School report

Holcombe Brook Primary School

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

Inspection dates	28–29 June 2016
Overall effectiveness	**Good**
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher and senior leaders understand the school's strengths and areas for development. They have improved the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.
- Teachers encourage and expect pupils to have positive attitudes to learning.
- Pupils behave well and feel safe in school. They know how to deal with any risks that they may face.
- Overall progress for current pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and the most able, is good and improving in English and mathematics.
- Children make good progress in the early years. They enjoy their time in Reception and are happy and safe.
- The school's curriculum is broad and balanced, with a range of extra activities that enhance pupils' experiences.
- Parents are very positive about the school and appreciate the sports and other clubs it provides. They describe it as an inclusive place, with one parent saying it 'feels like home'.
- Governors have an accurate view of standards in school and have become stronger at challenging school leaders.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not always plan lessons that build on what pupils already know and match their abilities. This leads to a lack of challenge on occasions.
- The feedback that teachers give to pupils about their work does not always help them to know how to improve and make even better progress.
- Not all pupils take care to present their work as neatly as possible.
- The most able pupils are not consistently given work that challenges them enough in subjects other than English and mathematics.
- Leaders of subjects other than English and mathematics are still getting to grips with finding out how well their subjects are taught and checking on pupils' progress more efficiently.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further raise the achievement of pupils, especially the most able, by more consistently:
  - planning and providing learning activities that build on pupils' current knowledge and skills and match their abilities well
  - applying the school's marking and feedback policy, so that all pupils know what they need to do to improve
  - ensuring that the presentation of pupils' work is of high quality.

- Further develop the role of leaders of subjects other than English and mathematics by:
  - ensuring that they have a stronger understanding of standards and of the quality of teaching and learning in their subject areas.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher has a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for development of the school. Since the previous inspection, she has taken action that has resulted in improvements, such as better quality of teaching and stronger progress in the early years and key stage 1.
- Senior leaders have an accurate picture of the quality of teaching and learning because of the systematic monitoring they undertake, including termly meetings to evaluate pupils' progress.
- Leaders for English and mathematics and phase leaders perform their roles effectively. Their work has contributed strongly to the improvements that have taken place in the school.
- The school's curriculum is broad and balanced, with a range of extra activities that enhance pupils' experiences, such as a visit from 'Bug Man' to support their science work. There is a focus on providing opportunities to apply writing skills across other subjects. For example, in history, pupils write 'fact files' about motte and bailey castles, and in science they write reports about investigations they have conducted, where they make a clear link between the scientific evidence they have gathered and the conclusion they have reached.
- Senior leaders manage the performance of teachers effectively, which has contributed to the improvements in teaching and learning. Teachers' targets are closely related to the progress of pupils and are reviewed regularly. A programme of training and monitoring takes place to ensure teachers improve. Any underperformance is challenged and appropriate individual support programmes put in place to secure improvement. School leaders manage the development of newly qualified teachers well through effective mentoring and the provision of a wide range of professional development activities.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and enhanced through religious education lessons, a planned programme of assemblies, and a range of other activities. Pupils, for example, visit a local Islamic boarding school and take part in shared activities there; they enjoy planning a range of fund-raising events for various charities and good causes; and they all have a weekly opportunity to develop their confidence and self-esteem by visiting their local forest school.
- Leaders promote fundamental British values well. There is a clear statement on the school's website about their importance and these values are threaded through the school's curriculum and programme of assemblies. In conversation, pupils show they understand about mutual respect and tolerance of others' beliefs. They also talk enthusiastically about recent activities in school in connection with the referendum on British membership of the European Union, including a class vote.
- The extra money provided by the government for physical education and sports has been used appropriately to support pupils' involvement in sport and to build up the confidence and skills of teaching staff. Leaders commission professional coaches to provide sports activities. Pupils increasingly take part in competitions, such as football tournaments. The girls' football team recently won a trophy in a six-a-side competition, and the school has achieved the Sainsbury's Silver Award for school sports.
- Pupils in the school very much enjoy singing and there is a school choir that is well attended. There is also a 'gifted and talented' choir for pupils in Years 5 and 6, which performs at various public venues.
- The parents who spoke to inspectors and responded to the online 'Parent View' questionnaire were highly supportive of the work of the school. They recognise the improvements that have been made in recent years and are very positive about them. They feel their children make good academic progress and that this is balanced by strong pastoral care. They approve of the homework that is set for their children and they appreciate the variety of sports and other activities that the school provides, both during and outside the school day. They also say that the school is a very inclusive place, especially with regard to children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and children from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- The local authority and other consultants commissioned by the school have provided substantial and effective support to improve the quality of teaching and learning, especially in English and mathematics. They have also had a positive impact on the quality of senior leadership other than that of the headteacher.
- The leadership of subjects other than English and mathematics has recently been restructured by the headteacher. The new subject leaders, some of whom are recent appointments, are beginning to get to grips with understanding the strengths and weaknesses of the quality of teaching and learning within these subjects. While they are generally clear about where to go next to secure further improvements, they have yet to develop a full range of monitoring and evaluation skills to provide a more precise analysis.
- Subject leaders are developing a more efficient method to assess attainment and progress in their subjects, but this has yet to be completed. Also under development is work to provide opportunities for pupils to apply mathematical skills across the curriculum.

