

Holmer Green Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110268
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	325122
Inspection date	3 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Graham Stephens

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	176
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	7
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Tricia Graham
Headteacher	Mrs Susan Huntley
Date of previous school inspection	20 September 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Watchet Lane Holmer Green High Wycombe HP15 6UG
Telephone number	01494 712 050
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Age group	4–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. They evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- the rate of progress for all pupils and particularly progress in writing
- how effective leadership and management have been in identifying issues, accelerating progress and evaluating the impact of the actions taken
- apparent strengths, particularly those relating to the Early Years Foundation Stage, personal development, well-being, care, support and guidance.

Evidence was gathered from visits to lessons, sampling pupils' work, discussion with pupils, parents, staff and the chair of governors, the school's documentation and assessment information and inspection questionnaires returned from the parents. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail.

Description of the school

Pupils in this average size infant school come from a variety of backgrounds. There is provision for children aged four and five in the Early Years Foundation Stage in three Reception classes. There are breakfast and after school clubs, and a pre-school that takes Early Years Foundation Stage children aged from two to four. These are all managed by the governing body. There is also a private nursery on site, which is inspected separately. The school has extended school status. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. In this school, these pupils are largely those who find aspects of English and mathematics challenging. There are few pupils who speak English as an additional language. Very few pupils either join or leave the school at other than the normal times. Until 2007, staffing was stable but there have been several changes since then.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Under the outstanding leadership of the headteacher, well supported by her deputy headteacher, this school provides a good education for its pupils. 'The school is a very friendly, approachable school, always looking at ways to move forward and improve, not that it needs to.' This is representative of the overwhelmingly positive comments received from parents.

Pupils build well on the strong start that they make in Reception. They make good progress through Years 1 and 2 because of the good teaching they receive. Standards have generally been above average by the end of Year 2. However, in 2007 results in national assessments in reading, writing and mathematics declined and were broadly average. A high percentage of boys did not attain the higher levels in writing and others failed to attain expected levels in mathematics. This was partly because a very small minority experienced emotional and behavioural problems that adversely affected their progress. There was also some disruption to staffing. Under the strong leadership of the headteacher, staff were determined to accelerate progress and raise standards. A detailed analysis of the results took place. The teaching of mathematics was reorganised and additional support was arranged to support pupils in both their reading and writing. Pupils have more time to practise their writing skills. As a result, standards improved in 2008 when they were above average in reading and mathematics and broadly average in writing. This represents good progress from these pupils' starting points. Evidence confirms that pupils continue to make good progress in all subjects. While progress in writing is accelerating, the school acknowledges the need to embed the strategies recently introduced and make sure that they are applied consistently to ensure that progress continues to improve.

The school's ethos is very conducive to learning. Adults are very good role models in terms of relationships, so pupils are able to give of their best. Adults listen very carefully to what pupils have to say and positively encourage them in their endeavours. Pupils play well together and cooperate well in lessons. They are developing positive attitudes to learning, reflected by one pupil who said, 'I just love mathematics because I really enjoy working with numbers.' Pupils feel very happy and secure and this is reflected in their high attendance. They know who to turn to if they are either worried or concerned. The school provides a safe environment. Although one parent expressed a concern about the safety of the perimeter of the school grounds, the school was already aware of the issue and had taken all reasonable steps to ensure pupils' safety. Behaviour is good. Occasionally, a small minority of pupils fail to pay due attention but they respond immediately to requests from adults. Pupils know what they have to do in order to lead a healthy lifestyle, encouraged by schemes such as the 'Yummy Scrummy Project' that encourages the provision of healthy lunch boxes. The well-attended before and after school clubs give pupils many opportunities for active play and to interact with older pupils from the neighbouring junior school.

Although teaching is good in Years 1 and 2, it varies from satisfactory to outstanding. Teaching is not consistent enough to ensure that progress accelerates further in all subjects, and especially in writing. The most successful lessons proceed at a brisk pace and work is well matched to pupils' abilities, especially the higher attainers. Progress slows down when expectations are too low and the more able pupils are not challenged consistently throughout the lesson. Recent initiatives ensure that learning objectives are always explained carefully at the start of lessons and that learning is evaluated at their conclusion. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported either by teaching assistants in class or by being withdrawn into

smaller groups for specialist teaching. They make good progress. Pupils who speak English as an additional language also receive good support from teachers and teaching assistants, although the range of resources to support them in their learning is limited. The school receives good support from outside agencies who offer practical support and advice that is acted upon.

