



Holwell Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 117175
Local Authority HERTFORDSHIRE
Inspection number 290746
Inspection dates 5–6 March 2007
Reporting inspector David Matthews

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Holwell Road
School category	Community		Welwyn Garden City
Age range of pupils	4–11		Hertfordshire AL7 3RP
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01707323716
Number on roll (school)	204	Fax number	01707334431
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Ms Angela Sarchet
		Headteacher	Mrs Lyn Emerson
Date of previous school inspection	28 October 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average sized primary school. Children start school with levels of attainment and skills that are below those expected nationally and well below in language skills. Most pupils are White British. A small number of pupils speak English as an additional language. About a third of the pupils are entitled to free school meals and a similar proportion are identified as having learning difficulties and disabilities. The school has been accredited with the Healthy School Standard.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school where pupils achieve well. Staff share a 'Can do' culture which they communicate to the pupils who, in turn, are confident that they will succeed in their work. 'Holwell is a happy school', 'The whole ethos of the school brings out a sense of community within the school', wrote parents who were overwhelmingly positive about the school's effectiveness. Parents acknowledged recent improvements to behaviour and provision. Inspectors agree that this is a caring school where adults value and respect pupils and guide and support them well. Consequently, pupils feel safe and able to concentrate on their work.

Leadership and management are good. The head teacher provides good leadership and is well-focused on ensuring pupils make good progress. She effectively ensures that all adults have a strong sense of well-being. As a result there is strong teamwork and a sense of common purpose. Adults are good role models and this contributes well to pupils' good personal development. Staff ensure that behaviour is consistently good throughout the school. Pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties are well supported so that they and other pupils learn effectively.

Teaching and learning are good. Good relationships are a feature of lessons throughout, as are clear expectations of what pupils will achieve. Recent improvements in provision in the reception class have already begun to impact on children's progress, which is now good. A good curriculum helps pupils to understand the importance of healthy lifestyles and enables them to become good citizens.

Given children's lower than expected skills, knowledge and understanding when they enter the school, and well below expected language skills, they do well to reach average standards by the end of Year 6. Progress in Years 1 and 2 is good overall, though it is less consistent in mathematics than in reading and writing, as shown in assessments at the end of Year 2. The school has improved well since its last inspection and provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement in mathematics in Years 1 and 2 so that it is at least in line with that in reading and writing.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well. All pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities and those for whom English is not their first language make good progress overall. Recently improved provision in the Foundation Stage means that children are now making good progress. One parent wrote, 'My child has only been at this school two weeks and she is making good progress. She also seems to enjoy everything she does'.

National assessments in 2006 showed that by the end of Year 2 pupils reached standards that were broadly in line with national expectations. In the last two years, however, standards in mathematics, while still broadly average, did not match those in reading and writing.

Pupils make good progress in Year 3 to 6. There was a dip in standards at the end of Year 6 in 2006 ending a previously improving trend. However, given the standards of this group of pupils at the end of Year 2, they made good progress overall from Year 3 to 6, particularly in science and mathematics. They made satisfactory progress in English. The school has placed a recent focus on English and its tracking system shows that current Year 6 pupils are making good progress in English, mathematics and science. This is reflected in the challenging targets that the school has set for these pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development is good. They show consideration and respect for others. In assembly, pupils are reflective and celebrate the achievements of others. Pupils enjoy school and a Year 6 pupil said, 'Lessons are interesting and fun'. Clear expectations and positive relationships give rise to good behaviour. A few pupils occasionally exhibit challenging behaviour but they are well managed by staff so that the learning of others is not hampered. Attendance figures are broadly average. Pupils adopt healthy lifestyles and have gained a good understanding of healthy diets and the need for regular exercise. They readily take on additional responsibilities. For example, members of the school council represent fellow pupils well. Pupils contribute to the wider community by raising funds for well known charities. The orchestra performs well in the local community. Pupils make good progress in acquiring and applying literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills. These, along with their ability to work with others, prepare them well for their future economic well being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good teaching and learning contribute to pupils' good achievement. Teaching builds good relationships with pupils, promoting good levels of confidence in their own ability to succeed. Teachers manage pupils well so that behaviour is good. Regular marking helps pupils to know how well they have done, though pupils do not always understand teachers' comments where, for example their reading ability hampers understanding. Teaching is enthusiastic and motivates pupils to focus well on their work. For example, one parent wrote 'The style of teaching in Year 6 has had a huge impact on my son's confidence and is instilling in him a real love of learning'. Teachers are providing good opportunities for pupils to write in different styles. However, opportunities are