- **The governance of the school**
  - There was an external review of governance after the previous section 5 inspection. The quality of governance has improved as a result.
  - Governors know the school's strengths and areas for development and actively contribute to the school's improvement plan. They monitor the work of the school by carrying out regular visits and seeking updates on pupils' progress from the headteacher.
  - Minutes of meetings of the governing body show that governors question and challenge school leaders and hold them stringently to account.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. There are established and efficient systems in place. Training of all staff is regular and up to date. Any safeguarding concerns that staff have are recorded and followed up appropriately by the designated safeguarding lead. The management of arrangements involving alternative provision is effective and supports pupils' safety.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- In the main, teachers provide a good level of challenge in the work they plan for pupils, especially the most able. In a mathematics lesson, for example, pupils who had grasped addition of three-digit numbers quickly were given an activity that involved generating two three-digit numbers with a die and using their reasoning skills to get the numbers to total as close to 1,000 as they could. Pupils very much enjoyed the activity and working collaboratively.
- Teachers encourage positive behaviour and attitudes to learning and have high expectations. They are enthusiastic in their approach and form positive and supportive relationships with their pupils, using well-judged praise to increase their self-esteem.
- Teachers have a secure subject knowledge and use it to plan mostly interesting lessons that stimulate pupils' spiritual development well. Adults question pupils effectively, encouraging them to tackle any difficulties for themselves and to check that their work is the best it can be.
- Teachers deploy support staff well, especially in supporting pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. As a result, these pupils make good progress compared to other pupils nationally.
- There has been a sharp focus since the previous inspection on improving the quality of teaching and learning, so as to improve achievement across the school. Pupils' books show that achievement, especially in English and mathematics, is now stronger and that the most able pupils are beginning to demonstrate more consistently high standards.
- Teachers use their resources well to keep pupils' interest and to support their learning. They use technology to find alternative ways of recording pupils' work. For example, some of the most able pupils are asked to prepare speeches for a debate based on a previous writing task. They video each other and deliver well-written speeches with a strong persuasive tone.
- While the most able pupils are suitably challenged most of the time, there are still occasions when the level of challenge is not strong enough. For example, mathematics work is set for some of the most able pupils in a class that is harder than the other pupils' work, but is still too easy for them. A more taxing activity is not offered to them, which means they are not making the progress they are capable of in that lesson.
- Sometimes, teachers do not accurately take into account what their pupils already know when they plan a lesson. When this happens, tasks are not well matched to the pupils' abilities, which results in an occasional lack of challenge.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Through conversations with inspectors and through their responses to the online questionnaire, it is evident that pupils feel safe in school and understand how to manage risks that they may face. Pupils who have been chosen as 'e-cadets' keep other pupils aware of how to keep safe on the internet to good effect.
- Pupils know about bullying in its different forms, including racist and homophobic bullying and cyber bullying. Pupils say that bullying of any kind very rarely happens, but they know who to talk to and what the consequences are. They report that teachers are very swift and firm in dealing with these infrequent occurrences.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave well on the playground and say they enjoy breaktimes. They also behave well at lunchtime in the dining room, where they are talkative, but not excessively so. Less structured periods, such as wet playtimes, are well supervised and pupils' behaviour is managed effectively.
- Pupils' behaviour in class is mostly strong. However, there is some inconsistency in attitudes to learning, as the presentation of pupils' work is variable and shows an occasional lack of pride. Where presentation is at its best, handwriting is well formed and legible and pupils give careful thought to how to set out their work.
- The school's 'Learning Passport' and 'Learning Back-pack' support pupils' overall good attitudes to learning, as they keep pupils focused on acquiring a broad range of knowledge and skills as they travel on their learning journey.
- There have been a small number of isolated fixed-term exclusions since the last section 5 inspection. The headteacher has taken effective action to prevent any recurrence. School leaders monitor attendance well and it is consistently above the national average.

