

Holden Lane Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124021
Local Authority	Stoke-On-Trent
Inspection number	340477
Inspection dates	12–13 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Roy Bowers 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	201
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Keith Titley
Headteacher	Miss Clare Thomas
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. The inspectors observed 11 lessons; saw all eight teachers teach; and held meetings with the chair of governors, senior staff, pupils, the local authority educational psychologist, parents and support staff. They observed the school's work, and looked at records for the tracking of pupils' progress, the school development plan, individual education plans, local authority plans and reviews, health and safety policies, curriculum policies and a range of other policies and plans. The inspectors also took account of the 91 parental questionnaires which were returned.

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

- the current progress of pupils, in all classes, in literacy and numeracy
- how effectively work is matched to pupils' capabilities, especially the more able
- the effectiveness of marking and target-setting
- the effectiveness of leadership at all levels.

Information about the school

The school is smaller than average and serves an area on the northern outskirts of Stoke-on-Trent. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above average. The large majority of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties. An average proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of one Nursery class and one Reception class. The school has achieved the accreditation of Eco Schools Bronze.

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

3

Main findings

Holden Lane provides a satisfactory standard of education. Strong relationships between adults and pupils are evident in lessons and around the school. Pupils say that they enjoy coming to school and feel safe and secure. The behaviour of the vast majority of pupils is good. Pupils' attendance is broadly average and improving.

When children enter into the Nursery, their skills, especially in language and communication, are not as developed as those of most children of that age. By the time pupils leave at the end of Year 6, attainment is broadly average in reading, mathematics and science. However, pupils' attainment in writing is low in all year groups and very few pupils exceed their age-related writing levels.

Most pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress throughout the school. In some classes, pupils make good progress, but in too many classes, pupils' progress in literacy and numeracy is no better than satisfactory and is occasionally inadequate.

The quality of teaching varies throughout the school. Although there is some good teaching, too much is only satisfactory, mainly because teachers are not clear enough about what they want pupils to learn in lessons and their expectations of pupils are too low. Consequently, pupils are not guided through the small steps which help ensure effective learning and the work given to pupils is too easy. In some classes, teachers' marking gives clear guidance on how pupils can improve their work. In other classes, it has little impact on helping pupils learn. A system for individual pupils' target-setting has been introduced, but this is not yet embedded and its impact on raising pupils' achievement is superficial.

Pupils appreciate the variety of after-school and lunchtime clubs available for them. The reading club is popular and provides excellent opportunities for pupils to develop their love of literature in a fun and enjoyable way. Teachers are beginning to plan more opportunities for pupils to practise their language and communication skills through role play and drama, and to improve their writing and numeracy skills through a variety of subjects. However, the school is aware that these strategies are not yet developed well enough.

After a period of instability due to staff and leadership changes, the headteacher has re-established a strong sense of common purpose, with raising pupils' achievement at its core. She has accurately identified the strengths and weaknesses in the school and has implemented many initiatives for improvement. The headteacher's ambition for improvement is shared by the leadership team and staff. However, the leadership skills of all leaders are still at the very early stages of development. Although information

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about pupils' progress is recorded, leaders do not use it rigorously enough to track the progress of groups of pupils, to evaluate the impact of new initiatives on pupils' achievement, nor to set challenging targets for improvement and hold teachers to account. Although the headteacher monitors and evaluates the quality of pupils' learning through lesson observations, other leaders are still developing these skills. The school has satisfactory capacity to improve further and provides satisfactory value for money.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' achievement by:
 - raising pupils' attainment and improving progress in writing
 - increasing the proportion of pupils who exceed their age-related levels in writing
 - ensuring that pupils make at least satisfactory progress in all classes and good progress in the majority of classes in reading, writing and mathematics
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to reinforce their writing and numeracy skills across the curriculum
 - providing more opportunities in lessons for pupils to practise their language and communication skills.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - ensuring that the majority of teaching is good or better
 - ensuring that all teachers are clear about what they want the pupils to learn and carefully guide the pupils through the small steps which help ensure effective learning
 - ensuring that all teachers have high expectations of all pupils and give them work which provides sufficient challenge
 - improving the quality of marking and target-setting so that they have a better impact on helping pupils learn.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that leaders and managers at all levels use more rigorously the information about pupils' progress to: monitor the progress made by all groups of pupils; evaluate the impact of initiatives on raising pupils' achievement; set challenging targets and hold staff to account for pupils' progress
 - ensuring that all leaders and managers develop the skills of monitoring and evaluating the quality of pupils' learning through lesson observations.
- 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 inspection.

