

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

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



25 January 2017

Nick Heald  
Holdbrook Primary School  
Longcroft Drive  
Waltham Cross  
Hertfordshire  
EN8 7QG

Dear Mr Heald

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Holdbrook Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 13 January 2017, 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 March 2016. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its section 5 inspection before the one that took place in March 2016, the school was also judged to require improvement.

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

The school should take further action to:

- increase the consistency of teaching across different ages in the school
- develop the skills of all teachers to promote and check the quality of provision in their areas of responsibility
- improve attendance so that it is at least in line with the national average.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and other senior and subject leaders, the acting chair and a member of the governing body, an adviser from 'Herts. for Learning', the national leader of education who is supporting the school, the local authority's attendance officer and the school's newly appointed attendance officer, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. I checked the single central record of staff recruitment information and visited each class to see pupils learning. I reviewed a range of documents including reports of monitoring visits from 'Herts. for Learning'.

## **Context**

Since the previous inspection, five members of the teaching staff have left and new appointments have been made, including changes to the staffing structure. There is a new acting deputy headteacher. The chair of the governing body resigned recently.

## **Main findings**

Since the previous inspection, you have worked with passion and commitment to drive up standards. You have taken robust action to raise the quality of teaching and, as a result, a number of teachers are new in post. They demonstrate strong potential to move the school forward. Teaching is more effective than at the time of the previous inspection. While most is good, there is still some variability.

You have recognised your need for support in driving forward improvements. People offering that support have commented positively that you are 'incredibly open to everything suggested'. For example, you requested and pushed for the support of a national leader of education. She is positive about the school's ability to move forward and there are good plans to use her to provide coaching, training and staff development. However, her involvement is recent and it is too soon to see the impact.

In the other areas for improvement from the previous inspection there has already been good progress. In the past, your ability to manage the school strategically has been hampered by a lack of opportunity to delegate. Recent appointments have put you in a much stronger position to monitor and evaluate the work of your staff. Teachers across the school now have leadership roles which they are developing. They are starting to lead their subject area forward. The reduction in temporary staff and increase in permanent staff has enabled this. The recent review by 'Herts. for Learning' reported that the leadership of subjects other than English and mathematics has 'developed very well since the inspection'. Leaders were able to give examples of the impact of their work, especially since the adoption of the new curriculum, giving pupils a breadth of experience across a range of subjects.

In summer 2016, the progress of Year 6 pupils (including disadvantaged pupils) from the end of key stage 1 to last year's end of key stage 2 tests was broadly in line with the national average in English and above average in mathematics. You recognise that too few pupils attained higher standards. You are addressing this as a whole school priority and as I toured the school with you, I saw examples of challenge for all ability groups. Also on our tour I noted that, across the school, pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning were consistently positive. Even the excitement of the snow outside the window did not distract pupils from the learning tasks in which they were engrossed.

There is clear evidence of improved provision in the early years. The attainment of boys was identified as an area of concern in the previous inspection. Assessments at the end of the summer term showed strong improvement in the number of boys reaching a good level of development. Our visit to the early years showed boys actively engaged in structured learning.

A possible barrier to a judgement of 'good' at the next inspection is that attendance is below average and the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent is above average. You have recently employed an attendance specialist who, working with the local authority, is introducing more robust approaches to attendance including financial penalties for parents. Good plans are in place, but it is too soon to see the impact.

An external review of governance was recommended by the inspection. This has now taken place and governors are meeting next week to plan how to implement its findings.

Overall, the changes to staffing, the use of external support, the staff development already put in place, future plans and your ability to monitor the effectiveness of teaching and learning puts the school in a strong position to improve further.

### **External support**

Since the March 2016 inspection, the school has received effective support from the local authority's advisory service 'Herts. for Learning'. The link adviser knows the school well. There have been focused advisory visits to support the early years, English, mathematics and phonics. There has been a safeguarding audit and the local authority's human resources department has helped the school deal with personnel issues. The local authority has brokered support from a national leader of education. It has created a board to support and challenge school leaders.

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

Yours sincerely

Adrian Lyons

**Her Majesty's Inspector**