Outcomes for pupils are good

- Overall progress for current pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and the most able, is good and improving in English and mathematics.
- The additional funding given by the government to support the achievement of pupils who are disadvantaged has been used to good effect to contribute to the good progress of this group.
- There was an increase in 2015 in the percentage of pupils in Year 1 who met the threshold in the phonics screening check. At 88%, this was above the national average. For 2016, positive outcomes are expected again.
- Current pupils in key stage 1 are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics and, as confirmed by local authority moderation, results are likely to improve this year compared to those attained in previous years.
- Results for key stage 2 assessments for 2015 saw pupils achieving slightly above national averages in reading, writing and mathematics – an improvement on the previous year. Current pupils are making good progress again, and projected outcomes for this year are positive.
- Although the leadership of subjects other than English and mathematics is still in development, pupils' workbooks in these subjects show good coverage of the curriculum and opportunities to acquire the appropriate skills and knowledge.
- Pupils' reading skills are well developed and are in line with, and often above, those expected for their age. They are able to apply their knowledge of the sounds that letters make and of root words to attempt to read unfamiliar words. They often read fluently and with expression, showing a good level of comprehension. Pupils are familiar with and have the opportunity to read a range of book types.
- A marking and feedback policy is in place and, most of the time, teachers adhere to it. On the occasions when teachers do not follow the policy, pupils are not given opportunities to respond to feedback or correct mistakes. This means they are unclear about how to improve or what the next step in their learning is.
- Pupils' handwriting and presentation are inconsistent across the school, which detracts from the overall quality of the work in some cases.
- While it is obvious that school leaders have taken action to ensure there is consistent challenge for the most able pupils, this aspect is not as well developed in the foundation subjects.

Early years provision is good

- Children enter Reception with knowledge and skills that are broadly typical for their stage of development. They make good progress across the year, and the percentage of children who leave the early years with a good level of development is consistently above the national average. This year's figure is set to rise from the same measure in 2015.
- The gap between boys and girls that has persisted for some time has been closed this year because of effective actions taken by the early years leader. These include the introduction of more boy-orientated topics such as 'superheroes' and a revised approach to the teaching of phonics and reading, which entails shorter, sharper sessions than previously.

- The early years leader is experienced and knowledgeable, and has a clear overview of the strengths and areas for development of the early years setting. She has, for example, plans in place to enhance the outdoor area further to include greater opportunities for children to develop their creative, reading, writing and mathematics skills.
- Assessment systems are rigorous and information gathered is used to good effect to plan a wide range of well-organised and well-resourced activities that cater for all the areas of learning. The environment is bright and orderly and contains many examples of written language which reinforces the children's learning in reading and writing.
- Relationships between staff and children and between children and children are good. Children enjoy their time in Reception and are clearly happy and safe. They show a good level of interest in their work because staff organise their learning well.
- Parents are very supportive and positive about the early years provision. They say that their children enjoy coming to school, that they are making good progress and that members of staff are very approachable. They appreciate the plentiful and useful information that the school provides.
- Children are well behaved and show good attitudes to learning. Staff place an emphasis on developing children's personal and social skills, which contributes to their good behaviour.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported and make good progress. Furthermore, there is often a good level of challenge provided for the most able children. For example, one boy was observed finding as many ways as he could to make the number 11 using addition and subtraction, which included '9 + 2' and '23 – 12'.

School details

Unique reference number	105311
Local authority	Bury
Inspection number	10012097

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	260
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jonathan Haworth
Headteacher	Gillian Evans
Telephone number	01204 882 304
Website	www.holcombebrookprimary.org.uk
Email address	holcombebrook@bury.gov.uk
Date of previous inspection	9 June 2014

Information about this school

- Holcombe Brook Primary School is slightly smaller than average in size.
- The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups and with English not believed to be their first language is well below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who receive support in school for their special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average.
- The percentage of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is slightly above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding is just over half the national average. The pupil premium is extra money from the government to support pupils identified as being from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- The school currently meets the government's floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment by the end of key stage 2.
- The school's website is compliant with statutory requirements.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors carried out observations of learning in lessons in all classes of the school. Two of these were joint observations between the headteacher and the lead inspector. The headteacher was also present at inspector team meetings.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised, including the school's self-evaluation summary, action plans for school improvement, pupils' assessment records, records of the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning, minutes of governors' meetings, reports of visits by local authority advisers and other external support and records connected with the safeguarding of children.
- Inspectors had discussions and conversations with members of staff, governors, parents and pupils.
- Inspectors analysed pupils' writing and mathematics as well as their work in other subjects. They also examined the work of children in the early years.
- Inspectors also evaluated responses received through Parent View, the staff questionnaire and the pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

Mark Quinn, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Michelle Beard	Ofsted Inspector
Doreen Davenport	Ofsted Inspector

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