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Pupils enjoy their learning and make satisfactory progress overall. Their achievement by the end of Key Stage 2 is beginning to improve as initiatives to raise the quality of teaching are starting to have a positive impact. However, pupils' progress in literacy and numeracy is no better than satisfactory in too many classes at present. The quality of writing in particular is relatively weak and pupils, especially the more able, are not given sufficient opportunities to extend their writing skills. Because of the good support they receive from teaching assistants, and through the strong links with the educational psychology service, most pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress and a few make good progress.

Most pupils in the school are fully aware of how a balanced diet and plenty of exercise has a positive influence of maintaining health. They also understand that smoking can seriously damage health and lifestyle, and know that the use of certain internet sites may expose them to danger. However, pupils' adoption of healthy lifestyles is only satisfactory because much of the food they bring into school is not conducive to good health.

Parents say that their children are very safe and cared for well in school. Pupils from all backgrounds get on well together. Older pupils show care for the younger ones if they are upset or anxious when playing at break-time or lunchtime. Pupils say that bullying does occasionally occur, but add that adults in the school deal with it effectively when necessary. Pupils feel confident to approach adults in the school if they feel threatened or have a problem and know that the adults will listen to them. Through assemblies, class discussions and effective programmes for personal and social education, pupils develop a good awareness of moral and social issues. However, the curriculum provides less well for pupils' spiritual and cultural development.

Through the school council, pupils are keen to be involved in decisions about improving the school and raising money for charities. When given the opportunity to work together in lessons, most pupils cooperate very well. During the inspection, all pupils spent their break and lunchtimes inside the school because of the inclement weather. In all classes, pupils played games happily and calmly together. Throughout the inspection, pupils were polite and well mannered. These positive attitudes, together with their satisfactory academic achievement, make a sound contribution to pupils' development of skills for their future economic well-being.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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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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	3
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	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Although there were some good lessons seen during the inspection, too much teaching is no better than satisfactory. Relationships between teachers and pupils are respectful and caring, and they help to provide a positive climate for learning. In all the lessons observed during the inspection, teachers managed pupils' behaviour very well, reinforcing good behaviour wherever possible and raising pupils' self-esteem. Although teachers' lesson plans detail the activities pupils are to undertake, they often do not show what pupils are expected to learn during the lesson. Consequently, in many lessons, pupils' learning is not focused enough and pupils are not guided through the small steps which help to ensure effective learning. Because teachers' expectations are insufficiently high, work given to pupils sometimes fails to provide sufficient challenge, especially in writing.

The curriculum provides effectively for pupils' moral and social development. It is enriched through some visits and visitors, but the school is aware that there is not enough of this type of activity to stimulate pupils' interests and to provide effectively for pupils' spiritual and cultural development. Through class discussions and one-to-one talks with teachers and teaching assistants, pupils are provided with opportunities to discuss their feelings and to be aware that others may have different views and beliefs which must be respected. Although the school knows that pupils' language and communication skills need to be developed further, opportunities to do this are not always taken. In lessons, teachers sometimes talk for too long and do not provide enough time for pupils to discuss and debate. Teachers are becoming more aware of the need for pupils to practise their writing and numeracy skills in subjects such as history

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and geography. However, this is still at the early stages of development.

Teachers and support staff know the pupils well and relationships are strong. All pupils, regardless of faith, culture, heritage or disability are treated in the same respectful manner and included in all that the school has to offer. This helps to ensure that all groups of pupils feel valued, safe and secure. Pupils who are potentially vulnerable are supported well through effective links with some of the external agencies such as the educational psychology service. Links with other external agencies are developing. Good induction arrangements when pupils first enter the Nursery, and developing links with local secondary schools help pupils quickly settle into their new communities.

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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher's and senior leaders' commitment to improving the life chances of all the pupils is clearly shown in their enthusiasm and dedication. Their evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses is accurate and enables all leaders to have a good understanding of the areas for improvement. The headteacher has implemented a systematic approach to monitoring and evaluating school improvement. However, most senior leaders are very recently appointed, and all leaders are still developing their skills of monitoring and evaluating the work of the school. Consequently, only the headteacher is currently involved in checking the quality of learning through lesson observations and the analysis of information on pupils' progress is not rigorous enough. However, all leaders are committed to sustaining the improvements already underway, developing their own skills and improving practice and provision at every opportunity. The effectiveness of the governors is improving. They are becoming more involved in the work of the school and are gaining a clearer understanding of the school's performance through visits to lessons and by attending meetings.

