

Holly Spring Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109806
Local Authority	Bracknell Forest
Inspection number	325031
Inspection dates	18–19 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Graham Stephens

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	208
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Sarah Mortimer
Headteacher	Mrs Patricia Donkin
Date of previous school inspection	24 April 2006
School address	Lily Hill Road Bullbrook Bracknell RG12 2SW
Telephone number	01344 422367
Fax number	01344 306577

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This school is similar in size to other junior schools. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is average. There are very few pupils who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, most of whom find aspects of English and mathematics challenging, is higher than in most schools. There have been changes to the leadership team this year and many changes to staffing during the past two years.

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. Under the strong leadership of the headteacher it continues to improve. The school provides a happy and stable environment where adults are good role models showing that mutual support and understanding are of paramount importance. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive. 'I am confident that children receive the support and continual encouragement from both teaching and support staff, to ensure that their junior school years are fulfilling and rewarding' is typical of the many comments received.

Pupils enter the school with standards that are broadly average. In 2008 results in national tests were broadly average in writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6, indicating satisfactory achievement. This was because of some weaknesses in teaching and severe disruption to staffing over the previous two years. However, staffing has now stabilised and teaching has improved. New school initiatives are having a very positive impact on pupils' progress, which is now good. These initiatives include the linking of subjects across the curriculum, very effective procedures to track the progress of every pupil and the review of planning that ensures work is well matched to individual needs. Good teaching ensures that these needs are met. Evidence confirms that pupils currently in Year 6 are on track to attain the challenging targets set in English, mathematics and science and that standards overall are above average. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels in mathematics improved last year but the proportion making the expected progress needs to improve still further. The school acknowledges that writing, and especially that of boys, needs to improve. Induction procedures for pupils who enter the school during the school year are good so that they settle quickly into school routines. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Teaching varies from satisfactory to outstanding and is good overall, though it needs to become more consistent so that all lessons are at least good. Teaching is regularly monitored, and strengths and areas for development are carefully noted and teachers informed. Teachers are well supported by a good curriculum, securely based on the progression of skills. The curriculum is further enhanced by a wide range of enrichment activities. Support for pupils in their learning is good. Their progress is carefully tracked and teachers use this information well to plan work to meet pupils' needs. This includes support for those who find aspects of English and mathematics challenging and those who have been identified as gifted and talented. The very few pupils who speak English as an additional language are well supported and make good progress. Procedures to safeguard pupils are established and well known.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. They are friendly and welcoming, speaking confidently to adults. Pupils behave well. They know what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and enjoy the wide range of sports on offer. They are fully included in the decision-making process through the school council and are aware of current initiatives. For example, they questioned a contractor visiting the site to survey the playground for new equipment and made sure that their opinions and thoughts were made known. Good links with outside agencies ensure that the school receives appropriate advice that it unfailingly acts upon. Since her appointment just over two years ago, the headteacher has overseen many staff changes and also changes to the senior leadership and management teams. Throughout this period, she has remained steadfastly focused on improving the learning opportunities for pupils and encouraging them to develop the skills to become independent learners. In this, she is succeeding. Staff share her vision and apply themselves with enthusiasm. They have a common

understanding of priorities for improvement. Governors are committed to accelerating progress and raising standards further. The school has a good capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Accelerate progress and raise standards in writing and mathematics. In particular, improve the quality of boys' writing and the proportion of pupils making the expected progress in mathematics.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better throughout the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress from when they join the school in Year 3 to the end of Year 6. Teachers are very well informed about pupils' progress because of systematic and rigorous monitoring, effective ongoing assessment and high expectations. Consequently, progress is accelerating quickly. Pupils achieve well and by the end of Year 6, are attaining standards above average in all subjects. Nevertheless, boys' writing needs to improve still further, although evidence confirms that many are now making good progress. The proportion of pupils gaining the higher level in mathematics last year improved but too few pupils met their challenging targets. Strategies have been put in place to address this and evidence confirms that the majority are on track to meet their targets this year. These strategies need to become embedded throughout the school to ensure that pupils make the expected progress from Year 3 onwards.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Relationships across the school are friendly and supportive. Pupils are keen to take on responsibility and fulfil their appointed tasks well. Class 'ambassadors', for example, greet visitors with enthusiasm and courtesy. Both the school council and the eco-council are well supported and contribute effectively to the life of the school because members' opinions are sought and valued. Pupils approach the day with confidence and enjoy coming to school. Behaviour in class and around the school is good. Pupils concentrate and apply themselves well. This has a positive impact on what they achieve. While the great majority of learners attend well, overall levels of attendance are only in line with the average for primary schools nationally. This is due to the persistent irregular attendance of a small number of pupils. Pupils have a good grasp of the principles of healthy eating and the need for regular exercise. In particular, they take full advantage of the wide range of opportunities given for developing sports skills. Take-up for extra-curricular clubs is good and the school is represented in a range of competitive sports.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Inspection findings and the school's own records confirm that the quality of teaching is improving. Very good relationships between all adults and pupils underpin the good progress that pupils make. Teachers effectively use information gained from the tracking of pupils' progress to plan work that interests and motivates them and is well matched to their needs.

