

The Holy Brook School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110193
Local Authority	Reading
Inspection number	325104
Inspection date	26 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Mike Smith

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	22
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Mullaney
Headteacher	Mr Lee Smith
Date of previous school inspection	14 May 2006
School address	145 Ashampstead Road Southcote Reading RG30 3LJ
Telephone number	01189 015489
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Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Holy Brook is a small school that provides for pupils who have statements of special educational need for their social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Pupils come from a variety of social and economic backgrounds, the great majority being of white British heritage. A higher than average proportion of pupils (over half) are eligible for free school meals and currently the great majority of pupils are boys. Two pupils are looked after by the local authority. Attainment on entry is generally well below average. The school holds the Healthy School Award and the Activemark for physical education. In addition, the school offers an Outreach Support Service to mainstream schools and their pupils via a Nurture Group setting and Art Therapist.

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 and continually improving school because leaders, managers and all staff put pupils' well-being and achievement at the heart of all they do. The very dedicated headteacher, supported by an equally committed deputy headteacher and staff, have, together with well-informed governors, driven improvement forward very effectively since the previous inspection. This vision for improvement is shared by the whole school and excellent, systematic cycles of monitoring and self-evaluation ensure that staff and pupils have a clear understanding of what needs to improve and how to achieve success. Consequently, the school has a good capacity to improve further.

One parent wrote, 'My son arrived at the school as a very anxious little boy who would have frequent outbursts. After only a short period of time, he is now a very happy, confident little boy who loves going to school'.

Teamwork and consistent management of pupils' behaviour are strengths of the school. A very high priority is given to the health and safety of pupils and there is very effective care and support for pupils' emotional, behavioural and learning difficulties. This contributes significantly to pupils' outstanding personal development and well-being. Pupils are treated with respect and dignity at all times. A parent reported, 'I am very pleased that my son attends a school where staff give a caring response to his difficulties. I value this greatly'. The school is a positive community, nurturing pupils' personal and academic development and celebrating their achievements at every opportunity. Community cohesion is promoted effectively, both within and outside the school, enabling pupils to appreciate their place in the local and worldwide community. This includes offering a wide variety of learning opportunities outside the school, such as sporting activities, theatre visits and places of worship. There are very effective partnerships with external support agencies and schools to ensure that pupils' well-being and personal needs are extremely well met.

Due to the complexity of pupils' learning and emotional difficulties, standards vary widely but, overall, they are average or just below average when compared with other pupils of their age. Importantly, the academic progress pupils make given their starting points is good, while the progress they make in their personal development is outstanding. Many pupils are aware of the National Curriculum levels they are working at and clearly understand what they need to do to improve. As pupils move through the school, they begin to show a marked improvement in their confidence, communication and social skills. One pupil remarked, 'I used to be really shy, but now I have the confidence to speak to anyone'. Younger pupils in the Nurture Group learn to work cooperatively with others and begin to appreciate social boundaries and expectations for their behaviour. They get an effective introduction to understanding the importance of managing their own behaviour and attitudes. An extremely useful record of achievement, including sequential photographs of progress, illustrates their achievements very effectively. Pupils work towards challenging individual targets based upon very effective analysis of their previous learning. Most pupils successfully achieve their targets.

The good progress pupils make in their learning and their outstanding personal development are due to the excellent relationships, outstanding care and support they receive for their individual needs. Their positive attitude towards their learning supports their progress very well. Teachers increasingly use information on pupils' progress in their planning to help ensure activities are suitably challenging and meet the learning needs of all pupils. However, some

teachers are better than others at using this information to ensure all pupils are consistently challenged and achieve as well as they can. Pupils' progress is monitored, recorded and analysed effectively, which ensures any underachievement is identified and appropriate support initiated. The curriculum supports pupils' personal development very effectively. The curriculum is being reviewed as evaluations have determined that pupils with more complex learning and emotional needs require a different approach to ensure they make the best possible progress of which they are capable. Activities are generally interesting and practical, which motivates pupils to learn. Visits into the community and from visiting specialists all enrich pupils' learning experiences. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils make an excellent contribution to the community, being involved in recycling and fundraising activities, such as a sponsored canoe paddle and a sponsored car wash to raise funds for the Year 6 summer camp. Pupils show consideration and support for each other and their behaviour is good as a result. Pupils like being in school; attendance rates are good. Governors are fully involved in the monitoring, evaluation and the strategic management of the school, all of which show a very good improvement since the last inspection.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve teaching to the level of the best by making better use of assessment information to provide more consistent and relevant challenge to all pupils.
- Ensure the curriculum continues to develop and adapt to meet the ever-changing and complex needs of all learners.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' academic progress is good, and they achieve well, because of the range of appropriate learning activities to meet their individual needs and the emotional support they receive, enabling them to access learning more effectively. Pupils make consistently good or better progress in their communication, choices and management of their own learning as they move through the school. This is due to the strong emphasis on these areas within the curriculum, pupils' enthusiastic learning, excellent support arrangements and good teaching. Pupils learn practical applications in mathematics, science, and information and communication technology (ICT) to support everyday living. They learn essential personal and social skills that fully support their transfer to secondary school and their development as citizens. Careful analysis of progress data has identified the need to improve pupils' writing skills. Intervention strategies include additional language therapy and a more intensive focus across the curriculum. This has resulted in an overall improvement across the school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils clearly appreciate all aspects of keeping safe and healthy and they eagerly engage in a wide range of physical activities. Pupils are very proud of their sporting successes against other schools, as their Activemark award shows. Their very positive attitudes result in their good attendance and behaviour and in their enthusiasm for all lessons. Pupils' relationships with staff and each other are outstanding with mutual respect shown at all times. Pupils make an outstanding contribution to their community through a variety of fundraising events and community performances and by helping and supporting each other. For example, pupils joined with local mainstream pupils in a concert to support the work of the Salvation Army. One pupil,

