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15 February 2013

Mrs D Rogan  
Executive Headteacher  
Briscoe Primary School & Nursery  
Felmores End  
Pitsea  
Basildon  
SS13 1PN

Dear Mrs Rogan

### **No formal designation monitoring inspection of Briscoe Primary School & Nursery**

Following my visit with Michael Sheridan, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your academy on 13–14 February 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was a monitoring inspection carried out in accordance with no formal designation procedures and conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was carried out because the academy's predecessor school was judged to be a school causing concern.

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents and met with the executive headteacher of the academy, the head of school, senior leaders, groups of pupils, and a representative from the academy trust and board of governors. Inspectors observed 12 lessons and several parts of lessons, scrutinised pupils' work and reviewed a range of documentation related to self-evaluation and improvement.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

The academy is making reasonable progress in raising standards for all pupils.

### **Context**

Briscoe Primary and Nursery School is smaller than the average primary school. There are 204 pupils, of which over half are known to be eligible for a free school

meal. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below the national average, as is the proportion who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average, and the proportion supported by school action plus or through a statement of special educational needs is well above average. A high number of pupils join or leave the academy during the year. The school became an academy at the start of this academic year as part of the HEARTS Academy Trust. A number of staff either left or joined the academy at this time. The academy trust consists of two schools led by an executive headteacher, each with its own head of school.

### **Achievement of pupils at the academy**

A continuing trend of improvement in English is clearly evident across the academy and achievement gaps between different groups of pupils are closing, particularly for those known to be eligible for a free school meal. Analysis of teacher assessments and observations of lessons in Key Stage 1 confirm that attainment in reading and writing is likely to be broadly average by the end of the current Year 2. This is due to the consistently outstanding teaching in Reception of phonics (the sounds children need to know in order to read), which is built on effectively in Years 1 and 2 to ensure that pupils make good progress in their reading and writing. Handwriting is taught effectively within the phonics programme and as a result, the vast majority of pupils in Year 2 write letters correctly in a neat joined style. However, the academy has recognised that some pupils find difficulty in transferring their good phonic knowledge in reading to support accurate spelling of more complex words in writing.

Inspection evidence confirms that pupils in Key Stage 2 are continuing to develop their reading and writing skills effectively, and are on track to reach average standards overall by the end of Year 6. Consistently high-quality teaching, thorough marking of pupils' work and high expectations at the end of this key stage provide the ideal climate for learning in English and support rapid progress in writing. Consequently, the majority of the pupils in Year 6 are writing at the expected National Curriculum level, with several writing at the higher Level 5. Higher-ability pupils in Year 5 benefit greatly from working with these Year 6 pupils and as a result, their achievement is particularly good. For instance, one wrote in their account of a ghostly, elderly couple playing the piano, 'Suddenly, he turned around seeing her pale complexion, like she was real! Playing a duo they took care with each note they were tapping. Together they turned their heads, not even to stop playing the onyx black and clear white keys.' This imaginative use of descriptive language is a strong feature in many of the pupils' books at the end of Key Stage 2, and a growing feature in other year groups.

This improving level of performance in English is yet to be seen in mathematics. This is because of the remaining gaps in pupils' mathematical knowledge and understanding. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 have a lot of catching up to do to make the progress expected of them in mathematics. Pupils in Year 6 are making rapid progress but still have considerable gaps in their knowledge and find some learning difficult because of these gaps. Leaders have identified this as a significant challenge

and have committed resources to help pupils in Year 5 to close these gaps before they enter Year 6. Pupils are making better progress throughout the academy, although this varies between classes because of differences in the quality of teaching. Attainment in mathematics is predicted to be still below average in the Key Stage 2 national tests this year.

Early number development starts well in the Early Years Foundation Stage, where children become familiar with number, learn to count forwards and backwards and complete simple arithmetic with numbers up to twenty. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage enjoy working with number and often apply what they have learnt from taught sessions in their independent play.

Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make generally good progress in class and over time because of the good-quality support provided, either in class or in small groups withdrawn from lessons.

### **The quality of teaching**

The quality of teaching continues to improve but some inconsistencies still remain. Inspection evidence and a review of lesson observations by senior staff confirm that there is no inadequate teaching within the academy. In the best lessons, teachers use their good subject knowledge, especially in English, to challenge pupils' thinking, extend learning and facilitate good achievement. Consistently high-quality teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage ensures that children make rapid progress in all areas of learning. Effective use of assessment information ensures that activities are very carefully matched to the needs of these children, both in the indoor and outdoor learning environments. As a result nearly all children, including those known to be eligible for a free school meal, are on track to reach age-related expectations in all areas of learning by the time they join Year 1.

