

Holcombe Brook Primary School

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

Inspection dates 11–12 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Achievement is not good and progress across subjects and year groups is too variable.
- Pupils' skills in mathematics are not as good as they are in reading or writing.
- Too few pupils reach the highest levels of attainment at either Key Stage 1 or Key Stage 2.
- Assessment is not yet accurate enough therefore, information to provide work for pupils at the right level is limited. Not enough is expected of pupils especially the most able.
- Marking does not provide pupils with clear enough information about how to improve their work. Pupils are not yet consistently expected to develop their work in response to teachers' feedback.
- Systems for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school are too dependent on external support. Although they are very appropriate, they are not yet monitored from within the school leadership structure. This means that progress towards school improvement, especially teaching and achievement, are still not fast enough.
- The curriculum does not meet the needs of all learners, particularly in mathematics and for the most able.
- Governors have not in the past held the school to account stringently enough for the speed of school improvement.

The school has the following strengths

- Behaviour is good. Pupils are very well mannered, respectful and show good care for each other and feel safe. They enjoy school and attendance is above average.
- Parents are very supportive.
- The headteacher, with the support of the local authority, has put a number of significant measures in place to bring about improvement. Systems for performance management of teachers are robust, and clear action plans are in place.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 18 lessons or parts of lessons, four of which were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and looked at the work in their books.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and different groups of people involved in the school. These included pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and other governors, members of the teaching staff and with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took into account the results of the school's recent parental surveys, as well as a letter from a parent. There were 78 responses on the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) which were also taken into consideration.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents, including plans for improvement, records of the school's checks on pupils' and teachers' performance, safeguarding and attendance documents, minutes of meetings of the governing body and school policies.

Inspection team

Pauline Hilling-Smith, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Sandy Dixie

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Holcombe Brook Primary is an average sized primary school.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, is below average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that the achievement of all pupils across all subjects, is accelerated, particularly for the most able, by:
 - raising expectations of how well pupils can achieve, so that tasks and questions are always sufficiently challenging
 - increasing the focus on the development of mathematics across the curriculum throughout the school
 - ensuring that the assessment of how well pupils are learning is accurate
 - ensuring that marking and feedback always tell pupils precisely what they need to do to improve their work, and providing them with time to act on the advice that they receive
 - ensuring that opportunities are provided to share the good practice which exists within the school.
- Improve the quality and impact of leaders at all levels, by:
 - further developing the role of the deputy headteacher
 - developing the skills of middle leaders so that they are accountable for evaluating the effectiveness of their area of responsibility
 - placing more focus on the progress of pupils when monitoring the quality of teaching
 - developing the curriculum so that it builds well on what pupils already know and can do as they move up the year groups, is stimulating and interesting and meets the needs of all learners
 - developing the skills of governors further so that they can hold the school to account even more stringently

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Children start school in the Reception class with skills and knowledge typical for their age and they leave school at the end of Year 6 with levels of attainment that are broadly in line with the national average. In the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils make the progress expected of them overall. Although there is evidence of good progress in some classes and subjects, it is inconsistent.
- Most able pupils are not sufficiently challenged, therefore, too few of them reach the highest levels of attainment or make good progress.
- Pupils, especially girls, do not make as much progress in mathematics as they do in reading or writing because they lack confidence in their abilities. Pupils know how to carry out straightforward mathematical processes by the time they leave Year 6. However, some are ambivalent about the subject because they are not given sufficient opportunities to develop their mathematical understanding by applying their skills to solving real-life problems.
- Pupils make stronger progress overall in reading. They learn well in the Reception class and Key Stage 1 how to use phonics (the knowledge of letters and the sounds that they make) to sound out words and are mentored by older pupils. They develop their skills across Key Stage 2, so that by Year 6 they read fluently and with confidence. Parents make a significant contribution to pupils' achievement in reading by listening to their children read or by supplying books for older pupils.
- Although progress in writing is inconsistent, national data in 2013 shows that pupils attained above the national expectations by the end of Key Stage 2.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs achieve at least as well as other pupils in the school. This is because teachers and teaching assistants provide effective support for them within and outside the classroom.
- The small but increasing proportion of pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, make the same progress as their peers and attain broadly similar standards to their peers. The gap between these pupils and their peers has been closing since 2012, except in mathematics which remains lower by a year.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Although the proportion of good teaching is now improving rapidly, it is not always good enough to enable pupils to make consistently accelerated progress. There is very little evidence of teaching which is outstanding.
- Assessments of how well pupils are achieving are not always accurate. This means that the information is not there to provide activities which match closely enough with the needs of the full range of abilities. The most able pupils in particular are not expected to tackle work that is hard enough. Often work is too easy for them.
- However, in too many lessons there is a lack of challenge. Pupils are given activities which are repetitive, such as repeatedly carrying out the same mathematical operation. Not enough opportunities are provided for them to solve real-life mathematical problems. Questions are often not used effectively enough to probe and develop pupils' understanding nor to ensure that all pupils are fully involved in the lesson.
- Work is marked regularly and there are some good examples of pupils checking each other's work. However, pupils do not always understand how to improve their work and they do not always act on the advice they are given. Therefore, there is little evidence of pupils learning from their mistakes and improving their work.
- Positive relationships between pupils and adults are a strong feature of most lessons, and create a positive climate for learning. Sometimes pupils are encouraged to explain and develop their ideas through skilled questioning. There are some engaging activities to enable pupils to learn

