and to allow them to see continuity in their learning.
- Improve the use of tracking data by all teaching staff to ensure that any underperformance of individual pupils is quickly identified and appropriate support put into place.

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

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?	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	2
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	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	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	2
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

1 April 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Holmbush First School, Shoreham-by-Sea, BN43 6TN

This letter is to tell you what I found out during the recent inspection. I really enjoyed my visit to your school and I want to thank those of you who took your time to talk to me and show me what you do, especially the school council. I was very interested to hear what you had to say about your school. I found your school is giving you a sound education.

What works well in your school:

- Your headteacher, teachers and governors take good care of you and make sure you are safe.
- Your behaviour is good, and sometimes outstanding.
- You have good attitudes to your work.
- You get on well with the adults in school.
- You usually enjoy lessons, particularly when the teachers plan fun activities for you like taking part in drama activities.
- You have a good choice of clubs to go to after school.

I have asked the headteacher and governors to do the following things to help you make better progress:

- Ask the teachers to question you more carefully during, and at the end of, lessons to make sure that you have fully understood what has been taught.
- Make it clear to some parents that they need to make sure you all come to school regularly.
- Ensure that the school helps you to record your work, especially mathematics problems, so that you learn how to set out your own work and have a better understanding of how well you are doing.
- The headteacher has introduced a good system to record how well you are all doing. We have asked your teachers to use this information better to make sure any of you who may be dropping behind are quickly given help.

You can help, too, by asking your teachers for help if you do not understand something and by asking them to tell you how you can improve your work.

Yours sincerely

Eira Gill Lead inspector

Annex B



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Eira Gill

Lead inspector