Care, support and guidance are outstanding. Assessment procedures are rigorous and track pupils' progress very well. Prompt action is taken when either further support or challenge is needed. Marking informs future learning. 'Well done, you have used dialogue but now you need to use speech marks as well', is a typical comment. Staff are relentless in their efforts to ensure that pupils know what they need to do to improve and have recently introduced individual targets, together with success criteria. It is early days but a good foundation has been laid to encourage greater self-evaluation. Systems and procedures to protect pupils are secure and well understood by all adults.

The curriculum provides a wide variety of exciting learning opportunities. It is well organised and supported by a wide range of extra-curricular activities, visitors, visits and events. The weekly arrival of the 'sports rangers' is eagerly awaited by the pupils who enjoy the opportunities to play a variety of team games during the lunch break. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used effectively by both teachers and pupils to enhance and enrich learning. Attractive displays reflect pupils' work and achievements. The further development of the grounds as a learning resource is a priority because teachers are searching for more opportunities to follow up and build on pupils' interests and observations within the local environment.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher is relentless in her determination to further raise standards, especially in writing, and personally monitors the progress of every pupil. The deputy headteacher has an excellent overview of school priorities and leads well by example. Subject coordinators are developing their new roles well. A good start has been made in reorganising the teaching of mathematics and standards have been seen to improve as a result.

The school promotes community cohesion well. It has well-established local links through which pupils develop a good understanding of people's different roles and responsibilities. Visits to the local care home help pupils to realise how much some people rely on others. Their understanding of wider communities is supported by celebrating different festivals, and learning that people have different beliefs. Pupils are encouraged to collect items for charity and are beginning to realise that some children have needs much greater than their own.

The outstanding governing body is kept very well informed by the headteacher and by regular visits to the school to monitor the impact of initiatives. It is very strongly led. It sets challenging targets and holds the school rigorously to account for achievement and the standards attained. Governors discharge their statutory duties efficiently and are ambitious for the school's success.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Induction procedures are good. Many attend the pre-school on site and very good relationships have been established with other pre-schools and Nurseries in the area. Children are invited to attend the weekly Panda Club where they borrow books and take part in a variety of activities. Consequently many children are familiar with the school before they start and most settle very quickly. Displays and presentations to parents help promote their understanding of how learning activities are planned and developed.

When they join Reception, children's skills in most areas are above those typical for their ages, but below average in language and personal development. Good teaching and very effective leadership help the children to make good progress from these starting points. They find learning fun because adults nurture them and know their needs well. Children are encouraged to find out things for themselves and do this very well. They are very happy and settled so that their relationships with each other and with the adults are excellent. There is a good balance between play and more directed learning across all activities. Very close links with Year 1 staff ensure that children are well prepared to move on at the end of the year. Very good teamwork between adults offers skilled support. This has a positive impact on children's learning and means that they all make good progress in developing their skills and confidence. Children's personal, social and emotional development is outstanding. All welfare requirements are well met. Teachers plan good lessons with activities that hold the children's interest and encourage their thinking skills. The curriculum supports all areas of children's learning effectively. Assessment and the process of setting targets are developing well. By the time children join Year 1, standards have risen, being above average in many respects, apart from children's writing skills which are average. Although good use is made of the outside areas each Reception class has, the school recognises that these have not been sufficiently developed as outside classrooms. A good start has been made. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader knows how to further develop provision, and leads this stage with enthusiasm and dedication.

What the school should do to improve further

- Accelerate progress and raise standards in writing throughout the school by consistently applying the strategies that have been introduced.
- Ensure that the quality of teaching is consistent throughout the school so that work is always well matched to need and pupils make at least good progress in every class.

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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

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

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?	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	1
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?	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	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	1
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**

13 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Holmer Green Infant School, High Wycombe, HP15 6UG

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.

- 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 good at planning very interesting things for you to do.
- All the adults make sure you are really well looked after and you are very appreciative of all that they do.
- Your headteacher and the other people who help run your school are doing a good job.

Every school, even one as good as yours, has something that could be improved.

- Although you are working hard to improve your writing, it needs to improve even more. Your teachers are really helping you and you need to make a special effort to remember to practise regularly and always apply all the writing skills that you have been taught.
- Your teachers plan carefully and try to make all your lessons interesting. We have asked them to make sure that you always get work that is just right for you, so you make good progress in every lesson.

Yours faithfully

Graham Stephens

Lead Inspector