

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 105311
Local Authority Bury
Inspection number 287191
Inspection date 21 May 2007
Reporting inspector Marie Cordey

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll (school)	253
Appropriate authority	The governing body

Date of previous school inspection 9 December 2002

School address Longsight Road
Holcombe Brook, Bury
Lancashire BL0 9TA

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Chair Mr D Hanley
Headteacher Mr G Howarth

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a popular, average sized school in a village location close to the town of Bury. The vast majority of the pupils are White British. The number of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average, while an average number of pupils have a statement of special educational need. The number of pupils who are eligible for a free school meal is low. The school is a 'Healthy Eating School' and holds the national Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Mark. The school has also been awarded the Charter Mark and holds Investor in People status.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1 Outstanding

Grade 2 Good

Grade 3 Satisfactory

Grade 4 Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Holcombe Brook is a good school that is very well led by the headteacher and the governors. Children settle down well in the Reception class and make a good start because they are well taught and looked after. Well above average standards by the time pupils leave school have been maintained over the past five years. Pupils of all abilities achieve well from their above average starting points. All aspects of the school's work are good and there are some outstanding elements. Pupils' attendance is high because of the importance placed upon it by the school and the parents. Pupils' preparation for the future is outstanding because of their standards in the basic skills; their appreciation and knowledge of business enterprise through regular mini enterprise sessions and opportunities to manage money.

Pupils' personal development and well-being is good. The school achieves its aim of 'Working towards respect, value, equality and achievement for all'. Pupils are responsible, articulate and welcoming. Some concerns by the parents regarding behaviour at lunchtime were found to be accurate. A small number of pupils feel worried by a tiny minority of other pupils' behaviour. The school is aware of this and is improving the planning of lunchtime activities and increasing the amount of play equipment. By far the greatest concern of staff, parents, governors and pupils are the four demountable classrooms. They are shabby and cramped. Despite the best efforts of the staff to make them more attractive, including outstanding displays, they are not conducive to learning. Pupils cannot easily work in groups or develop more independence because of the small size of the classrooms. The pride in their work which is observable in their books is not reflected in the conditions in which they work. The respect that is shown to them in all other areas of the school life is not matched by the quality of the accommodation.

Teaching and learning are good and pupils are well motivated. Typically, lessons are well planned and clearly linked to the pupils' achievement. Occasionally, teachers spend too long introducing the lesson and a small number of pupils become restless. The good curriculum is matched to all the pupils' needs. In particular, the provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is a model of good practice. A strong and dynamic provision is developing further through arrangements to track these pupils' progress. Enrichment activities are vibrant and loved by the pupils. Enthusiasm for country dancing in physical education lessons and the fencing club before school reflect this. The care, guidance and support for the pupils are good and the vast majority of pupils perform well in an atmosphere of care and nurture. The school knows what it wants to do to improve. Nonetheless, judgements of outstanding in leadership and management, and care, guidance and support are over generous. Leadership is not embedded in

the practice of all key staff and the arrangement for care at lunchtimes needs to be improved. The accommodation for too many pupils is uncomfortable and restrictive.

