

Holdbrook Primary School

Longcroft Drive, Waltham Cross, EN8 7QG

Inspection dates

6–7 February 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	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 yet good because

- Although teaching and pupils' progress are improving this year, leaders have not yet done enough to ensure that they are consistently good across the school.
- As a result, pupils do not achieve well in English and mathematics. Given their abilities, standards are not as high as they should be by the end of Year 6 in reading, mathematics or writing.
- Teachers do not always show high expectations for what pupils can achieve, and so pupils' progress still varies too much, particularly in Years 3 to 4 and in reading and mathematics.
- Teachers' marking does not always help pupils to move on in their learning.
- Additional adults in the classroom have not had sufficient training and are not always used effectively to help pupils with their learning.
- Not enough has been done to share leadership responsibilities by developing the skills of subject leaders in checking and improving teaching and learning.

The school has the following strengths

- Good teaching helps children to make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes.
- The new headteacher has made a positive start to raising standards and improving the school.
- Parents and staff are happy with the school.
- A strong emphasis on behaviour and respect for each other results in pupils feeling safe and happy in school. Pupils behave well in the classroom and around the school.
- Governors have not always been fully effective in supporting improvements, but are now well informed and provide leaders with a good balance of support and challenge.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 14 lessons or part lessons, including time spent in brief observations in every classroom with the headteacher.
- The inspectors heard pupils read and looked closely at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of school documents, including development plans, policies, the school's self-evaluation report, monitoring files and safeguarding files.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, senior leaders, teachers, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority.
- There were insufficient responses from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View) for these views to be considered. However, inspectors took account of the views of 51 parents in response to a paper-based questionnaire which was distributed by the school. They also spoke with several parents in the playground.

Inspection team

Gillian Bosschaert, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Liz Kissane

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportions from minority ethnic groups and who speak English as an additional language are much higher than average.
- An above-average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children known to be eligible for free school meals, in local authority care or from service families.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or through a statement of educational needs is higher than the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The headteacher took up the post in April 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- In order to raise standards in reading and mathematics, make teaching consistently good or better by ensuring that:
 - high expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving are reflected in challenging activities in lessons
 - teachers insist that pupils present their work to a high standard
 - teachers' marking shows pupils what they need to do to improve their work.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - rigorously checking the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' achievement
 - developing the skills of subject leaders so they play a full role in leading improvements
 - providing training for teaching assistants and other adults who support learning in the classroom in order to improve the effectiveness of their contribution.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- The overall attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 has been well below national averages for the last few years, and inconsistent progress as they move through the school has been holding back their achievement.
- Children join the Nursery with skills and knowledge that are well below the levels expected for their age in all areas of learning and development. They make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes, but standards are below average when they enter Key Stage 1.
- By the time they leave Key Stage 1, a low proportion of pupils reach the standards expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics, and very few pupils exceed them. However, pupils' progress is improving. Results of the screening check for phonics (the sounds that letters make) at the end of Year 1 in 2013 were just above the national average. Better development of phonic skills is having a positive impact on their reading, and especially their writing, because pupils use their phonic knowledge well to break down words and spell them correctly.
- The extra support the school has provided for pupils who are falling behind in their reading, writing and mathematics is also having a positive impact on progress, and school data show standards are improving this year as a result.
- The proportion of pupils making or exceeding expected from Year 3 to Year 6 was close to the national average in 2013 in reading and writing, but below average in mathematics. In spite of good teaching in Years 5 and 6, progress through Key Stage 2 has been inconsistent and still requires improvement, even though the school's own data and the work in pupils' books show that more rapid progress is being made this year. The quality of writing has improved significantly because of a whole-school focus on improving this area.
- The school has a reputation for working well with disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, and this attracts high numbers of additional less-able pupils in Key Stage 2 with a subsequent impact on Year 6 attainment data. The amount of additional support these pupils receive is helping them to keep up with other pupils, but their overall progress is held back by the same inconsistencies in teaching.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language typically make similar progress to their classmates. Sometimes their progress is better when work is carefully adapted for them.
- The pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium funding make variable progress, but overall it is in line with other groups. The effective one-to-one tuition and additional specialised support in Key Stage 1 result in many eligible pupils making accelerated progress and narrowing the gap between their achievement and that of other pupils. In 2013, pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium were one year behind their classmates at the end of Year 6, reflecting progress that required improvement.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching varies throughout the school, particularly in Years 3 and 4. In some classes, teachers' expectations are not high enough, work is not demanding enough and pupils are not encouraged to present their work well. Sometimes, handwriting is sloppy with too many crossings out showing a lack of pride in their work and uneven progress.

