

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
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Mrs Nicola Davies  
Executive Headteacher  
Holgate Primary and Nursery School  
High Leys Road  
Hucknall  
Nottinghamshire  
NG15 6EZ

Dear Mrs Davies

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Holgate Primary and Nursery School**

Following my visit to your school on 27 November 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 May 2017. 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 for the school to become a good school.

The school should take further action to ensure that:

- teachers are provided with effective guidance to enable them to make accurate judgements about pupils' attainment in reading
- leaders work effectively, in collaboration with parents, to reduce the level of absence for those groups where it is still too high
- staff create sufficient opportunities in mathematics for pupils to explain their answers.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, I held meetings with yourself, the head of school, the operations and services leader, the subject leaders for English and mathematics, the acting leader of the early years, the coordinator for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities and the executive inclusion leader. I also met with a group of teaching assistants. I spoke with a representative from the local authority and met members of the governing body to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the leaders' improvement planning and carried out a scrutiny of pupils' workbooks from pupils of different ages. I also toured the school with the head of school to see lessons taking place in different groups. I checked that the school's records of safeguarding arrangements met requirements.

## **Context**

Since the last inspection, two parents have joined the governing body. Three newly qualified teachers have joined the school.

## **Main findings**

You, senior leaders and the governing body want the school to become a good one as soon as possible. You are therefore taking brisk action in respect of all the areas for improvement. You have simplified your school development plan so that it is focused sharply on the areas for improvement, and to make sure that staff are not distracted by issues of less importance. This plan has clear milestones by which you and the governing body can judge whether the school's work and pupils' outcomes are improving. The plan has a series of detailed steps that build logically to produce the improvements needed for the school to become a good school. There is a keen sense of urgency in terms of timings, but no excessive action at any one point, which would risk overload for staff. The plan makes explicit who will check what actions have taken place, when and how. There are very clear criteria by which governors can check the success of each action.

To improve the effectiveness of this plan, you and your subject leaders have recently written the first of your 'transition to transformation' school reviews. You aim to show this to the governing body imminently, and discuss your work with them. This document gives extensive details of precisely what actions you and staff have already completed, their impact, and what will happen next. The thoroughness of this document means that the governing body will be able to hold you and other leaders to account much more effectively. You plan to produce further reviews on future action each term.

You and your staff have introduced a new system to improve the quality of teaching, based on mutual support and coaching. You began this with organising whole-school training so that everyone would become familiar with it. All teachers and teaching assistants are now part of small groups who meet regularly to support

each other to improve. Staff have filmed themselves at work and colleagues are completing summaries of good practice. Where a member of staff needs additional support, the leaders of English and mathematics will assist them to improve. They will provide them with useful ideas, for example on how to plan a sequence of activities for pupils effectively. They will then check that the member of staff is doing this well enough and give them further support if needed. Subject leaders write reports for you, so that you know about the strengths and weaknesses of each member of staff, and what is being done to improve their effectiveness. Each coaching team is led by an experienced teacher who is familiar with this way of working. The coaching system is effective because staff have focused on a specific whole-school aspect of teaching, such as improving pupils' involvement. This ensures that everyone is clear on what is being scrutinised, and how their effectiveness will be measured. The teaching assistants who I met during my visit explained to me enthusiastically how this process is helping to unite staff to work collaboratively. The staff are helping each other to improve their confidence and effectiveness. They are clearer about what leaders expect them to teach, and are happy to receive professional development because they know that it will mean that pupils will make faster progress.

You have adjusted the information that you give to the governing body regarding pupils' achievements, having met with them to determine how they would like this information presented. A resulting report begins with a clear, one-page summary of both progress and attainment within the school. The report highlights clearly the different proportions of pupils currently on track to meet the expectations for their age. Further information shows the progress different groups of pupils are making. You have written detailed commentaries for each year group and summarised these well so that governors have an effective overview of achievement. The governing body has met with you and other leaders to scrutinise the information you have provided for them. From this, they have compiled a detailed list of areas where they can see that pupils' progress is not fast enough, or where not enough pupils are attaining at least the standards expected of them. You are strengthening this system by ensuring that leaders meet regularly with teachers in each class to discuss the progress of their pupils. Teachers are required to account for any pupils not making the gains you expect. This means that you and staff quickly identify pupils who have fallen behind, or are at risk of doing so, in order that these pupils receive effective support.

