

Serco Inspections
20 Colmore Circus
Queensway
Birmingham
B4 6AT

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

5 July 2013

Richard Hunter
Executive Headteacher
Four Dwellings Primary Academy
Quinton Road West
Birmingham
B32 1PJ

Dear Mr Hunter

No formal designation monitoring inspection of Four Dwellings Primary Academy

Following my visit with Simon Rowe, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your academy on 3–4 July 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, including 17 lessons seen jointly with a member of the senior leadership team. Inspectors also scrutinised documents and met with the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative of the sponsors, Academies Enterprise Trust (AET), groups of pupils and staff, subject leaders, and parents and carers as they brought their children to school.

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

The academy is larger than most primary schools and currently has 451 pupils. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals and for whom the school

receives additional funds (the pupil premium) is well above average. Just under half the pupils are from minority ethnic groups. There are similar numbers of pupils in both these groups. The proportions supported through school action, and through school action plus or a statement of educational needs, are above average.

The school moved into new buildings in September 2012. You supported it while being the headteacher of Robin Hood Primary School, acting as executive headteacher for both schools for one term. A close working relationship between staff from both schools was bringing about improvements to the quality of teaching and in leadership. The academy sponsor, AET, rightly recognised this support as being highly effective, and continued the arrangement when the academy opened in January 2013. All staff transferred from the predecessor school but a new governing body was formed.

Achievement of pupils at the academy

The academy has made a good start in raising achievement since it opened. Standards have improved as pupils make better progress. Academy leaders had an accurate understanding of pupils' attainment when it opened and can compare how well pupils make progress in reading, writing and mathematics with results from previous years. This information shows that achievement is improving and is now good in all subjects and year groups, except Year 3. It also shows that the academy is successfully reducing the gap in achievement between pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are not. Records for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs show they are making better progress than last year, and similar progress to their classmates. There are no significant differences in progress made between pupils from different ethnic backgrounds.

Children start in the Reception and Nursery classes with skills and experiences below the levels expected for their age. The academy has responded well to the new ways in which the children of this age are assessed. Early assessments show that they have made better progress in their early work on reading and writing, along with their social and physical development.

The results of checks in Year 1 on how well pupils read are much improved this year. The support provided for pupils who have problems in matching letters to the sounds that make up words (phonics) has meant that the proportion of pupils who meet the required standard is likely to be above average.

Pupils' progress records for Key Stage 1 show a much improved picture. Standards for reading and writing are higher than the previous year and around average. Standards in mathematics are in line with the previous year and again broadly average. Records for Key Stage 2 pupils show a similar improving picture. The Key Stage 2 assessments this year are on track to be broadly average for all three subject areas.

The quality of teaching

Staff have worked well to build upon the improvements to the quality of teaching and learning made before becoming an academy. As a result the quality of teaching is predominately good, so pupils are making good progress in lessons and over time and making up for some previously poor progress.

Teachers have responded well to excellent support from the partner school and most lessons are now challenging and enjoyable. Pupils recognise improvements to the way in which they are taught, and were very clear that it was not because they liked the new buildings but because teaching had improved.

Good teaching is supported by excellent relationships between staff and pupils. Lesson activities are usually well matched to pupils' abilities, although at times the most able are not fully stretched. In reading, pupils respond well to daily sessions to help them form words and to recognise what words mean. However, staff do not always make the meaning of a word clear when it can have more than one meaning, for example the word 'heading'. Pupils enjoy writing and have opportunities to write at length in their topic work as well as in English lessons.

In mathematics, pupils investigate mathematical ideas and practise skills using real-life contexts. Pupils have improved their fluency with number bonds and timetables.

Teaching assistants are used well in many lessons. They also provide good additional support when pupils are taken out of class for help with reading or number work in small groups. However, at times pupils do not receive enough 'warning' when they are about to be taken out, and may be working with the teacher on a tricky area when they have to leave the lesson.

