

Holywell Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117290
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	338985
Inspection dates	8–9 July 2010
Reporting inspector	Philip Mann HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	290
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Irvin Needle
Headteacher	John Fowler
Date of previous school inspection	17 October 2006
School address	Tolpits Lane Watford WD18 6LL
Telephone number	01923 225188
Fax number	01923 440408
Email address	admin@holywell.herts.sch.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 11 teachers and 22 lessons, either teaching whole classes or smaller groups of pupils. Brief meetings were held with a small number of parents and groups of pupils. Inspectors also held meetings with some governors, senior staff and subject leaders. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school's self-evaluation form, school improvement plan, monitoring reports and various policies. Inspectors also analysed 76 parental questionnaires.

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

- the school's success in raising standards and increasing rates of achievement for all groups of pupils
- the impact of the school's procedures in improving pupil attendance
- the overall quality of teaching and use of assessment to ensure activities fully match the needs of all pupils
- the overall quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- the quality and effectiveness of leadership and management.

Information about the school

The school serves a culturally and socially diverse community of West Watford where the majority of pupils live in local authority housing or rented accommodation. The level of social and economic deprivation is higher than average. Two thirds of pupils come from minority ethnic groups, the largest of which has Pakistani origins. Over a half of pupils do not speak English as their first language. Healthy School Award status was granted in 2007 and the school is in the process of moving to two forms of entry.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a satisfactory school that is rapidly improving in many aspects of its work because of dynamic leadership. Accurate self-evaluation has identified where improvement is needed and with the support of the local authority, school leadership has galvanised and inspired staff following a previous period of high staff turnover, low morale and inadequate standards. Teamwork is a strong feature and as a result, the climate for learning is very positive. This is fully reflected in the sense of enjoyment shown by the vast majority of pupils in lessons and observed by inspectors. These views are fully shared by most parents who speak openly about the rapid changes that have taken place since the appointment of the new headteacher. His drive for high quality learning experiences to be established in all classrooms is being mirrored in most lessons being good or better, positive attitudes of pupils and increasing rates in pupil progress across many areas of learning. Much has been achieved in a short time both in terms of pupil outcomes and provision. Capacity for further improvement is therefore good.

As a result of this drive for improvement, achievement is now satisfactory, with increasing numbers of pupils making good progress in each year group. However, achievement is not yet consistently good across all subjects and areas of learning, particularly in mathematics and science where standards are too low due to a legacy of weak teaching in the past. In contrast, a drive to raise standards in English and especially in writing has paid off with broadly average standards being reached by pupils in Year 6 in the latest national tests with considerable improvement in the number attaining the higher Level 5. Furthermore, displays around the school and examples of pupils' work, confirm outcomes in art and information and communication technology (ICT) are above nationally expected levels.

Pupils are responding well to good provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Assemblies are exciting, celebrate pupil achievement and are used very effectively to reinforce good attitudes towards learning. As a result, pupils are able to actively reflect on the key messages being conveyed about how to be resourceful and resilient in lessons whilst demonstrating respect for others. Combined with appropriate opportunities for contribution to their own and wider community there are ample opportunities to be responsible; around the school, in their own learning and their relationships with others. Furthermore they know how to keep themselves safe and display good attitudes towards keeping a healthy life style. Despite the school's efforts in establishing an improving trend, pupil attendance is still too low because of the high numbers of persistent absentees.

Although teaching is improving, with much being good or better, there has been not

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enough time for this to bring about consistently good learning and progress in all classes. As a result, teaching overall is satisfactory. However, examples of outstanding teaching are evident in each key stage with resources such as digital visualisers being used imaginatively to illustrate key teaching points. Where teaching is at its weakest, there is often a lack of clarity to the planned learning activities, resulting in pupils being unsure about what is expected of them. Detailed marking celebrates achievement whilst providing appropriate guidance for pupils. However, target setting although satisfactory is insufficiently personalised to really impact on individual pupil progress.