well. Teaching assistants support pupils with special educational needs well in classrooms; they spot when pupils are struggling and take action to support them and move them on.

- Teaching for the youngest children has improved over the last year because of the attention given to the opportunities for children to learn in small groups both indoors and outdoors.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils enjoy school and have very positive attitudes. As a result, attendance for all groups of pupils is well above average.
- Pupils have very good manners. They are polite and treat each other and all adults with respect. They have the confidence to talk openly to visitors, asking as well as answering questions. They are considerate, listen well to each other's points of view, and can articulate their own views very clearly.
- Parents are confident that the school keeps their children safe. All pupils confirm that they feel safe and that adults look after them well. They are aware of how to keep themselves safe and have, for example, a good awareness of e-safety.
- Pupils are aware of the different forms which bullying can take, but say that it happens very rarely, and that teachers always deal with it straight away.
- The atmosphere around the school is happy and calm. Pupils are very proud when their good behaviour is written on a 'raffle' ticket and taken to the headteacher. They look forward to assembly when the tickets of three pupils are drawn out for further celebration. Behaviour in the playground is good and pupils play together well.
- The work of the school to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Staff are well trained and this ensures that any potential risks are identified and action is taken to manage or remove them.
- Behaviour is not yet outstanding, because, when lessons are not stimulating enough, some pupils get bored and do not take an active part in what is going on.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Since her appointment, the headteacher has worked tirelessly to ensure that systems for improving the work of the school have been put in place to bring about the governors' plan for the future. Although these are having an increasingly good effect, pupils' progress is still not fast enough.
- An accurate view of how well the school is performing is being built up quickly. Governors are able to demonstrate that they are less easily satisfied with the information they receive because the relationship governors have with the school's leadership has strengthened.
- Clear action plans are in place to bring about improvement, and progress towards meeting the success criteria is reviewed. However, the role of the deputy headteacher and skills of middle leaders in monitoring and driving forward school improvement faster are not yet fully developed.
- The headteacher has established cycles of lesson observations and teachers are now receiving clear and accurate feedback about their performance and guidance about how to improve. Robust performance management targets and appropriate training for staff professional development are now in place to support teachers' development.
- The headteacher is aware that assessments have been inaccurate, and she has taken effective steps to remedy this. Teachers are provided with support to develop their understanding of how pupils should be achieving and are given opportunities to moderate assessments both in school and with other schools. Clear succinct information about pupils' progress has been made available, so that teachers can identify underachievement and take appropriate action.
- Partnership with parents is strong and this contributes well to pupils' achievement. The vast majority of parents would recommend the school to another parent.
- The local authority is very supportive. It has contributed significantly to monitoring. However,

although the school is developing leadership's skills, it is still too dependent on this support.

- The school curriculum does not ensure that it builds well on what pupils already know and can do as they journey through the school. It does not provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to apply what they have learned in real-life contexts, especially in mathematics. There are good opportunities for pupils to be involved and motivated through enrichment opportunities, such as clubs and visits.
- Although the gaps in the achievement of groups of pupils are small and closing, the promotion of equal opportunities requires improvement because too few pupils are sufficiently challenged to make good progress and reach their full potential. The school makes appropriate provision for the promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, including involving a parent in promoting the understanding of the Asian culture.
- The additional primary school sport funding has been used by the school to provide further training for teachers. A broader range of physical activities has also been provided for pupils. An action plan is in place and the impact of the actions taken is being closely monitored.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Since the last inspection, governors have been provided with better information about the progress of the school. They have further developed their skills to challenge as well as support. For example, they have recently asked that middle leaders give them information directly about their areas of responsibility. They are aware that the speed of the school's improvement has not been fast enough and are now working closely with the headteacher to speed up the process. They have close links with parents and gather their views, which influence their work. Governors manage the budget effectively and check that additional funds, such as the pupil premium funding, are spent appropriately and they monitor its impact. They have ensured that performance management systems are in place, and understand the need to link outcomes for pupils with pay progression. They ensure that all safeguarding requirements are met.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	105311
Local authority	Bury
Inspection number	430952

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 of pupils on the school roll	236
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jonathan Haworth
Headteacher	Gill Evans
Date of previous school inspection	13 March 2012
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