The increasingly strong links with many external agencies to help the school provide better support for pupils who are potentially the most vulnerable. These links, and the successful strategies used to reduce the numbers of persistent absentees, demonstrate the school's commitment to equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination. Parents' and carers' views are canvassed and valued, and links with parents are improving steadily. Most parents say that they are kept well informed about their children's progress and other school activities.

The school is implementing its plan for community cohesion. However, the headteacher

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and governors are aware that the plan to improve pupils' knowledge and understanding of the diverse range of communities in the United Kingdom and globally is not yet fully developed.

Safeguarding procedures and risk assessments are implemented effectively. Through class discussions and assemblies, pupils are encouraged regularly to consider their own safety and that of others, and to recommend changes to the school's procedures if necessary. At the time of the inspection, all statutory requirements for the safeguarding of pupils were in place. All staff have a sound knowledge of safeguarding processes and procedures.

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	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
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

Information provided by the school shows that, during the past school year children made satisfactory progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. By the time they entered into Year 1, pupils' attainment was still below average and their communication and language skills were poor. Since the new Early Years Foundation Stage leader started his duties in September 2009, many new initiatives have been implemented which are beginning to have a positive impact on children's progress. Planning has become more detailed, with suitable emphasis on developing children's communication, language and literacy skills. Children's progress is tracked carefully through a range of evidence collected from child observations, and staff are identifying the needs of individual children with more accuracy. Consequently, the activities given to the children are becoming increasingly well matched to their needs. There is a good balance between adult-led activities and those that children choose for themselves. Children who

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have special educational needs and/or disabilities are included well in all activities. Children generally behave well and most play together in a sensible and safe manner, although a number of children still find it difficult to share and take turns. Hygiene is encouraged by the staff and most pupils are happy to wash their hands after activities. Children are nurtured well and grow in confidence in a caring environment.

The Early Years Foundation Stage leader knows what needs to be done to improve. He is aware that his own knowledge and understanding of the information on pupils' progress is still at the early stages of development and does not allow him to make consistently accurate judgements about the progress made by children in all areas of learning. He is supported well by the other adults who work with the children. The school is aware that the accommodation, indoors and out, sometimes limits the quality of children's experiences, and has plans to improve this aspect of the provision.

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	3

Views of parents and carers

Most parents who responded to the questionnaire or who spoke to the inspectors were very positive about the school. They praised its warm and welcoming atmosphere and felt that their children were happy and cared for well. Only a very small number of negative comments were made about the school and these were taken into consideration when arriving at the inspection judgements. The greatest proportion of concerns was expressed about the way the school deals with unacceptable behaviour. During the inspection, there were no instances of unacceptable behaviour seen. Overall, the behaviour of the pupils was good. In lessons, teachers showed a good range of class management skills. Pupils said that any instances of unacceptable behaviour were dealt with effectively by the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Holden Lane 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 91 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 201 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	64	70	25	27	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	61	67	28	31	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	50	55	39	43	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	46	51	43	47	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	58	64	32	35	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	51	56	38	42	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	49	54	37	41	2	2	0	0
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)	44	48	39	43	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	50	55	37	41	1	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	45	49	36	40	6	7	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	41	45	42	46	1	1	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	47	52	38	42	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	57	63	31	34	0	0	0	0

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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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.



14 January 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Holden Lane Primary School, Stoke-on-Trent, ST1 6JS

Thank you for making our recent visit to your school such a pleasant experience. We enjoyed visiting your lessons, looking at your books and talking with you. We were pleased to find that you enjoy coming to school and are happy. We particularly liked how well you play together and were very impressed with your good behaviour. Well done! The school works hard to make your time at school as enjoyable as possible. The teachers are kind and helpful, and want you all to do your best.

You go to a satisfactory school and here are some of the reasons why.

- You make satisfactory progress.
- Most of you who find learning difficult also make satisfactory progress and some of you make good progress.
- You behave well and work hard in your lessons.
- You and your parents say that you feel safe and secure when at school.
- You say that you enjoy coming to school and get on well with your teachers.

To help the school become better, I have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to make sure that:

- teaching is good so that you improve your progress, especially in writing
- you have more opportunities to practise your literacy and numeracy skills
- the teachers know exactly what they want you to learn in all your lessons and guide your learning very carefully
- the marking and targets help you learn better
- those teachers with special responsibility in the school help other teachers to improve your learning.

You can help too by continuing to work hard, especially with your writing.

We shall take away many good memories about your school and have very much enjoyed the time we have spent with you. Thank you again for being so helpful and friendly.

Yours sincerely

Roy Bowers

Her Majesty's Inspector

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