- The effectiveness of teachers' marking varies across the school. In too many classes, the marking does not provide pupils with sufficient information to help them to understand what they need to improve or to help them move on in their learning.
- The effectiveness of teaching assistants is variable across the school. In some classes, they do not engage with pupils from the start of the lesson and are unclear as to how to help pupils move forward in their learning. In others, they have a constant dialogue with pupils which helps them to understand their work and move forward quickly.
- Where teaching is good, instructions are clear, the work set is not too easy or too difficult for pupils and they improve their understanding. In these lessons, no time is wasted and pupils make rapid progress. Pupils are able to explain what they are doing and why. Adults' questions encourage pupils to think more clearly.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good and children get off to a good start. They settle quickly, and have many opportunities to develop speaking and listening skills through 'talking groups'. Physical development is also nurtured well through a well-resourced outdoor area.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' behaviour is good. Pupils move around the school well and also in the playground. Even when teaching is less stimulating, pupils behave well and listen to the teacher. Pupils are respectful of all adults and to each other. This stems from the good relationships pupils have with the adults in their classrooms and the way the school manages behaviour through opportunities to listen to each other.
- Most pupils have positive attitudes to their learning, settle quickly and respond well when staff ask them questions. They collaborate successfully in pairs and in groups regardless of ability, showing the strength of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural education provided. When out in the community, the school receives compliments about the way the pupils behave.
- The school's work to keep the pupils safe and secure is good. All procedures for safeguarding pupils comply with regulations. School records show that bullying is infrequent and dealt with quickly. There have not been any racist incidents for some time. Pupils spoken to endorsed this and said that they were very clear what to do should it happen. Discrimination is not tolerated.
- Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet. Pupils in Year 6 take part in an interactive safety game for children, which covers fire safety, cycling safety, electricity safety, gangs, drugs, building site and knife awareness in an accessible format.
- Attendance has improved dramatically in recent months and is now average. The school follows up any absences immediately the registers have been collected and parents are contacted. Parents are kept informed each half term of their children's attendance. Rewards and certificates are offered to encourage good attendance and, to encourage competition, the weekly newsletter displays each class's attendance.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leaders have not done enough to keep a check on the quality of teaching or to improve pupils' achievement. Changes have been instigated, but new procedures have not yet become

embedded or resulted in rapid improvements.

- Responsibility for leading improvements currently rests with the school's senior leaders, and there is little delegation of responsibility to other staff. Senior leaders have not developed the skills of subject leaders to enable them to play an effective role in bringing improvements to the areas they are responsible for. Not enough training has been provided for non-teaching staff.
- The new headteacher and his senior leaders have a clear vision for the school and are working to raise standards. Standards in writing have improved and appropriate plans have been made to improve reading and mathematics in Key Stage 2. In Key Stage 1, specialist teaching of reading and mathematics has started to have an impact and standards are beginning to rise.
- The school's leaders have an accurate awareness of its strengths and priorities for improvement. Joint observations with the school improvement partner and an inspector show that the headteacher's judgements on teaching are secure.
- Pupil premium funding has been used for some one-to-one teaching as well as group work. The funding is also used to finance additional music and some counselling for pupils with emotional barriers to learning, helping to ensure that all pupils have an equal opportunity to succeed. As a result, eligible pupils are making better progress this year.
- The curriculum is exciting and engages pupils' interest. The winter Olympics displays in the hall and classroom work encourage pupils to understand the many kinds of sports. Writing is encouraged across subjects, and some high-quality writing was seen in pupils' Cinderella books and work in religious education books. French is taught as a modern foreign language. The curriculum is enhanced by a variety of school clubs and activities. For example, the school wins a good variety of sports trophies and gardening club trophies.
- The additional funding provided by the government to help pupils become more active and improve their fitness is used appropriately to employ a sports coach. Children also have the opportunity to participate in some of the less usual sporting activities, such as yoga and tap dancing.
- The headteacher has improved lines of communication with parents, and the vast majority support him and would recommend the school to other parents. Staff, too, are very supportive of the headteacher and the new initiatives to improve standards, showing a commitment and capacity to improve the school.
- The local authority has provided effective support and training for the new headteacher and for some teaching staff.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are well trained, and the Chair of the Governing Body is a leading governor for the local authority. Governors have had a better understanding of the school's data since the appointment of the headteacher, who keeps them well informed and up to date with new initiatives.
 - In order that governors are more visible to parents, staff and pupils, a certificate has been designed for pupils. Governors visit the school regularly to discuss with staff which pupils merit this award. The pupils and families treasure these certificates.
 - Governors are encouraged to visit classrooms to help them understand what the pupils are learning. They provide effective challenge for the headteacher and senior leaders and hold them to account for the standards achieved.

- Governors now have a good understanding of the quality of teaching and how well the school is performing in relation to other schools nationally, and are very aware of what is being done to improve this.
- Governors monitor the finances well, including the use of the pupil premium funding. The governing body has thorough procedures to ensure the school meets health and safety requirements and has bought in an external consultant to provide expert advice and guidance.

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	117091
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	440547

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	219
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Joe Brock
Headteacher	Nick Heald
Date of previous school inspection	26 June 2012
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