The visionary headteacher is very well supported by an increasingly challenging governing body and by incisive middle leaders. The school gives good value for money. It has good capacity to improve as shown by the good improvement made since the previous inspection.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve accommodation, especially in the provision for learning in the demountables.
- Embed the distribution of leadership skills to involve all senior staff in school improvement planning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils make good progress from the time they join the Reception class to when they leave school. Clear focus on reading, writing and number develops pupils' skills well in the Reception class. There is insufficient accommodation for the children to develop their outside play and little cover to enable them to play outside in all weathers. Good arrangements for the move to Year 1 include visits and shared activities. Consequently, pupils settle down quickly and happily. Pupils' standards by the end of Year 2 are above average and reading is a particular strength. This reflects a trend of above average performance in Year 2 and Year 6. Mathematics results for Year 2 have not been as high as in reading or writing but this is reversed, because of very good teaching, by the time pupils leave school at the end of Year 6. The school is aware of the relatively weak performance in writing of boys, especially in Key Stage 2 and has developed effective intervention strategies to improve standards. Close attention is paid to the planning, teaching and support of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Consequently, these pupils make good progress throughout the school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles through eating healthily and exercising regularly. Physical education is taken very seriously and the pupils thoroughly enjoy it. The inclusion of dance is much appreciated. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are respected and learn to respect and tolerate others. A wide range of visits and visitors broaden the pupils' experiences and learning. Pupils enjoy school as shown by their high attendance. They are actively involved in their community and are keen fund-raisers for charitable causes. Although pupils visit local churches and are taught about a number of cultures and faiths, there have been fewer visits to local mosques and synagogues. Behaviour and attitudes to learning are good. The poor behaviour of a very small minority of pupils spoils the otherwise very happy, convivial atmosphere in the school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning is good throughout the school. Very good planning in the Foundation Stage keeps the children well motivated and eager. Learning experiences are restricted by the lack of suitable outdoor accommodation. In Years 1 and 2, pupils continue to develop their skills through a range of challenging activities. They improve their reading, in particular, through a well taught phonics programme. In Years 3 to 6, pupils continue to make good progress because of a sharp focus on standards and the positive attitudes to learning demonstrated by most pupils. Improvements in information and communication technology (ICT) resources and lesson planning make teaching and learning more effective for all pupils. When pupils are not as involved in their learning they become restless and distracted. Despite pupils' experiencing discomfort in the four demountable classrooms, they are positive about their lessons. Pupils are involved in setting their targets and they are used to thinking for themselves especially in Years 5 and 6. Their work is marked regularly and includes clear guidance for improvement as well as appreciation for the quality of the work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

A good range of indoor activities in the Reception class provides the children with good opportunities for learning and enjoyment. There is not the same opportunity to teach the Early Years' curriculum through outside play because of the inadequacies of the accommodation. The school's powerful focus on achievement and standards has a positive impact on pupils' progress. Work is planned to match all pupils' needs and pupils with difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported and provided for. The teaching of music is a strength, as it has been for a number of years. A large number of the pupils play a musical instrument and are very active in the choir. Pupils present many concerts in school as well as in the local and wider community. There are numerous, well-attended enrichment activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Exceptionally well planned provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is in place. The care provided for the most vulnerable pupils is supported by good use of external services to provide further support. Arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils are thorough and good provision is made to ensure pupils' feel safe. Parents and their children feel that they have a contribution to make to the school, although some parents would appreciate more communication especially about changes to the school's organisation. The provision for academic guidance is good and pupils are increasingly involved in setting their own targets for

improvement. Care at lunchtimes is generally good, although a very small number of pupils feel worried about the behaviour of a few pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher and the governors are committed to achieve the best possible results and are determined to remove barriers to learning. Chief amongst these is the accommodation, especially in the demountables where they have had some recent success. The school has implemented many new strategies to improve its performance and these are working well. More staff have taken on leadership roles but these are insufficiently clear because they are defined too narrowly in some cases. Links with other agencies, such as the local authority, the parents and the governors are well used to support the school. Parents rate the school highly and are mostly very positive about its strengths. The school takes their views seriously and recognises that occasionally, communication is not as clear as the school wants it to be. The governing body has a long history of service and support to the school. It has taken on the role of 'critical friend' very seriously and holds the school to account strenuously.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
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 disabilities make progress	2
¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 -	

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate **School Overall**

Exceptionally low.

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	1
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the 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?	2

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	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave to me when I visited your school. You are very friendly, polite and kind.

Yours is a good school and some things are outstanding. Your work is good and you make good progress. You are looked after well and in turn, you look after others. Your attendance is high and your headteacher and the governors are good leaders. You enjoy being at school and your parents are pleased with your progress. Pupils who have special learning needs are very well looked after.

Some of you and your parents are concerned about the accommodation especially in the demountable classrooms. I agree that these classrooms are unsuitable because they are shabby and too small. You say you feel uncomfortable in them and your parents do not like them. The school is doing its best to get new classrooms for you. A small number of you are worried about behaviour and the school is working to improve it. I have also asked all the school's leaders to get together to share all the important things they want to do to improve the school further and each take a key part in doing that.

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