

# Holly House Special School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	131322
<b>Local Authority</b>	DERBYSHIRE LA
<b>Inspection number</b>	315782
<b>Inspection dates</b>	3–4 December 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Trevor Watts

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–14
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	38
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Iain Williams
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Peter Brandt
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	25 November 2003
<b>School address</b>	Church Street North Old Whittington Chesterfield Derbyshire S41 9QR
<b>Telephone number</b>	01246 450530
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

Holly House is a small special school for pupils aged 7 to 14 years who have severe behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, often with other learning difficulties. Although designated as a mixed gender school, all the pupils are boys and all have a statement of special educational need. For the past two years the school has had Specialist College status for special educational needs. Prior to their admission, almost all pupils have had a disrupted education and have been excluded from mainstream schools. Consequently, their level of skills in all subjects is well below that expected nationally for pupils of their age when they enter the school. Pupils come from all over Derbyshire. There is a residential facility, which was inspected in July 2007, and was judged to be good. The school's aim is to encourage pupils to become independent learners who are capable of contributing positively to society.

## 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 with some outstanding aspects. There are no significant weaknesses.

Pupils enter the school with very negative attitudes to learning. However, they learn to get along with each other, and to control their anger and frustration. They find the teaching interesting and the activities worthwhile. They feel secure and begin to make good progress in their personal development and in their academic learning. They achieve well. As their self-belief grows, they are encouraged to want to return to mainstream schools. The school has set itself the very challenging target of helping eight pupils each year get back into mainstream education.

The pace and breadth of improvement have been outstanding since the last inspection. All of the areas for development that were highlighted previously have been improved. Personal development, communication and computing skills are encouraged much more than previously in lessons. While pupils' attendance has improved, it is still unsatisfactory, despite considerable efforts by the school to reduce absences. As a part of the Specialist College status, there is a new 'Nurture Centre' for pupils who find general classroom activities too challenging. As well as pupils from Holly House, groups of pupils in danger of exclusion come in the afternoons from two partner primary schools. Thorough assessment of pupils' personal and academic progress is carried out now. It is increasingly used to plan pupils' work in a range of subjects. The school has recently become part of the local authority's 'Intensive Support Programme' (ISP). This aims to raise standards for the small, but increasing, number of pupils admitted who have poor literacy skills. School leaders also expect the use of new teaching skills to spread through the school so that all staff and pupils will benefit from new ways of using assessment information to plan work for pupils.

Teachers manage and motivate their pupils well. The curriculum is outstanding as a strong motivator for pupils. It has great breadth and variety. All subjects and additional activities are open equally to all pupils, and are extremely relevant to the needs and interests of pupils of different ages and abilities. Pupils say there is little bullying. Although it can happen, they say they feel safe in school, and know they can talk to a member of staff if there are problems.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher have evaluated the school's strengths, and areas where development is required, outstandingly well. The deputy headteacher has been especially effective in the absence of the headteacher. The governors and staff with management responsibilities work well together as a team, sharing the aims of the school, and working towards them with dedication and professional skill. The school has an outstanding capacity to continue making improvements.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Reduce the frequency of pupils' absences.
- Develop strategies suggested by the ISP to further improve the learning of the lowest attaining pupils.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Once established in the school, pupils begin to make good progress and achieve well, initially in English, personal and social development and mathematics. In practical and very motivating

subjects such as physical activities, art and food technology, pupils make especially good progress. In most subjects, pupils improve their skills at about the same pace as pupils in mainstream schools. Whilst this is satisfactory for mainstream pupils, it is good for Holly House pupils, whose progress was previously poor. Progress can be slower for a very few pupils whose skills on entry are well below the level at which the National Curriculum starts. More able pupils progress at a faster rate. Even so, this good progress is not sufficient to enable any pupils to reach the level that would be expected of them in mainstream schools. They do not fall further behind, however, and have a much better attitude to learning than previously. They stand a good chance of successfully returning to mainstream education.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils develop good personal skills. They learn not to lose their tempers and be aggressive. They work alongside their classmates, share things and take turns. Although pupils say there is occasional bullying, they also say that staff do everything possible to eradicate it, and they feel safe around school. They enjoy their lessons, and feel that they are listened to, and are encouraged to join in discussions and practical activities.

Pupils' attendance, at 82%, is unsatisfactory. Key Stage 2 pupils attend better than those in Key Stage 3. A small number of pupils are responsible for most of the absences. Efforts by the school and the local authority to encourage better attendance have been in vain. Some pupils attend for only 15% of the time, and their progress is therefore poor.

Pupils learn a good sense of moral values: what is right and wrong in different situations. They also learn to be sociable with each other and with adults. In many lessons and assemblies, pupils begin to understand the nature of other cultures, and something of the spiritual aspects of life. Visits to places such as a mosque and a mining museum add to regular school based events and celebrations of different religions and cultures.

