

Holdbrook Primary School

Longcroft Drive, Waltham Cross, Hertfordshire EN8 7QG

Inspection dates

1–2 March 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Not enough pupils make good progress from year to year. Pupils' achievement has improved since the last inspection, but is not yet good.
- Leaders' development plans for teaching and learning lack specific detail and deadlines and the actions taken to improve teaching have not been fully effective.
- The quality of teaching is inconsistent between year groups.
- Governors do not provide robust challenge to senior leaders. They do not have an in-depth understanding of the work that the school is doing.
- The school does not monitor the effectiveness of the curriculum well enough for subjects other than English and mathematics.
- Boys do not make enough progress from their starting points in the early years. Initiatives to tackle this underperformance are too new to have made an impact.
- More-able pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable. The work they are given is too easy.

The school has the following strengths

- Safeguarding is effective. Pupils are very well cared for. They are happy, safe and secure because arrangements for their welfare are good.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They are respectful and polite in class and around school. Their written work is carefully presented.
- The close monitoring of disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils has meant that they make good progress from their individual starting points.
- Leadership of mathematics is strong. Teaching of mathematics has improved.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen teaching by providing coaching, training and development for staff.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that the processes for monitoring and evaluation are rigorous so that leaders and governors are able to measure the impact of the actions taken to improve the school
 - strengthening leadership of subjects other than English and mathematics
 - taking action to accelerate the progress of the more-able pupils across the school.
- Improve outcomes for boys in the early years by:
 - developing effective planning for teaching and learning so that boys make the progress necessary to prepare them well for Year 1
 - checking to see that actions taken are working.

