

# Holbeton School

## Inspection report

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Unique Reference Number	113252
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	325781
Inspection dates	4 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Kevin Jane HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	94
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr J Tuckley
Headteacher	Mrs Kathryn Garnett
Date of previous school inspection	4 July 2006
School address	The Square Holbeton Plymouth Devon PL8 1LT
Telephone number	01752 830317
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## Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector. The inspectors visited eight lessons, and held meetings with a governor, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at school improvement planning, school policies, curriculum and teachers' planning, pupils' work and minutes of the governing body. In addition, 42 parent questionnaires were scrutinised.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- The progress of pupils in Years 1 and 2 relative to the profile of attainment on entry to the school and the outcomes for pupils at the end of Year 6
- The effectiveness of provision and support for higher attaining pupils, particularly in English in Years 3 to 6
- The provision for cultural and spiritual development
- The impact of the new leadership and management in securing the vision for the school and how well the vision is communicated and understood
- The extent to which there is a strategy for promoting community cohesion.

## Information about the school

Holbeton is a small primary school serving the village and surrounding areas. A very small number of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups and whose first language is known to be English is well below national averages. There are few pupils with learning difficulties compared with national averages and no pupils with a statement of special educational needs. Although the numbers of pupils in any one year group can fluctuate markedly, there is no significant imbalance of boys and girls. A new headteacher took up her post in April 2009.

## Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

3

### Main findings

Holbeton is a good school. There are particular strengths in the following aspects:

- The behaviour of the pupils
- The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles
- The progress most pupils make in acquiring basic skills and their high levels of attendance
- The effectiveness of the school's partnerships with external agencies, services and other schools.

Other aspects of the school's provision, such as the quality of teaching, the curriculum, care, support and guidance are good and account for the high standards and good progress that pupils make by the end of Year 6. As a result of this, the school has a strong reputation in the community. Pupils enjoy their time at the school and are rightly proud of it.

Children start school with levels of attainment that broadly exceed age-related expectations in all areas of learning and leave with standards that consistently exceed the national averages in tests at age 11. Nevertheless, there is scope for improving the rate and consistency of progress that pupils make in Years 1 and 2. Improvements to the efficiency and precision with which the school now monitors and tracks pupils' progress since the last inspection mean that the school is secure in identifying where intervention is necessary to ensure all pupils make good rates of progress. Priorities for such improvements are clearly defined in the new school development plan.

The school is committed to continuous improvement. There are clear signs that, after a period without a substantive headteacher, it is poised to move forward in the next chapter of its history. The school has a realistic view of its strengths and weaknesses. For example, the school is aware that with the appointment of a new substantive headteacher and new governors, improvement is required in establishing revised aims and values for the school and communicating this clearly. This includes setting out more strategically the approach taken to promote community cohesion. With significant adjustment to school staffing and class organisation pending, redefining the roles, responsibilities and accountabilities of staff is required. The school has rightly maintained its focus on improving pupils' attainment and progress during this transition period. The systems and procedures for ensuring this are sufficiently established to enable the school to continue to improve. While the track

record of pupils' performance is, and has been, good over recent years, the impact and effectiveness of future intentions by senior leaders and managers are unproven and for this reason, the capacity for further improvement is currently satisfactory.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- In order to improve the strategic direction of the school, governors and senior leaders should:
  - clearly re-define the vision, aims and values of the school and use the outcomes to underpin priorities in the school development plan
  - rigorously implement identified priorities for improvement and monitor and evaluate their impact on pupils' performance
  - re-define the roles and accountabilities for those staff with management responsibilities
  - ensure that governors are robust in their approach in holding the school to account for its performance.
  
- Ensure that all pupils make consistently good progress in Years 1 and 2 in reading, writing and mathematics by:
  - setting more precise curricular and performance targets for pupils
  - providing wider opportunities in lessons to motivate pupils to achieve the learning objectives by the end of Year 2.
  