Leaders understand the need for staff to make accurate assessments of their pupils' achievement, so that the governing body receives correct information for each subject. Staff are increasingly able to make accurate judgements, particularly in writing and mathematics. However, subject leaders explain that staff need further guidance to help them to do this with greater accuracy in reading. The subject leader for English is aiming to give them more information about the expectations in reading for different ages of pupils, so that teachers across the school are able to make consistently accurate judgements in this subject.

The most able pupils are receiving more work that meets their needs. During my visit, I saw how staff in the early years were requiring these children to count higher numbers and to write words that are more difficult. For pupils in key stage 1 and 2, staff have introduced a series of challenges of varying difficulties, and are assisting pupils to choose these wisely. Staff ask pupils to evaluate their choice after completing each one. As a result, pupils are learning to make appropriate judgements. Pupils explained to me how they chose 'the beast', which is the most difficult of all, when they felt confident in their ability to complete the work. However, pupils sensibly choose a slightly less challenging task where they were not as confident. This shows that pupils are playing a more active role in their own learning. Pupils say that they enjoy these challenges greatly. Pupils' books that I scrutinised during my visit confirmed that pupils are choosing these challenges increasingly well, so that they have work that meets their needs.

Pupils are also becoming more involved in the learning of their peers. There are increasingly frequent examples in exercise books of pupils looking at each other's work and suggesting improvement points. Pupils in Year 5 also explained to me how they visit children in the Reception class and help them with their reading and phonics. One pupil explained eloquently that she, 'could infer that children were enjoying this because of the smiles on their faces when we visit' and because children were keen to get the raffle tickets that they receive as a reward for reading regularly.

Staff are also giving pupils more opportunities to apply their skills. Workbooks in different year groups show clear and increasing evidence of problem-solving. For example, pupils in Year 5 were asked to calculate the weight of a slice of cake, if a cake weighing 560 grams was cut into eight equal slices. However, although pupils' ability to answer word-based problems is improving, staff are not consistently giving pupils sufficient opportunities to explain why they have reached an answer. Lessons I visited with you showed that staff are asking them more questions that help them explore their ideas in greater depth. For instance, pupils in Year 3 were each writing a letter persuading an employer to give a job to their imaginary son. The teacher repeatedly asked questions that made pupils think how they could use particular words and phrases such as, 'he is an amazing communicator' to convince the employer of their son's many useful qualities.

You are now monitoring attendance more effectively and giving the governing body information that shows whether pupils in different key stages, and in different groups, are attending sufficiently. You have raised the importance of attendance to parents by reminding them regularly in newsletters. Pupils I met said that they liked coming to school, and value the certificates and rewards they get for attending each day. A new policy makes it clear that the governing body is determined to ensure good attendance, and will not authorise holidays in term time, other than in the most exceptional of circumstances. You have also ensured that the attendance officer is, with support from the local authority, helping to support families of those children who are persistently absent. However, while the levels of absence for some

groups are reducing, this is not the case for all.

Ofsted may carry out further monitoring inspections and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

### **External support**

The local authority is providing you and leaders with appropriate support. As well as visiting the school to look with you at pupils' work, the local authority has checked the quality of your school improvement plan to ensure it is of a high quality. It has also scrutinised the monitoring documentation to see that it is providing good levels of information to the governing body on the actions you and staff are taking to improve. The local authority has helped new governors to become familiar with their strategic role, and has produced reports for the governing body to summarise the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The local authority has also recommended effective external programmes which have improved the effectiveness of your staff to improve the independence of pupils. The local authority is fully committed to continuing to support the school so that it becomes good by its next inspection.

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

Yours sincerely

Roary Pownall  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**