Pupils know how to be healthy and avoid dangerous substances. Most regularly eat fruit, have non-fizzy drinks, and engage in various physical activities, including boxing, cross country running, table tennis and using a fitness suite. They have good opportunities to help in their own school community, including being on the school council, keeping the grounds tidy, helping to make breakfasts, serving lunches, and raising funds for charities such as the shoebox appeal and a harvest festival. Pupils feel that the school prepares them well to return to mainstream school. They actively learn language and numeracy skills that will help them in a future work setting, as well as practical skills with computers, or work-related skills such as bricklaying, painting and decorating. They learn to work together, follow instructions, and arrive on time.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

The good teaching is based on skilled behaviour management, and an ability to engage and sustain pupils' interest. Teachers are confident, and have good knowledge of the subjects they teach. They are sensitive to pupils' moods and emotional swings, and adjust their teaching accordingly. They are well supported by a good number of capable and experienced classroom assistants. Lessons are mostly challenging and well adapted to the needs of all pupils. Pupils enjoy their learning, especially practical and creative activities. The ISP is providing advice and

support about detailed targets to boost the rate of learning made by some of the lowest attainers.

Teachers mainly plan their lessons to include good opportunities for pupils to develop and practise their writing, speaking and computing skills, and to link other subjects in many lessons. Most often, lessons end with a good review of pupils' learning, particularly their effort and behaviour. Generally, pupils are sensible when evaluating how good their own performance has been.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 1**

The curriculum is outstanding because it offers something of value to all pupils. There is much more than a good focus on the basic subjects of English and mathematics, or promoting the pupils' personal and social development, including citizenship. All other expected subjects are taught, including French and information and communication technology. Practical and creative lessons, such as food technology and art, are very popular. Many clubs and activities take place at break and lunchtimes. Last year 35 pupils out of 39 on roll took part in the evening activities that are offered every night, including the school's climbing wall, roller-blading and trampolining at nearby facilities. Two afternoons each week are dedicated to sporting activities or 'special' activities such as photography, music therapy and tuition, Tai Chi and 'puzzle club'. Two classes have a half day each week at a 'Forest School' where they learn teamwork, self-reliance and practical skills. The school organises an annual whole-school fishing competition, and a watersports day. Pupils in Year 9 benefit from careers advice, from college links that give them work experience, and from a range of outdoor activities. Staff are developing some subjects for national accreditation.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

All the required safeguards are solidly in place. Pupils feel safe, especially since they were able to put notes in a 'Say it and Sort it' box, and the introduction of closed circuit television cameras has virtually eliminated places where bullying could take place. They know they can discuss problems with their Key Worker.

Teachers assess pupils' skills on entry to the school, and regularly thereafter. They do this most thoroughly in personal and social development, English and mathematics. Assessment information is increasingly well used to plan lessons to suit the needs of individual pupils, and to change the longer term planning of the curriculum in each subject. Pupils are more involved in agreeing their own targets, and monitoring how well they are progressing towards them.

Regardless of their needs and difficulties, pupils have good support from staff in lessons. Many people from outside the school also help, including sports coaches, music therapists and forestry teachers, as well as educational, health and social services personnel. The Nurture Centre is a great support for some pupils, as are the residential facilities for others.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

In the temporary absence of the headteacher the deputy head is currently acting in this role, although both were present during the inspection. They work closely together and have evaluated the school's performance outstandingly well. The curriculum was evaluated too modestly because some elements were relatively new. School leaders have set a very clear direction for future developments, resulting in outstandingly good improvement since the previous inspection. There are still some on-going initiatives being developed, such as ways of reducing the high level of absenteeism, and keeping bullying to a minimum. However, the capacity to continue improving is outstanding. Governors fulfil their duties well, skilfully manage the school's finances and are increasingly more professional and proactive in their support for the school. Staff with management responsibilities work very capably as a team, whether they are leaders for particular subjects, for the Nurture Centre, or for the residences. Links with other institutions are highly valued, including local primary and comprehensive schools, a college, the careers service and behaviour support service.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4
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	4
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?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
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**

5 December 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Holly House Special School, Old Whittington, Chesterfield S41 9QR

I expect you remember when I came to inspect your school recently. Thank you for being polite, talking with me and showing me your work.

I found that you go to a good school, with many really great things happening. Your teachers work hard to make sure your lessons are interesting, and to help you to learn how to behave in different situations. You tell me you like your teachers and other classroom staff, and most of the work that you do, especially in subjects like art, design and technology and food technology. You have an extremely good range of extra activities that you can join in with, from non-stop cricket and skiing to violin lessons and chess. Many of you go to the 'school in the forest', to college work-related days and to another school's sports centre. You told me that there is hardly any bullying, and you do not feel threatened around school. You also said that you want to get back to mainstream school, but are a bit nervous about doing so. Mr Brandt and Mr Greenhough work very determinedly to make things right for you, and make things better. They have been extremely successful in doing this over the past few years. They get good help from other staff, and from the school's governors and other people who visit regularly.

There is not a lot that needs to be changed, but I am asking the school to look for ways to get pupils to attend the school more often as at present too many pupils do not come when they should.

Teachers and classroom helpers are already discovering some new ways to help those of you who find learning difficult. Once they are secure with how they work, I would like them to use these with more of you.

With my best wishes for the future

Trevor Watts

Inspector