

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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



11 December 2015

Mr Stephen Down
Headteacher
Bushmead Primary School
Bushmead Road
Eaton Socon
St Neots
Cambridgeshire
PE19 8BT

Dear Mr Down

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Bushmead Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 3 December 2015, 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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in February 2015. 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 to become a good school. The school should take further action to:

- Use assessment information precisely to plan learning opportunities so that pupils can make accelerated progress and close gaps in their learning.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, the governing body, and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school action plan was evaluated. Lesson observations and a scrutiny of books in class were undertaken, jointly with the

headteacher, to gauge the quality of teaching and learning. The start of the school day was observed together with an assembly. I also checked procedures for recruiting and vetting staff.

Context

Significant staff changes have taken place since my last visit. You have taken up your post as the permanent headteacher of the school with the acting headteacher reverting to his former post as deputy headteacher. You have employed a new experienced leader who is responsible for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Three teachers left at the end of the summer term and one teacher is due to retire at Christmas. Replacement staff have been appointed and three new teachers joined the school in September, with one more due to start in January. There have also been staff changes in the office and administration area of the school. There is a new early years leader who has been promoted from within the staff and also a new mathematics leader.

Since the last monitoring inspection you have received a safeguarding review and a behaviour review from the local authority. You have also attended the Ofsted 'Getting to Good' seminar.

Main findings

Work to address the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection report has continued, despite the considerable changes in senior leadership and staff. You have wasted no time since September, focusing on the correct areas to secure improvement for the pupils in the school. You believe there are no barriers preventing the school from improving at pace and being judged good at the next inspection. Staff have responded quickly and are committed to securing long-term improvements.

You have rightly prioritised the need to build capacity in the school's leadership team and now have an effective structure in place. Senior leaders are enthusiastic and rapidly developing their roles and responsibilities. The impact of their work is positive in raising the quality of teaching and learning, as seen during this inspection. For example, the leader of English has rightly identified reading as an area of concern and has changed the whole school approach to reading; pupils now develop their enjoyment of texts and have daily opportunities to read in small groups that are carefully planned and supported by adults in each class. The teaching of phonics and early reading skills has also changed: the most-able pupils are identified much earlier than previously, and staff employ a more personalised approach to their teaching. You are currently assessing the impact of these new initiatives.

In the early years, the new leader has quickly established her team, holds weekly meetings to involve staff in planning and ensures that learning opportunities for the children are purposeful and based on clear objectives. Consequently, children are

experiencing stimulating activities that encourage and help them to make better progress. The early years leader has a clear action plan that rightly focuses on continually improving the provision, so that the proportion of children achieving a good level of development continues to rise further and children are better prepared for their move to Year 1.

The effectiveness of support staff is being addressed. The deputy headteacher has already put in place robust performance management targets for all support staff together with training and development to help them be successful.

You and your leaders are now more regularly monitoring the impact of your actions to ensure that the quality of teaching and learning is rising rapidly. Actions are being taken where the quality is less than good. You provide supportive measures for improvement and have high expectations of all your staff.

Governors are starting to challenge school leaders and beginning to ask more questions which hold leaders to account for the standards of education in the school. They are more focused on the core priorities of school improvement. As a result, they are more organised and becoming more effective. Each governor is now linked to an area of improvement within the school. Consequently, governors check the performance and progress of pupils with greater precision on their visits to the school. The review activities undertaken by the local authority have resulted in plans which include further training for governors, though this has yet to take place.

Some strong practice was seen during the inspection where teachers were using their subject knowledge effectively to make progress more rapid. For example, in some mathematics lessons teachers used strategies that allowed the most-able pupils to excel in their learning and practise their skills further. In one lesson some younger pupils enthusiastically grappled with mathematical concepts, working together and deciding whether a calculation was true or false. These pupils were making good progress, as a result of the teacher's accurate expectations of their age and abilities combined with activities that helped them deepen their understanding.

The behaviour of pupils has improved significantly since the previous monitoring visit. Pupils are able to explain the use of the 'Good to be Green' system you have introduced. They respond well to the positive and high expectations that you, leaders and staff now place on them. As a result, pupils walk around the school considerately and conduct themselves well during assembly times. They are more polite and respectful as a result of your work. In lessons most pupils demonstrate a positive attitude to their learning and want to succeed. An older pupil told me that 'we want to copy good behaviour now, so we can learn better'.

You have changed the beginning of the school day and this has resulted in a calm and purposeful start across the school. Adults plan for learning from the moment the pupils enter the classroom so high expectations are set straight away, and other staff make sure the school grounds are safe and secure. Consequently, lateness to

school has reduced significantly and pupils are happy in a secure environment. Parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, agree that their children are kept safe.

You have spent time ensuring adults are fully trained in accurately assessing the achievement of pupils in reading, writing and mathematics. The school's assessment systems are not yet used precisely enough by teachers to inform their planning so that individual pupils can make even better progress, and so that older pupils catch up with their peers nationally. This priority remains for the school to tackle robustly, so that the achievement of its older pupils improves rapidly.

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 school makes the most of the opportunities to work in partnership with other schools and accepts invitations to participate in programmes provided by the local authority. Several staff have benefited from courses and individual training provided by the local authority which has developed their teaching and leadership skills. The local authority ensures that the support meets the needs of the school. You commented that you value the support the local authority offers.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Cambridgeshire.

Yours sincerely

Kim Hall
Her Majesty's Inspector