While teaching is mainly good, it is rarely outstanding. This is because not enough teaching relates to real-life situations, develops pupils' understanding or gives pupils opportunities to work by themselves. Teachers do not always use assessment information well to see when pupils need additional support, or have found the work easy and need additional challenge. Books are frequently marked and the best marking gives pupils additional tasks to complete. However, this is not consistent and pupils often get comments on what they should do next time rather than being given a specific problem to practise their skills on before their next piece of work.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils behave well around the academy and in lessons. They show a positive attitude to their work because they feel valued. At lunchtime and at breaks, behaviour has improved. There are now far more activities and resources for pupils to use in the playground. There are now very few disagreements between pupils, whereas a year ago these were commonplace.

In lessons, staff use the academy's behaviour policy consistently. Pupils are aware of where they are on the 'behaviour ladder' and also what they need to do to regain ground if they have been moved down the ladder after poor behaviour. Pupils also respond well to the reward of a 'carrot' token.

Records show that there are occasional bullying and racist incidents. This is confirmed by pupils, but they say they are dealt with well when reported. All pupils feel safe because they know staff are caring and they can share any problems. Pupils are aware of the dangers of using the internet and about making sure they never give any information to others unless agreed by a responsible adult. Attendance is improving but remains below average. This is because of a small number of families whose children have a lot of time away.

The quality of leadership in and management of the academy

You have given outstanding leadership, along with other senior leaders from Robin Hood Primary School. This has brought about many improvements. Most notable is that staff feel valued and want to deliver their best possible lessons. Professionalism has been restored. Consequently there is a momentum of continual improvement to the quality of teaching. Teachers rightly recognise they are the most important factor in ensuring pupils gain a good education on which to build at secondary school.

The academy's improvement plan is ambitious and identifies the right areas to continue improving. There are clear criteria against which the impact of actions can be judged.

Senior leaders have received good support in identifying the quality of teaching in lessons and then working with teachers to bring about improvements. The much improved system to track the progress of pupils has meant staff are being held to account for the progress made by pupils in their class. The information collected is now more accurate, so comparisons are more secure than in previous years.

The new governing body has quickly gained an accurate understanding of the academy's strengths and its main areas for improvement. Governors receive good information from leaders so that they are well informed, check the work of the academy for themselves and challenge senior leaders. They know how the academy spends its pupil premium funding and how this is improving the achievement of eligible pupils. Safeguarding procedures meet current national requirements.

You have ensured good relationships with parents and carers. You make sure that you, or other senior leaders, are always available at the start of the day to meet parents as they bring their children to the academy. Many who have children in the Reception and Nursery classes join their children at the start of the day. They are able to see how their children settle and many take the opportunity to bring in

younger children who can see what school is like before they start. Relationships with the local secondary academy, which shares the same site, have improved. Pupils now visit for sessions in art, science, design technology, and information and communication technology.

External support

The sponsor rightly recognised the major impact of your support as executive headteacher, and that from other staff at Robin Hood Primary School, and so continued with this support for the whole year. You are due to continue in this role when the new headteacher takes up post from September 2013.

Additional support for mathematics and writing is being provided by sponsor staff. This includes well-received guidance on the best way to teach mathematics and how to improve writing by getting pupils to talk about things first. The sponsor has also undertaken an inspection to see how well the academy has started. However, this did not focus upon the progress made by pupils since the academy opened and took too much account of published information of the predecessor school.

Priorities for further improvement

- Make all teaching at least good and more outstanding by ensuring that:
 - pupils have more opportunities to work by themselves without direct intervention from the teacher
 - marking is used purposefully to give pupils tasks to complete to consolidate or extend their learning
 - teachers regularly find out how pupils are progressing during lessons, and then adjust their teaching to give greater support or challenge as appropriate
 - teachers give work greater relevance through practical, real-life activities and develop pupils' understanding and independence so that learning is embedded.

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

Michael Smith
Her Majesty's Inspector