- Align intentions for promoting community cohesion with the school development plan and ensure that promoting cultural diversity is more prominent in curriculum planning.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2
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In lessons observed, pupils made good progress. Lessons had good pace and activities were well matched to the needs of individuals. Where classes had mixed-age groupings, care was taken to provide suitably challenging tasks. For example, in a mathematics lesson in Years 3 to 6, individual pupils were given personalised problems to solve in plotting coordinates. In a Years 1 and 2 lesson on writing stories, paired work was effective in analysing and assessing how improvements could be made to make the opening of the story more exciting and interesting for the reader. In both these examples, pupils responded particularly well and were highly involved in their learning. The pupils were confident in their response to the tasks and adults were focused on supporting and challenging all pupils to achieve well.

As a consequence of improved monitoring of pupils' academic performance since the last inspection, the school is able to identify where there is risk of underachievement for individuals and groups. This has resulted in greater numbers of older pupils attaining higher levels in English than was the case in previous years. Similarly, this supports the required drive to improve attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics in Years 1 and 2 which are currently too uneven.

Without doubt, pupils enjoy their learning. This is reflected in the very secure relationships between adults and pupils, in their excellent behaviour, very high rates of attendance and as a result of the interesting enrichment activities provided for the pupils. By the end of Year 6, all pupils, including those with learning difficulties, attain the required level in English, mathematics and science and this has been a consistent pattern in recent years.

The school is successful in striking a good balance between attending to academic attainment, progress and personal development. The social and moral development of pupils is particularly good. The pupils are fully aware of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle. They particularly appreciate the range and diversity of sporting activities provided and the 'yummy' award-winning school meals. They report feeling safe and are confident that adults will listen to them if they have personal problems and resolve any unkind behaviour fairly and swiftly. The pupils appreciate the opportunity to make decisions, as those in the school council testify, and take pride in supporting their chosen charitable events. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their educational lives as a result of attention to basic skills, team-building activities and through young enterprise initiatives. Older pupils are ecologically aware through their involvement in the RIO project, and the school's link with a French school as part of a 'twinning' enterprise is supporting their cultural development. However, the pupils' understanding of cultural diversity in this country and spirituality is more limited.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	2
How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	2
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	2
How well do pupils behave?	1
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	1
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	2
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	1
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	1
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	2

## How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching is typically good. There are common strengths in the very good relationships between pupils and adults and in the interesting and well-planned activities that are matched appropriately to pupils' needs. Teachers use their subject

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

knowledge to good effect in English and mathematics in particular and know the children very well. This results in pupils making good progress especially by the end of Year 6. As a result, pupils are attentive in lessons, they are motivated by the tasks they are given and are able to sustain their concentration. There is no significant difference in the quality of teaching and learning across the school. However, there is scope for improvement in Years 1 and 2 to define curricular targets for individuals more precisely to ensure that pupils make consistently good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. There is some variability in the quality of day-to-day marking of pupils' work, although the pupils report that they know what they have to do to improve their work. Nevertheless, the school can identify reliably where pupils make expected or better than expected progress and predict more precise performance targets for individuals and the school as a whole.

The curriculum is well organised, planned and matched to the needs of pupils. The expertise of adults is used flexibly to maximise learning, for example in physical education and music. In addition, the school is particularly good at enriching and extending the curriculum by exploiting the local environment and outside agencies to enhance the experiences of pupils. Visits to places of educational interest, visitors to school and residential experience all add value to the curriculum experience of pupils. In addition, the school provides a good range of extra-curricular opportunities, including sailing and surfing for older pupils, and attendance at these is very healthy.

Another strength of the school is its caring and supportive family atmosphere and this accounts for pupils feeling safe, secure and happy in school. Older pupils accept responsibility willingly in helping younger pupils to settle into school. There is good support for the few pupils who have additional learning needs and there are well-established links with outside agencies.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

The quality of teaching	2
The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

## How effective are leadership and management?

Since the last inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed and there has been a significant turnover in governors at the school. The result of a lengthy period of acting headship arrangements, and recent difficult decisions taken to reduce the number of classes and teachers, has put a break on the school redefining its ambition. While these important decisions have, out of necessity, commanded high priority, it is a tribute to those associated with the school that a focus has been maintained on pupil performance which has remained high. Predictions for this year look set to improve on previous performance, especially for the higher attaining pupils. There are well-intentioned plans for improvement, based on appropriate priorities already being implemented. The school is set to move forward with

renewed impetus under the leadership of the new headteacher and supportive and committed governors. The leaders and managers are motivated to seek further improvement but there remains much to be done if the school's ambition to be outstanding is realised. Currently, the role of adults in monitoring the provision and performance of curriculum subjects is underdeveloped. Governors, while supportive and active in the school, are not fully effective in holding the school to account. The strategy to promote community cohesion is at a very early stage of development.

