

# HOLMER GREEN SENIOR SCHOOL

Holmer Green Senior School,  
High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire



*“The headteacher has successfully raised everyone’s aspirations so that the school is ensuring ‘Achievement and opportunity for all’.*

In January 2014, Holmer Green Senior School was reeling after an Ofsted Inspection that downgraded the school from Good to Requires Improvement. The Governing Body and Headteacher fully appreciated that change was needed and implemented a strategy to turn the school around. As a result, attainment rose from 54% 5+ A\*-C including English and Maths in 2013 to 65% in 2016. Raiseonline reported achievement in terms of English, Maths as well as Best 8 Average Point Scores being significantly positive for two years in a row. For a Secondary Modern school within a selective county, these outcomes were remarkable and thus it was unsurprising that the school returned to a Good overall judgement in May 2016.

The successful strategy was founded upon a three-pronged approach to school improvement:

1. Develop a robust and accountable leadership structure and team.
2. Implement an effective teaching development programme to improve the pace of pupils’ learning.
3. Recruit expert practitioners to create areas of excellence where outcomes are unequivocally outstanding and thus challenge preconceptions about what Secondary Modern children can achieve.

The first step proved the most controversial as well as decisive one for moving the school on a rapid journey of improvement. A re-structure of the Senior Leadership (which had been planned in the months before the Ofsted visit) was introduced to create a sole Deputy position with a relentless focus on improving the quality of teaching across the whole school. Within a few months an external appointment was made to ensure that the candidate with the right skill set was in position. The re-structure also opened up opportunities on the Leadership Team for Middle Leaders who had been recognised as strengths through the Ofsted report. Thus a mixture of strong external appointments working in collaboration with colleagues who knew the school inside out were able to effect a targeted approach to improving key areas such as extended writing, assessment and feedback as well as extending challenge for the most and the least able in terms of prior attainment at Key Stage 2.





The focus on leadership also brought about an increased professionalism across the staff room with an acceptance of challenging, professional conversations that clearly highlighted development areas for individual teachers. This was embraced by the staff room as the second key feature of our strategy was to carefully plan and structure support to improve whole staff teaching. A Monitoring, Evaluation and Review cycle was introduced and now runs four times across the academic year. This involves learning walks and work scrutiny conducted by Middle Leaders and quality assured by the Senior Team. The key element is that Ofsted grades and judgements are not used but instead strengths are carefully recorded as well as areas for improvement and these inform the content of the weekly Teaching and Learning Clinics where best practice strategies (often identified through Learning Walks) are shared by the school's most effective teachers as well as guest expert practitioners from other schools. The role of Middle Leaders has been a crucial aspect to this strategic approach with intensive training for all key Middle Leaders to ensure they are able to monitor and challenge as well as develop colleagues to ensure that effective teaching is evident across all lessons in their area.

The final piece of the strategy was the recruitment of expert subject leaders in Maths and Art who had a track record of achieving outstanding outcomes in similar schools. They have set a bench mark for not only how well Secondary Modern children can attain at GCSE and A Level but what Outstanding should look like in any subject area at Holmer Green. Their sky high aspirations are in tune with that of the Governing Body and Headteacher and are spreading across all areas as a healthy competition emerges between all subject areas to raise the bar for what every child can achieve.

The result has not only been an Ofsted "Good" grading and record results but a school that is now heavily oversubscribed, is applying to become a Multi Academy Trust and has made a bid to sponsor a new Free School to replicate the model that is working so well for the local children in our area. With that in mind we are actively seeking business partners to help develop and broaden our Sixth Form curriculum offer and would welcome any contacts direct to the school.

For more information visit:  
[www.hgss.co.uk](http://www.hgss.co.uk)

