

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
[www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)



20 July 2016

Chris Drake  
Headteacher  
Hillside Infant School  
Northwood Way  
Northwood  
Middlesex  
HA6 1RX

Dear Mr Drake,

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Hillside Infant School**

Following my visit to your school on 4 July 2016, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in January 2016. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and the deputy headteacher to discuss the actions taken since the previous inspection. I met with members of the governing body and spoke to a representative of the local authority. The school action plan was evaluated. I examined documents relating to governance and reviewed reports received following visits from local authority advisers. You and I visited all classrooms to observe teaching and learning. I met with pupils from key stage 1 to talk about their work. I looked at a range of pupils' books. I examined the single central record of recruitment checks and evaluated the records that you keep to safeguard pupils. I took account of the views of the parents I met during the visit and the 18 responses to the Ofsted online survey Parent View.

## **Context**

Since the last inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed and will take up her post in September 2016. The current headteacher is retiring at the end of this term. A new leader of the early years has been appointed and a new governor with responsibility for assessment has joined the governing body.

## **Main findings**

You, the deputy headteacher and governors have worked hard to address the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. You have embraced the external support you have received from local schools to improve the quality of teaching and learning and to strengthen your plans for improvement. You have collectively responded well to the challenge the local authority has provided. In addition, you have been rigorous in ensuring that recommendations for improvement are being acted upon. As a result, teaching is showing improvement, standards are rising and leadership has strengthened.

Staff are beginning to use your new assessment systems effectively. They benefit from the good guidance from the deputy headteacher. Leaders are now using the information about the progress pupils are making to support teachers in meeting pupils' specific needs. The latest assessments show that pupils in Year 2 have made good progress in reading, writing and mathematics this year. The most able pupils have been challenged well and many of them have made progress beyond what is expected for their age. However, pupils' progress in other year groups remains variable because teaching is not consistently good.

Lessons in the early years are now well structured and the purpose of activities is clear in planning. However, sometimes children do not fully understand the task set. For example, during the inspection, a group of children in the Reception Year who are at the earliest stages of learning to write struggled to sequence a story because they did not receive the guidance or support necessary to be successful. When teaching leads to good progress, children are interested, motivated and supported well by adults. An example of this was seen in the nursery class where children made good progress in their early number skills because of the skilful questioning and strong subject knowledge shown by the adult working with them on a chalk 'tally' chart.

Outcomes for pupils are beginning to show improvement as a result of stronger teaching. Pupils currently in the Reception Year are on track to achieve much stronger outcomes than those children who left the early years in 2015.

Pupils make good progress in their phonics (the sounds that letters make) skills across the early years and key stage 1. Year 1 pupils are on track to achieve well above last year's national average in the phonics screening check. The majority of

pupils in Year 1 are working at the level expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics, although the progress they have made is variable, particularly in mathematics.

Improved teaching has ensured that gaps between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and others are closing swiftly in all year groups.

Your school improvement plan focuses sharply on the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Timescales for improvement, roles and responsibilities are clear. You evaluate the impact of actions regularly and accurately. You have identified that the reviewed plan now needs to inform the next self-evaluation and improvement cycle for the school. In addition, you have been pro-active in involving the recently appointed new headteacher in this planning process.

Governance continues to be a strong element of the school. Highly skilled, committed governors add clear capacity to the leadership team. They are appropriately focused in the drive to move the school forward. They have reflected on the feedback and challenge they have received from the local authority and have supported you to make sure effective actions have been put in place to secure improvement. Governors do not shy away from difficult decisions regarding staffing or from responding to external challenge. They tackle issues head on with professionalism and integrity. They are working effectively with the new headteacher to ensure a smooth start in September.

### **External support**

The local authority has brokered effective support, which you have used well to improve the school quickly. Informal partnerships with local schools have supported you in improving teaching and learning in the early years. You have worked effectively with a national leader of education to sharpen up the school's improvement planning. You and governors have responded positively and effectively to the recommendations from the local authority's challenge board.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Hillingdon. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Ruth Dollner

**Her Majesty's Inspector**