The quality of teaching in Key Stage 1 and 2 is more variable. It is best at the end of Key Stage 2, where it is consistently good or better. In the best lessons, teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge in writing and mathematics. Pupils' behaviour is managed well and all teachers and support staff establish very positive relationships with the pupils in the class or small groups. Detailed lesson planning includes clear learning intentions. These are linked carefully to success criteria shared with the pupils to support the assessment of progress. Teachers make good use of information and communication technology to enhance their teaching. For example, in an English lesson for pupils in Years 4 and 5, the newly qualified teacher played pupils a video of an adult conversation so they could transcribe dialogue that included the correct punctuation for direct speech. In another lesson for pupils in Year 1 and 2, the teacher made very good use of a digital scanner to share a pupil's piece of writing with the class to consolidate learning and celebrate achievement.

In the small number of lessons that still require improvement, teachers ask questions that are often too superficial to deepen pupils' understanding. The pace of these lessons is too slow because there is too much talking by the teacher and not

enough time spent on consolidating pupils' learning. This is particularly so in mathematics, where often there is a lack of purpose to the planning and misconceptions are not noticed quickly enough by the teacher to adjust the activities in order to advance pupils' achievement.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Inspectors noted good behaviour in all lessons, around the academy and in the playgrounds. Discussions with the school council reflect these changes. Pupils say that they are much happier in school because behaviour has improved, and that this has been noticed by their parents. One pupil said that she knows her parents are pleased about the changes to the academy because, 'All they are getting is good news about me!' Relationships are increasingly positive between pupils and adults, and among pupils themselves. Pupils say that they feel safe, that there is very little bullying, and that if it does happen it is quickly dealt with by staff.

Pupils are responding well to an increasing emphasis on their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through well-planned assemblies and the celebration of festivals. Stories and drama are used by senior staff in assemblies to encourage pupils to reflect on important values such as right and wrong and the wider world around them. As a result, pupils are thoughtful, consider the needs of others and display positive attitudes to their learning. They persevere with their work and display an increasing level of pride in their achievements. For example, many pupils write in a neat joined-up style and work in books is neat.

Pupils say that learning is becoming increasingly interesting because teachers plan exciting things for them to do, such as in science. As a result, attendance is now broadly average and continuing to improve. The number of persistent absentees has declined. However, despite some innovative use of the pupil premium (extra government funding) to ensure that eligible pupils are in school on time to receive extra support in reading, absence levels continue to fluctuate. There were several fixed-term exclusions at the start of the academic year, but all of these pupils have been successfully reintegrated back into the academy.

### **The quality of leadership in and management of the academy**

The transition from predecessor school to academy has been managed well by the executive headteacher and head of school, who demonstrate a clear drive for improvement. Collaboration between the trustees and governors from both academies is good. As a result, teamwork and the sharing of resources are becoming particular strengths. For instance, governors from both academies have participated in monitoring the impact of curriculum initiatives to improve pupils' achievement. This helps to ensure that self-evaluation is accurate. Comprehensive improvement planning includes action plans for key priorities and subject development. However, the absence of clear targets linked to pupils' achievement limits how well overall performance can be tracked. Teaching is monitored regularly by all senior staff, and

clear lines of accountability, linked to pupils' progress, support effective performance management.

Subject leadership is developing well. Good leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage and English is reflected in a sustained trend of improvement in literacy skills. The leadership of mathematics has improved. Responsibility for this subject is shared between an experienced teacher from the sponsoring academy and an advanced skills teacher. Together they have generated an action plan to tackle the key issues to improve teaching, help pupils catch up and eliminate underachievement. There are now leaders for all other subject areas, including outdoor learning. The leadership of provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs continues to strengthen.

### **External support**

Appropriate use is made of external consultants to support school improvement and self-evaluation. Collaboration is a growing strength supporting further improvement in both academies. For example, senior leaders from the sponsoring academy provide effective support to staff who have specific responsibilities at this academy. In exchange, the Early Years Foundation Stage leader from this academy has oversight of this provision in both academies. Furthermore, staff expertise within this academy in the development of outdoor learning is used to provide training for all staff across both academies, and better use of the outdoor facilities on this site.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- Accelerate pupils' achievement in mathematics by:
  - addressing the gaps in pupils' mathematical knowledge
  - ensuring that mathematics is consistently well taught throughout the school.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State for Education, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Academies Advisers Unit at the Department for Education. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Philip Mann  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**