Staff plan a wide range of interesting and relevant activities for pupils to develop their attributes and skills. Subjects are often linked effectively together to make learning more relevant. For example, pupils in Year 6 have produced a video advert for their box for a healthy breakfast cereal created using skills learnt in mathematics, art and design and technology. Vulnerable pupils and those with specific learning needs are well supported by caring staff. Safeguarding is given a high priority and all statutory requirements are fulfilled. Pupils who are at the early stages of speaking English make rapid progress because of carefully targeted support within lessons

Leadership and management are satisfactory. This is because recent initiatives are yet to result in a sustained trend of improvement in pupil outcomes and the role of subject leader is underdeveloped. However, governance is good. Governors play an increasingly more active role in monitoring the schools' work and liaising closely with senior leaders to plan for further school improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards further in each year group and particularly in mathematics and science by:
 - increasing the proportion of pupils reaching and exceeding the level expected for their age in all year groups
 - accelerating pupils' progress in mathematics and science, particularly in Years 3, 4, 5, and 6
 - sustaining and embedding the recent rise in attainment levels in English for all groups of pupils.
- Increase the proportion of pupils making good or better progress by:
 - ensuring tasks effectively match the learning intentions for each lesson
 - providing clear guidance to pupils on what they need to do next to improve
 - extending and making best use of the most effective teaching in school.
- Strengthen the school's capacity to embed and sustain improvement by:
 - developing the role of curriculum leadership to cover all subjects and areas of learning.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5

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inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Standards are rising and especially in English where attainment at the end of Year 6 is broadly average and back to the previous levels seen at the time of the last inspection. Challenging targets are set to raise the achievement of pupils and the success of these is borne out by the increasing number of pupils attaining the higher Level 5 in English and the very positive attitudes they have towards learning. Nevertheless, standards in mathematics and science are not at the same level because of weak teaching in the past, an insufficient focus on subject specific vocabulary and limited development of investigative skills. However, there is no doubt that learning is good or better in many lessons and this is having a positive impact on pupil outcomes. This can be clearly seen in the enjoyment of pupils and their good behaviour in lessons. Furthermore, pupils persevere quietly with their tasks when they can see the relevance of the learning such as with ICT or art work where outcomes are above that expected nationally. Pupils who speak English as an additional language quickly gain in confidence when teachers introduce them to new words and support staff provide close support. Overall there are no significant differences in the outcomes for different groups of pupils.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	4

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
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How effective is the provision?

A real sense of enjoyment and positive relationships between pupils and adults are key features of the vast majority of lessons. This is a direct result of the new headteacher's drive to ensure good learning is at the forefront of teachers' minds when they plan their lessons. Well led assemblies and staff training embed this vision. As a consequence, much teaching is now good or better across the school and staff morale is very high. However, some inconsistencies in lesson quality exist and evident in variable progress for pupils in a small number of classes and subjects such as mathematics and science. This weaker teaching is often characterised by confusing introductions and a lack of clarity to learning because activities are not carefully chosen to fully match the aims of the lesson. Despite these weaknesses, the curriculum is good overall because of effective whole school planning, a strong focus on cross-curricular links between subjects and good provision for ICT and art. A wide range of sporting and other activities provide further enrichment. Vulnerable pupils are supported well. The provision for those pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language is good because of effective leadership and the work of dedicated support staff. Assessment is satisfactory and improving. Pupil achievement is tracked very carefully and used well to identify where extra support is needed. Marking is used appropriately to provide guidance to pupils in their learning. Group targets are set regularly but these do not always fully reflect the personal needs of each pupil in what they need to do next to improve.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
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?