sometimes missed for teachers to demonstrate effective writing skills and so develop learning further. Just occasionally teaching pace at the start of lessons is not as brisk as it might be, and this does not maximise time available. Mostly, however, lesson pace is brisk and enjoyable. One parent wrote, 'Education is fun at Holwell'.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum enables pupils to make good progress and contributes well to their personal development. There is a clear emphasis on developing literacy and numeracy skills. Links between subjects are developing and adding meaning and relevance to pupils' learning. Provision for ICT has improved and this is generally used well to support teaching and learning in a range of subjects. Occasionally, teachers miss opportunities to enhance learning using ICT. A good range of additional activities, including sports clubs and music tuition enrich the curriculum and enhance pupils' interests and enjoyment. Provision for music is a real strength and pupils benefit from specialist teaching and expertise. Residential visits to Cuffley Camp, London and Isle of Wight broaden pupils' horizons. Healthy lifestyles and keeping safe receive good attention. The Foundation Stage curriculum has improved recently. It is now good and offers a wide range of stimulating activities that promote enjoyment and good progress. However, outdoor apparatus and equipment is limited.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Highly effective procedures ensure that pupils are well cared for, safe and secure at school. Pupils are responsible and adopt safe practices. Staff know the pupils well and pupils feel that there is always an adult they can turn to if they are in difficulty. They commented, 'Teachers and staff are kind and helpful'. There is good provision and support for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. The needs of pupils at an early stage of learning the English language are effectively assessed and effective support is given. Academic guidance is good. Assessment information is normally used well by teachers to set challenging targets for individual pupils in English and mathematics. This contributes to good achievement as most pupils know what they need to do to improve. However, effective target setting is not consistent in every class.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The leadership of the school is successfully focused on raising achievement and promoting pupils' personal development and well-being. The head teacher effectively sustains a common sense of purpose among staff so that morale is high. This makes for a positive learning environment for both pupils and staff. 'The atmosphere in school is great. I feel that it is due to the staff and how they work together and are managed' one parent wrote. Leaders have a good

record of raising achievement since the last inspection because they have kept a close eye on pupils' progress and ensured that suitable action has been taken to raise achievement further, including a recent focus on improving literacy skills. Some subject leaders are new to their post and their role is less well developed than other more established co-ordinators. Effective inclusion of all learners is reflected in the good progress of all groups of pupils. Governors are well informed and have a good understanding of the schools' strengths and what it needs to do to improve further. Arrangements for the school to evaluate its own performance are good. The school's good track record of improvements since the last inspection and the current effective leadership means that its capacity to continue to improve is good.

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Inspection judgements

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

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	3
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	2

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

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 - Exceptionally low.

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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

6 March 2007

Dear Pupils

Holwell Primary School, Holwell Road, Welwyn Garden City, AL7 3RP

We were very pleased to meet you when we inspected your school recently. Thank you for making us welcome and helping us to find out so much about your school. We enjoyed talking to you and hearing about all of the interesting things that happen here.

Your school is a good school because it helps you to progress well in your learning and to grow into considerate and responsible youngsters. Adults work hard to make sure you feel safe and they listen carefully to what you have to say. You enjoy your learning and you behave well. It was good to see you enjoying the delicious healthy lunchtime options. The school makes learning interesting, for example through the visits that you make, and we were impressed by the way you make the most of the valuable musical opportunities that you have. Well done!

We think your school can be even better. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are not making as much progress in mathematics as in reading and writing. We have asked the teachers to help you to make at least the same progress in mathematics as you do in reading and writing.

With best wishes for the future,

D Matthews

Lead inspector