Nevertheless, the school is an inclusive one and care is taken to ensure that all pupils have equality of opportunity and chances to improve in their academic performance and personal development. The school takes all reasonable steps to ensure that pupils are safe and policies and procedures, recently reviewed, are in line with government requirements. Partnership work with outside agencies and other schools is outstanding. Engagement with parents is such that the school has the confidence and support of the great majority of the parental community.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

The effectiveness of leadership and management in communicating ambition and driving improvement	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Since the last inspection, provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved with better outdoor space to promote a wider range of activities for children. While this is still limited in poor weather because of the lack of a covered area, the school is aware of the need to improve this aspect still further. Nevertheless, the provision for the youngest children when they start school is good. They arrive in the school with standards above that generally expected for their age and make good progress in their first year across all areas of learning. This is based on astute observations, assessments and tracking the progress that children make by the adults working in this class. The transition from home to school is well planned and managed. Good relationships with parents exist, including the opportunities for parents to share a learning activity with their children first thing in the morning in the classroom. Despite being taught in a mixed-age class, the curriculum for the youngest children is suitably and appropriately planned and is balanced across the six areas of learning.

Appropriate attention is given to helping the children with early literacy skills through a daily period of being taught letters and sounds in a systematic way. The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed with good attention to securing the welfare and personal development of the children.

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

## Views of parents and carers

The great majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire are supportive of the school and the quality of education that their children receive. Most cite the welcoming ethos and hard work of the teachers as particular strengths. This accounts for the strong profile in how parents say their children enjoy school, feel safe and make good progress in their academic work and personal development. Inspectors agree with these views. Parents also made reference, understandably, to the fact that the school had experienced a period of instability recently pending the appointment of a substantive headteacher. This has resulted in some uncertainty, voiced by a minority of parents, about leadership and management as the new headteacher has only been in post since the start of the summer term 2009. Inspectors investigated these views and judgements about this are contained in the appropriate sections of this report.

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Holbeton School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. If a parent has more than one child at the school, we asked them to record an answer against all the questions for each of their children.

The inspection team received 42 completed questionnaires. In total, there are 60 parents and carers registered at the school.

	Always	Most of the time	Occasionally	Never
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	19	20	3	0

## What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2007-8, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2007-8, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. In 2007-8, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2007-8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

- Attainment:** the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
- Progress:** the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
- Achievement:** the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, training or development. This may refer to the acquisition of skills, knowledge, understanding or desired attributes. Attributes include qualities or personal competencies which are important to the development of the pupil; for example personal, social, cultural, emotional or health.
- Capacity to improve:** the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
- Leadership and management:** the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.



5 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Holbeton School, Holbeton, PL8 1LT

I would like to thank you for being so helpful to us when we visited your school recently. We very much enjoyed talking with you in lessons and around the school, sharing some of the super opportunities you have for learning and hearing about how much you enjoy school. You told us how proud you are of your school and you are right to be so! Our inspection found that Holbeton is a good school and here are some of the things we were particularly impressed with:

- Your attendance, behaviour and attitudes towards each other are outstanding.
- You work hard in lessons and respond well to your teachers, who plan interesting activities so that you can make good progress in your work and reach high standards in English and mathematics by the time you leave the school.
- You have good opportunities outside the classroom to extend your knowledge and understanding of the world around you and help you develop as young people.
- Your teachers look after you very well, keep you safe and help you to understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle.
- The school does all it can to work with others to make sure you have a good education.

Your new headteacher and the other adults are working hard to make the school even better and we have asked them to improve three things:

- Make sure that everyone at Holbeton contributes to stating what is special about your school and how it will improve by making sure all the important plans are very clear and do what the adults want them to do for your education
- Make sure that all of you in Years 1 and 2 always make good progress in your reading, writing and mathematics. You can help here by working hard to achieve the special targets that you have.
- Help you to understand how Britain has many different kinds of people living in it and how they believe in different things, so that you can appreciate what a rich and exciting place our country is.

Yours faithfully

Kevin Jane HMI  
Lead inspector

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