

Holly Grove School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135014
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	316304
Inspection dates	28–29 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Caroline Broomhead HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	2–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	58
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Lisa Monckton
Headteacher	Mrs Sue Kitto
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Harrogate Crescent Burnley Lancashire BB10 2NX
Telephone number	01282 424216
Fax number	01282 831419

Age group	2–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

Holly Grove opened as a primary special school in 2005 following the amalgamation of 3 special schools in the area. It is due to move to new premises in 2008. The school makes provision for pupils aged 2 to 11 years with complex needs including moderate, severe, or profound and multiple learning difficulties, and/or autistic spectrum disorder. Some pupils also have associated medical needs and require high levels of care. There are currently 58 pupils on roll within the age range 4 to 11 years. All the pupils have a statement of special educational needs. The majority of pupils are White British and a third Asian Pakistani heritage. Nearly all pupils speak English as their first language. The school takes pupils from a wide catchment area. Nearly one third of pupils are entitled to free school meals.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Holly Grove is a good school which enjoys a good reputation locally. Some aspects of its work are outstanding, for example the care, guidance and support given to pupils and the extent to which the school promotes equality of opportunity for each individual. The pupils love coming to school and, as a result of the good teaching, make good progress in their learning and personal development. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school.

Under the strong leadership of the headteacher and her deputy, the school has gone from strength to strength. They have established a shared sense of purpose and a culture of self-review. As a result staff morale is high. At the heart of the school's success is an inclusive child centred approach to all its work. Holly Grove is a nurturing environment for pupils and adults alike. Excellent teamwork between staff ensures that pupils receive the individual attention they need. There is a strong commitment to staff training and this is recognised in the school's Investors in People status. The school's expertise is recognised and called upon locally.

In line with its policy on inclusion, the school re-structured its class groups recently. Pupils are now taught in mixed ability classes by age group. This has had a very positive impact on the pupils' social and communication skills. However, in some lessons the narrow range of resources available limits the effectiveness of this approach. The curriculum is well matched to the pupils' needs, although better use could be made of information and communication technology (ICT) to support teaching and learning. Subject leaders have been identified but their role is currently underdeveloped.

The school works well with the wider community to ensure that the pupils have a good range of opportunities to develop their independence and social skills. This is reflected in the number of pupils taking part in link programmes with local mainstream schools. The school is moving to a new site in 2008, where it will be co-located with mainstream and community facilities. The staff are well prepared for this move and looking forward to the opportunities it will bring. The school has good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The quality of provision in the Foundation Stage is good. The children are welcomed into the bright, stimulating environment each morning and clearly enjoy the individual attention they receive. Relationships between staff and children are excellent. Careful attention is given to promoting children's well-being and protecting their dignity. The Foundation Stage is well led and managed. The curriculum, based on the early learning goals, is suitably adapted to take account of the children's individual needs and abilities. Teaching is good, and sometimes outstanding. As a result the children make good progress by the time they move on to Year 1. Assessment is rigorous; each child's small steps of progress are well documented. Staff and children celebrate these successes, for example there was jubilation when a child recently uttered her first word. The children are encouraged to become independent at an early age and are given responsibilities such as taking the register to the office.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the use of ICT to support teaching and learning.

- Develop the role of subject leaders.
- Improve the resources available to match the wide range of pupils' needs and abilities in class groups.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The children's skills level on entry to the school is well below that found nationally; it is within the National Curriculum P Levels ranging from P1 to P8. This is due to the severity of their learning difficulties, disabilities and medical needs. As they move through school they make good progress against their individual starting points and against suitably challenging targets. The pupils begin to develop early literacy skills. For one child good progress can be making eye contact with an adult, for another, more able pupil, it can be learning to read and write short sentences. Some pupils make outstanding progress, particularly in communication skills and social interaction. The pupils learn to use visual timetables to help them to structure their day. This helps them to learn to manage their own behaviour and control their anxieties; as a result they have a more positive attitude to learning and are able to concentrate for longer periods. Some pupils with autistic spectrum disorder begin to join in groups voluntarily and to interact with others, which is a significant achievement for them. The school places great emphasis on developing pupils' physical mobility. With careful support and encouragement some learn to take weight on their legs for the first time, to walk, to run with better coordination.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being is good. The pupils enjoy coming to school and most attend regularly unless they are ill. Their behaviour in and around school is good. In this supportive environment, the pupils learn to become independent, to tolerate being in groups, to take turns and to work with others. They are encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles and clearly enjoy taking part in physical activity, for example in the multi-skills activity at lunchtimes. The school has achieved the Healthy Schools Award. With support, they learn to keep themselves safe, for example when playing out. The children have been involved in a range of fundraising activities, for example raising over £100 for Children in Need. They have many opportunities to go into the local community, for example to parks, places of interest or supermarkets. As a result they learn to socialise with others and to use their numeracy skills in everyday settings. The school council offers suggestions for improvements that they would like to see. They requested that drinking water be available in each of the classrooms, and said they would like more bicycles for use at break-times. One member in particular would like to see an improvement to the school's website and the school is already taking steps to address this. Throughout the year the pupils take part in a broad range of events which promote their understanding of different cultures. Visitors to the school bring these to life; for example during the Indian dance festival. The pupils begin to appreciate different beliefs, festivals, songs and dances. In assemblies they have time for quiet reflection and sing songs as well as celebrating their achievements at school. They are proud of the stars they receive for their behaviour and efforts and are eager to hold the title of 'Star of the week'. The pupils learn to see and accept each other's differences and begin to help each other. They willingly take on responsibilities around the school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good and sometimes outstanding. Excellent teamwork and relationships are seen in all classes. The staff are well aware of each pupil's needs and know where to pitch their questions to challenge each individual. They have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and participation in lessons and so ensure that lessons are fun and capture pupils' interest. Since the recent restructuring of classes into mixed ability groups, teachers have responded positively to the challenges this poses. They have been encouraged by the excellent support and guidance they have received from the headteacher and her deputy. In the best lessons, teachers plan for a good mix of whole group and small group activity. The whole group activity promotes social interaction and maximises opportunities for stimulation from the wider ability range, at the same time encouraging pupils to feel part of a class group. The small group activities are usually organised according to ability levels and ensure that pupils remain focused, receive individual support, and are suitably challenged. Most pupils respond willingly in this lesson structure. Where lessons are less successful it is because the activities set in the small groups are not relevant to the main theme of the lesson so opportunities are missed to promote continuity of learning. In addition, a narrow range of resources may be used which do not engage all pupils as well as they might. Occasionally the whole group activity takes too long and pupils begin to lose interest.