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

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because progress in getting the school to 'good' has slowed down. The leadership team is not currently at full strength. Consequently, the headteacher is taking on too much at the expense of work on school improvement. The leadership of subjects other than English and mathematics is not good enough.
- Leaders' monitoring of teaching, the process of performance management and the identification of training needs have not been effective in eliminating inconsistencies in teaching.
- Leaders, including governors, have not gained an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and as a result self-evaluation is overly generous. The school's plan for improvement is not sufficiently well focused on the important things the school needs to do to improve further. For example, not enough has been done to embed the new national curriculum.
- Leaders make efficient use of funding to support disadvantaged pupils. Special programmes are designed to meet the specific needs of these pupils and, as a result, their progress is improving rapidly. Additional adult support is increasing pupils' confidence as they develop their knowledge and skills in mathematics and English.
- The inclusion leader has a very good understanding of the needs of pupils who have special educational needs or disability, disadvantaged pupils and those who speak English as an additional language. The progress of all of these groups is tracked carefully. This ensures that the actions taken to raise pupils' achievement are effective.
- The mathematics leader has taken effective action to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. For example, planning has been reviewed, developed and closely monitored, resulting in identifying accurately what teachers need to do to improve their skills. Teachers told inspectors that this process has given them clear guidance that is helping them to improve their classroom practice. This was seen in the teaching observed and the progress pupils made in mathematics.
- Pupils' safety and welfare are very high priorities. Consequently, pupils feel safe and are happy at school. Parents regard this aspect of the school particularly highly and the few who spoke to inspectors told them that they were confident that their children are well looked after.
- Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. They demonstrate a good understanding of ways of life and beliefs other than their own and they are taught British values. For example, pupils highlighted the care and respect they receive from their friends and all adults at the school.
- School leaders have established productive links with local schools. These have helped develop the work the school is doing in improving assessment practice. Teachers welcome the opportunity to share good practice in teaching and learning.
- Funding to promote sports participation is used adequately by the school. Resources have been bought and specialist coaches lead lunchtime clubs. This is increasing pupils' participation in a variety of physical activities and sports such as golf, basketball and netball.
- The local authority has increased the level of support to the school. This has contributed towards the development of the newly qualified teachers and leadership in the early years. Training is helping the school improve teaching and learning in reading, writing and mathematics.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors do not challenge leaders sufficiently. They do not question the headteacher closely about pupils' achievement, and sometimes accept explanations without probing further to develop their own strategic understanding. Governors are supportive of the school and show commitment to improving the school.
 - Governors are not aware of the progress made by disadvantaged pupils throughout the school. As a result, they are unable to challenge school leaders rigorously about the use of the additional funds that the school receives, or check these pupils' progress well enough.
- Safeguarding is given high priority by the school. The arrangements for safeguarding are effective and fully meet requirements. All required checks are made and staff training for child protection and safeguarding are fully up to date. Leaders ensure that safeguarding pupils is everyone's responsibility.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is inconsistent, being stronger in the early years, Key Stage 1 and in Years 5 and 6 than in other years. Across the school, the more-able pupils are not provided with effective challenge as the work is too easy. As a result, too few of these pupils make greater than expected progress.
- Weaker teaching is to some extent linked to lack of continuity of staffing. More generally, the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics is much stronger than the teaching of other subjects, where pupils' achievement is lower than should be expected.
- Where teaching is most effective, teachers have high expectations of pupils and good subject knowledge. They use questioning well and provide expert guidance for learning and effective support. For example, in Year 6, pupils were drafting a poem about the book *Skellig*. The teacher looked at a pupil's writing with the class and asked questions such as 'How can we improve this sentence?' and 'Explain your choice of vocabulary – why those words?' This led to the pupils developing their own point of view, and also having to consider reasons for the replacement of words.
- Teachers provide plenty of opportunities for pupils to read and improve their writing. An analysis of pupils' work in their topic books showed that there are opportunities to develop their literacy skills across a wide range of subjects. Pupils are using their writing skills for various purposes and doing this well. For example, pieces of writing compared Mary Seacole and Florence Nightingale; and historical evidence was used to write interviews with Elizabeth I.
- Teaching assistants are effective in their work. They provide good individual support for pupils who have special educational needs or disability.
- Pupils' work is often well presented and pupils are taught to take a pride in their work. The work seen in books is of a good quality and shows improvement since the previous inspection.
- Teachers provide good support for Key Stage 2 pupils, with specific programmes for those who need additional help to improve their work. The Year 6 teacher checks regularly to ensure that these are making a difference so that all pupils, including those who speak English as an additional language, get an equal opportunity to succeed.
- Positive relationships between adults and pupils are a strong feature in almost all lessons. This helps pupils to develop positive attitudes to learning. Pupils concentrate well, behaviour is good and they often enjoy their work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. The school is a calm, warm and welcoming environment and children and pupils feel safe and well looked after. Care and personal guidance is good and every effort is made to support pupils' social and emotional needs so that they grow in confidence.
- Pupils are kind and considerate to each other and to adults and are polite to visitors. They talked to inspectors confidently.
- Pupils report that bullying does not happen often. If there are concerns, pupils are confident and certain that they would be dealt with promptly.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive, both when they are taught in groups and as a whole class. They respond promptly to staff instructions and requests so that lessons proceed with few interruptions and no lost learning time.
- Pupils take pride in taking on extra responsibilities. For example, they talk enthusiastically about their roles as team captains, school councillors and lunchtime assistants. This helps them to develop their communication and team working skills.
- Breakfast club is well organised and gives the pupils a positive start to the school day.
- Pupils know how to keep safe, including when using the internet. They have a good knowledge and understanding of how to report inappropriate information and websites.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils say that behaviour is always good at their school and parents agree.
- Pupils cooperate well with each other. They support and offer help to each other without prompting to do so. For example, in Year 4, a pupil was waiting for the teacher as she was stuck on a mathematics

question about factors. Another pupil in the group said to her: 'Would you like me to help you because I think I get that and have got it right? I will explain it to you and then you can do the next one.' The pupil then talked her partner through the process of finding factors.