Teamwork between the newly appointed headteacher and deputy headteacher is very strong and together they have quickly resolved a number of weaknesses in the school. Their clear vision for improvement is very effectively shared with staff and governors and together the school is well placed for further development. Despite some remaining inconsistencies, much teaching is now good or better because of rigorous monitoring and the strong focus being placed on improving the quality of pupils' learning experiences. Those with middle management responsibility provide satisfactory

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leadership but some are new to their role and not all subject responsibilities are yet to be allocated. This limits the overall pace of improvement. Governors play an increasingly important role in school leadership. They display a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses through effective monitoring and clear vision for future strategic development of the site. Planning for school improvement is clearly focused on raising standards and the enhancement of provision. Equality is satisfactorily promoted. There are no significant differences in achievement but pupils are yet to achieve their full potential. A positive climate for learning is now clearly evident and the promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory. As a result, pupils have greater opportunities to participate in local events and gain a greater insight into the cultures of others both within a national and international context. Safeguarding procedures are robust and rigorously applied.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Early Years Foundation Stage

Provision is satisfactory overall with some good features. Planning for all aspects of learning is consistent with Government guidance for teaching children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Most children make at least satisfactory progress from below average starting points in all areas of learning. Most children make good progress when teaching is good or better. However, a small amount of satisfactory teaching leads to variations in the overall achievement of children in this key stage. Relationships are positive between adults and children and children themselves. Staff work well as a team to plan and organise a good range of creative learning experiences for all children. The level of care,

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guidance and support for children is good and they quickly grow in confidence.

Clear focus is given to developing the children's communication and early literacy skills whilst placing a strong emphasis on personal, social development. For instance, staff encourage children in many aspects of their learning to participate fully in role-play to develop vocabulary and use of imagination. A good balance is struck between indoor and outdoor play and learning that is either directed by adults or chosen by the children themselves. The assessment of children's achievements is thorough, regularly undertaken and moderated both internally and externally to ensure consistency of judgements. Staff actively observe children's progress and diligently record significant milestones in the children's learning.

Good leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision continues to improve despite staffing changes and some inconsistencies in teaching. Self-evaluation is accurate and based on careful monitoring.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The overwhelming majority of parents are very pleased with what the school provides for their children. Many spoke very positively about the positive things that have happened since the appointment of the new headteacher and deputy. A very small number expressed some concern about the behaviour of a small number of pupils at lunchtimes. Inspectors found pupil behaviour to be good throughout the inspection and especially at playtimes.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Holywell Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 76 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 290 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	34	45	42	55	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	34	45	39	51	3	4	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	20	26	49	64	6	8	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	16	21	49	64	6	8	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	26	34	45	59	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	22	29	44	58	6	8	4	5
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	32	42	37	49	5	7	1	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	14	18	45	59	11	14	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	18	24	48	63	6	8	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	24	32	30	39	13	17	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	18	24	46	61	3	4	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	29	38	35	46	3	4	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	23	30	47	62	2	3	1	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
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.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



12 July 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Holywell Primary School, Watford, WD18 6LL

On behalf of the inspection team, I would like to thank you all for making us feel so welcome. We really enjoyed visiting your school and were so impressed with your good behaviour and your enthusiasm towards your learning. You clearly enjoy being at school and enjoy talking about your experiences. We couldn't help but notice how hard you work in lessons.

Many of you said that you really like school. However, some of you find it difficult to attend regularly despite the efforts of the staff to encourage you to be at school as much as possible. The staff are going to continue to encourage you all to be at school regularly so that you make as much progress as possible. Many of you are making good progress in your reading and writing and this is helping you to succeed in other subjects as well. We are also very pleased with the progress that you are making in your art and use of computers. Unfortunately, many of you are not doing as well in mathematics and science because you are not given enough opportunity to practise calculations, undertake investigations and solve problems. This is something that your teachers are going to give you more opportunity to do. We saw many good lessons during the inspection and a few were excellent. Some lessons were okay but unfortunately a small number were not good enough. In future and with the help of your headteacher, the teachers will try to plan activities that enable you to learn well in all lessons.

Many of you told us that Mr Fowler is already making a big difference to the school. Your parents also told us this and we agree with them. This is because he is inspiring the staff to try new things and make learning interesting for you. The governors and other leaders are also playing an important part in moving the school forwards for the better but as yet, not all subjects get the same attention as English, mathematics and information and communication technology. In future, your teachers will place a greater emphasis on making sure all subjects are led and managed to the same high standard.

I wish you all the very best in the future,

Yours sincerely

Philip Mann

Her Majesty's Inspector

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