reflecting the views of many spoken to, said, 'I like it here because I have made friends and there is always something interesting to do. I also like the food, especially the roast meals'.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The wide and varied learning needs of most pupils are generally met effectively, which results in them making progress. The quality of teaching and learning is monitored closely and support is given for individual improvement, although the very best practice, particularly in terms of using assessment data to plan individual challenge could be shared more effectively across the school. A very positive learning environment is created where pupils gain confidence and are encouraged to do their best. A pupil commented, 'Most lessons are really interesting and I am making really good progress in mathematics'. Pupils are involved in evaluating their own learning and lessons. This leads to a clearer idea of how they can improve. Ongoing assessment, feedback and support in lessons by teachers and highly effective support staff also very clearly indicate to pupils how they might improve. This, together with a good use of supportive resources such as the interactive whiteboard, ensures all pupils maximise their learning opportunities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum effectively supports pupils' good academic and outstanding personal development. There is a continued drive to improve pupils' standards in English and mathematics and the use of their skills within these areas is planned across all subjects. Active, lively learning experiences based on prior achievement enable pupils to engage successfully in all lessons. There are good opportunities to enrich pupils' learning, through a wide range of school visits, visiting specialists and after school activities that all effectively promote pupils' enjoyment and achievement. Teamwork is encouraged, and imaginative play led by the Art Therapist contributes effectively to pupils exploring their own learning. Provision to make healthy choices and to stay safe are emphasised and curriculum planning and lesson delivery considers pupils' personal learning needs. For example, pupils' confidence, communication and interests develop well in drama, art and sporting activities. The school is continually trying to improve the curriculum and have noted they need to modify it constantly to meet the ever-changing nature of pupils' needs.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Consistent and efficient school procedures and practice keep pupils safe and secure, while promoting their confidence and independence. This results in extremely positive attitudes and pupils who want to be in school. Very effective planning and coordinated teamwork between all staff ensure pupils' physical, personal and emotional needs are very well met. Vulnerable pupils are identified quickly and carefully monitored to ensure their well-being. Communication between the school and home is very good and effective use is made of the daily home/school report book. A parent said, 'I think this is an excellent school and staff have been very helpful to me and my son in, and out of school'. It is very clear to pupils in all lessons how they may improve and they receive very effective guidance and support for their transition into secondary school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good throughout the school as there is a common set of high expectations and a consistent delivery of agreed policies. The headteacher has a clear vision for further developing the school's provision and role. This is clearly demonstrated in the strategic plan for the improvement and extension of the accommodation. All staff very effectively promote high-quality care and learning. Their work is valued, and consequently morale is high. Staff agree that teamwork and support for each other are a strength of the school and the impact of everyone's work is clearly seen in the outstanding care and support for pupils. This leads to pupils' outstanding personal development and good achievement. Staff induction and support arrangements are effective and result in all staff being clear on how to best support individual needs. Training and professional development is clearly based upon the school's priorities for improvement and the health and safety of the pupils. Links with external providers, public services and other organisations successfully support the integration of care and education to enhance learning and promote well-being and community cohesion.

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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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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?	1

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	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 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**

20 April 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Holy Brook School, Reading, RG30 3LJ

I would like to thank you for making my visit to your school such a pleasurable one. I really enjoyed spending my day with you. I would especially like to thank those pupils who spoke with me in the staffroom and told me all about the school. You were friendly, polite, and excellent representatives of your school. During the day, I saw that you all get on very well together and really enjoy coming to school. I agree with you and your parents that your school is good. It teaches you useful skills and helps you to improve your behaviour and confidence. I think you make good progress in your work and excellent progress in your personal development. All staff work really well together to make sure you get the extra help you may need. You too can help by listening very carefully to all instructions and working as hard as you can at all times. Things I particular liked are as follows:

- you learn to do things for yourself and make choices
- you really enjoy all your lessons
- you learn to be healthy and safe and to improve your behaviour
- you support your community very effectively and think about other people
- you really like the school trips and after school activities
- you learn useful skills that will help you when you move to secondary school
- the school works very effectively with other people to ensure you receive the support you need
- the school is well led and managed and it has your very best interests at heart.

The school knows it can still improve, and agrees that it should:

- make sure that you receive the very best teaching in all lessons so that activities are always challenging and support your different individual needs
- make sure that the curriculum always meets your different ways of learning so you can make the best possible progress.

It was a delight being in your school and I wish you all every future success.

Yours faithfully

M J Smith

Lead Inspector