- All staff promote good behaviour around school. For example, the school was calm and orderly when adults were supervising pupils indoors on a rainy lunchtime. The adults led variety of games and activities, joining in with all the pupils. Pupils maintained good behaviour throughout and were visibly enjoying their lunchtime.
- Attendance has improved. The school has worked with families and with the local authority education welfare officer to ensure that pupils attend school regularly. The systems in place to monitor attendance are effective. The numbers of pupils persistently absent or late for school has reduced and is now average.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Pupils' progress is too slow in Years 3 and 4. This means that too much time in Years 5 and 6 is spent catching up and so, over the Key Stage, too few pupils make the progress of which they are capable.
- Pupils do not do as well in other subjects across the curriculum as they do in English and mathematics because staff are not paying sufficient attention to the quality of pupils' work.
- The work provided for more-able pupils does not give them the chance to excel. Rather than an extra challenge, they get mundane work that does not allow them to master their skills.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability make good progress because their learning is well planned and they are supported in class, which has led to them making at least expected progress in reading and mathematics.
- By the end of Year 6 in 2015 pupils' attainment was broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics. This represents an improvement in standards on previous years.
- In 2015 the proportion of pupils who reached the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check (letters and the sounds that they make) was in line with national figures. This was an increase on previous years. Pupils currently on roll are on track for further improvements to be made.
- The attainment of Year 2 pupils in reading, writing and mathematics has improved year on year and in 2015 was broadly in line with national averages in reading and writing but below average in mathematics.
- School assessment information indicates that standards in reading, writing and mathematics are improving across the school. Work seen in pupils' books showed that progress across the school is accelerating.
- In the past, the achievement of disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 was not as good as that of their peers or of other pupils nationally. Inspection evidence shows that gaps are closing. This is because of the robust action taken by the inclusion leader to identify the issue and put in place additional support for these pupils.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language are well supported in their learning and make good progress.

Early years provision

requires improvement

- Boys do not make enough progress in the early years. This is the key reason why the school requires improvement.
- Leaders have taken swift action to address the fact that boys make slower progress than girls. For example, boy-friendly books are being used to encourage the boys to read and write for pleasure. While this is the case, it is too early to report that this is making a difference. The progress boys make requires improvement to ensure that they are well prepared for Year 1.
- Provision in the early years is improving. The local authority early years adviser is working very effectively with the Nursery and Reception staff to develop a better system for planning daily activities. This is in its early stages of development.
- The newly appointed early years leader is working effectively. She liaises closely with all staff to ensure that they are able to fulfil their roles. She is knowledgeable about the children and uses this to plan for their learning. This has resulted in exciting activities linked to the children's interests.

- Teachers and other adults in the Nursery and Reception classes are good role models. They establish strong, nurturing relationships with the children and, consequently, instructions and routines are followed well by children.
- Children's progress is checked through observations. A record of these is kept in the learning journals. This system results in a clear picture of every child's progress that identifies the next steps and is shared with parents.
- Adults engage children in purposeful and adventurous play. This results in the children following their own interests. For example, some boys were fascinated by a leak in the canopy covering the outside area and set about finding the best container for collecting the most rainwater.
- Safeguarding is effective and children's welfare is a high priority for all staff.

School details

Unique reference number	117091
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	1000952

This inspection 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	228
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Joe Brock
Headteacher	Nick Heald
Telephone number	01992 716789
Website	www.holdbrook.herts.sch.uk
Email address	admin@holdbrook.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	6–7 February 2014

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school and includes a nursery.
- Children attend the Nursery class part time and the Reception class full time.
- An above-average proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic groups and speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged and supported by the pupil premium is significantly above average. The pupil premium provides additional funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, and looked after children.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is above average.
- There are two newly qualified teachers.
- The school runs its own breakfast club.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- Both inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classrooms. The headteacher took part in some joint observations with an inspector and attended both inspection team meetings.
- Observations were made of pupils' behaviour at the beginning of the day, at lunchtimes, breaktimes and when they were moving around the school. Pupils' behaviour was also observed in the classroom and at the school's breakfast club.
- Meetings were held with pupils, staff, the headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body, the assistant headteacher, the school business manager, the mathematics leader and teachers new to the profession. Inspectors spoke informally with parents and pupils in the playground.
- The lead inspector met with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read, and looked at work in pupils' books and on display. They looked at available documentation including minutes from governing body meetings and the school development plan. Behaviour and attendance records and information relating to safeguarding were also scrutinised.
- Inspectors took account of the limited responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View). They also spoke to parents at the beginning of the day.

Inspection team

Tracy Fielding, lead inspector

Linda Killman

Her Majesty's Inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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