The headteacher has established robust arrangements for assessing and tracking pupils' small steps of progress across all subjects. This is beginning to provide the school with more detailed data about pupils' progress over time. The school has rightly identified the need to ensure consistency in teacher assessment and is beginning to address this through work with other schools.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is dynamic and responsive to pupils' needs. It provides them with an exciting range of opportunities which capture their interest and promote a sense of fun and enjoyment in coming to school. Pupils study a broad range of subjects at their own level and good emphasis is placed on developing their skills in communication, socialising and independence. Under the direction of the speech and language therapist, weekly groups have recently been established which focus on developing pupils' language skills. The school is promoting increased use of symbols and signing to aid pupils' communication. Personal, social and health education is taught in discrete sessions but is also central to the whole curriculum. For example, during family dining at lunchtimes pupils are taught table manners and are given choices about what they eat. There is also a strong emphasis on promoting pupils' physical development and mobility. Strong links with the local sports partnership are opening up more opportunities to join in sports. At present these include additional coaching and physical activities at breaks and lunchtimes. Plans are being made to extend this to include a residential activity holiday. There are regular opportunities for pupils to learn in the wider community. For some this means a visit to a local shop whereas for others it might mean regularly joining in with classes at a local mainstream school. The curriculum is flexible enough to allow it to be tailored to suit individual needs.

The use of ICT is underdeveloped. To some extent this is due to the fact that the school is in temporary premises and there have been technical difficulties with the computer systems in place. However, it is also due to a lack of staff confidence and expertise. The range of software and control technology available to teachers to support the curriculum is limited.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care, guidance and support given to pupils is outstanding throughout the school day. High staffing levels ensure that pupils are well supervised at all times. Rigorous procedures are in place for minimising any risks to pupils, for example when going out on visits or when being moved into standing support frames. Individual care and medical plans are drawn up and routinely monitored by the school's full time nurse. Some pupils have high levels of dependency and require physical lifting or tube feeding. Each of these procedures is carried out with the utmost respect for each pupil's dignity. Staff are well trained to meet their responsibilities. All child protection and safe recruitment procedures are in place. The school has introduced a 'safe space' where pupils can go if they feel the need to calm down or to have some quiet time out of a group. This situation is carefully supervised and has had a positive impact on pupils' behaviour. It has led to a reduction in the number of incidents requiring positive handling. The school works closely with partner schools to ensure that pupils are adequately prepared for moving on to secondary school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management is good overall. The headteacher provides outstanding vision and direction for the school. She works closely with her deputy to promote high standards of education and care and they both enjoy strong respect and support from the staff, governors and parents. The staff say they feel able to contribute their ideas and to try new ways of working knowing that they will be well supported.

A particular strength of the school is the way in which it promotes equality of opportunity for every pupil regardless of need or disability. This outward looking school actively seeks to work in partnership with others for the benefit of its pupils and is very successful in this respect.

The headteacher has brought rigour to self-evaluation. As a result, the senior managers have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and a clear plan of action for addressing its priorities for improvement. Detailed assessment procedures have been established which are beginning to provide more accurate data about pupils' progress over time. The school intends to use this to support evaluation of the effectiveness of recent initiatives such as the new language groups. The school has recognised that the role of subject leaders is underdeveloped and senior managers are guiding them in monitoring how well pupils are achieving in their subjects across the school. Resources to support the curriculum are adequate. Senior managers have carried out an audit of resources and made some improvements to what is available and how these are used, for example in the library.

The governors provide good and effective support for the school.

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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	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	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?	1

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	1
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

30 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Holly Grove School, Lancashire, BB10 2NX

Thank you very much for welcoming me into your school earlier this week. I enjoyed meeting you and watching you in lessons and around school.

These are the things I found out about your school from my visit:

- You make good progress at school and this is because the teaching is good.
- The staff look after you very well from the minute you arrive in the morning until you go home each evening.
- Your attendance is satisfactory and I know that many of you are only off school when you are ill.
- Your behaviour around school is good. You get on well with staff and with each other. I was impressed by how much fun you have at school. It was lovely to see you smiling.
- You receive excellent support in your lessons and this helps you to learn better.
- The headteacher and deputy lead the school extremely well. They are well respected by you and the staff. They have good plans for the school's future.
- Your parents are very pleased with the school.

The school could make some improvements in the following:

- Improve the use of computers and technology in lessons to help you to learn and to communicate with each other.
- More resources are needed in lessons which match your ability and needs.
- Subject leaders should look at how they can improve teaching and learning in their subjects across the school.

Once again, thank you for helping me with the inspection. Best wishes for the future, particularly when you move into your bright new school building next year.

Yours sincerely

Caroline Broomhead

Her Majesty's Inspector