Teaching assistants are skilled at supporting those who find aspects of English and mathematics challenging and also the very few who speak English as an additional language. Both groups make good progress. Nevertheless, the quality of teaching is inconsistent. In the outstanding lessons observed, pupils were fully engaged and keen to learn. Teachers had very high expectations, built very well upon what the pupils already knew and understood, and asked questions that challenged their thinking. Less successful lessons proceeded at a slower pace, time was not always used to best effect and a small minority of pupils were not always managed effectively to ensure that they fully concentrated on the task in hand.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good, being both broad and appropriate to the interests of the pupils. It is enhanced by a wide range of topics that are blended across different subject areas. Although recently introduced, this is beginning to provide pupils with many opportunities to apply their knowledge, understanding and skills in English, mathematics, and information and communication technology in a range of subjects. For example, work on human rights links with science through work on how to provide clean water. Spiritual and cultural development is strongly promoted through the topics chosen and the way the content challenges stereotypes and extends awareness of the wider world. The content, and sometimes the choice of the topics themselves, benefit from the direct input of pupils. This fosters a keen sense of engagement and promotes independent study. Further enrichment comes from a good level of specialist teaching and the contribution of community members with relevant knowledge to share. Sport, in particular, is well promoted through clubs and the employment of specialist coaches. This promotes healthy living, a strong sense of school identity and good social and moral development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care, guidance and support provided by the school are good. Staff display a strong commitment to the nurture and development of each pupil. In support of this, they maintain good records of what the pupils know and can do, and use these to tailor work at an appropriate and challenging level. Success of all kinds is recognised and rewarded. This very positive and well-informed encouragement has a positive impact on learners' maturity and academic achievement. Within the framework of a well-behaved school, pupils play a positive role in supporting each other and school life generally. Those pupils identified as having any learning difficulty and/or disability and those who speak English as an additional language make good progress because support is tailored to meet their identified needs. The school draws on an extensive range of specialist agencies to support this provision. Arrangements for the safeguarding of children are in place, and health and safety is carefully managed. Target setting, marking that helps pupils know what to do to improve, and numerous opportunities for pupils to evaluate each other's work against success criteria are all well established.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Although still establishing themselves in their new roles, managers share a common determination, driven by the good leadership and enthusiasm of the headteacher. She is well

supported by the deputy headteacher in her efforts to raise standards and accelerate progress. The thoughts and opinions of all staff are sought and valued, and pupils are consulted through the school council. Consequently, all have a role in strategic planning. The school improvement plan sets out clear objectives for both the year ahead and the longer term. It appropriately identifies as a priority the need to raise standards through enhancing opportunities for learning. Teaching is monitored regularly and systems are securely in place to ensure that teachers are held to account for the progress pupils make. To ensure that all staff are actively involved and have a real sense of ownership, they have very recently been reorganised into two teams, as well as retaining individual subject responsibilities. One team has responsibility to develop learning opportunities for pupils by further developing the curriculum and the other to promote pupils' personal development and well-being. It is too soon to judge the impact of this initiative. The governing body is well led. It holds the school rigorously to account for the progress pupils make and the standards they attain. The promotion of community cohesion is good. Well-established links ensure that pupils gain a good understanding of both the local and wider community.

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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	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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
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 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

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

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

01 April 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Holly Spring Junior School, Bracknell, RG12 2SW

Thank you for being so welcoming, polite and friendly when we came to visit your school recently. We enjoyed meeting and talking with you and looking at all your work and the exciting things that you do.

You go to a good school. Here is a list of some of the things we liked best.

- We enjoyed being greeted by the 'class ambassadors'. Everybody made us feel very welcome and looked after us well.
- You are very polite and caring and your behaviour is good.
- You listen very carefully to all that your teachers and teaching assistants say.
- You work together very well and make good progress in your work.
- Your teachers are skilled at planning very interesting things for you to do.
- All the adults make sure you are well looked after and you are very appreciative of all that they do.
- Your headteacher leads your school very well.

Every school, even one as good as yours, has something that could be improved. We have asked your headteacher to make sure that:

- standards in writing and mathematics improve further
- boys try even harder to improve their writing and you all make faster progress in mathematics so that you gain the success of which you are capable
- all your lessons really help you to improve all aspects of your work so that standards continue to improve.

Yours faithfully

Graham Stephens

Lead Inspector