

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

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



29 October 2015

Ms Samantha Jackson  
Headteacher  
Berkswich CofE Primary School  
Cedar Way  
Walton-on-the-Hill  
Stafford  
ST17 0LU

Dear Ms Jackson

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Berkswich CofE Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 15 October 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 first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in March 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.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. The school's improvement plans were evaluated and other documents, including records related to the management of the performance of teachers and minutes of governing body meetings, were scrutinised. Information about how the school keeps children safe was analysed and the school's summary of outcomes for pupils was evaluated. Visits were made to every classroom with the headteacher and the deputy headteacher. Brief discussions were held with pupils, and books and displays were also looked at during this time.

## **Context**

Since the inspection in March 2015, six teachers have left the school and five teachers have replaced them. The new teachers include three newly qualified teachers, a senior leader and a member of staff who was previously a supply teacher in the school. One governor has left the governing body and one has joined.

## **Main findings**

The headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher, the governors and all members of staff, has continued to take action to rapidly improve the school. Her high expectations of all staff and pupils have led to improved teaching. As a result, pupils currently in the school are making accelerated progress across year groups and in a range of subjects.

New staff have established themselves quickly in the school. They enjoy productive relationships with the pupils, who respond positively to the high expectations of all staff. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to maximise progress. The good behaviour of the pupils, which has been maintained since the last inspection, contributes to their learning.

All staff follow the effective school marking policy, which helps pupils to improve their literacy skills as well as their subject-specific knowledge and understanding. Work is marked regularly to support and celebrate achievement, and comments made by teachers give pupils clear next steps on how to improve their work. As pupils respond to marking in a very positive manner, this allows them to make rapid progress.

Staff are also using accurate information about individual pupils to plan activities to challenge pupils of all abilities. Teachers now have high expectations of all pupils. For example, the work provided for the most-able is set at an appropriate level and activities seen during the inspection excited pupils' interest and inspired them to produce imaginative writing.

There is evidence of improved outcomes in 2015, when compared to 2014, but school leaders are striving to improve these further. Their high expectations do not allow them to be satisfied with results that are above the national average. They are taking action to ensure that outcomes are significantly above national averages and well above age-related expectations.

Senior leaders use effective systems to manage the performance of teachers. Teachers are set appropriate targets linked to the teachers' standards, the school's values, the quality of teaching and the outcomes for pupils. The process which is now in place builds upon the best features of the previous system. It enables the school's leaders, including governors, to have a clear understanding of a teacher's strengths and areas for development and plan appropriate training when required.

Subject leadership has improved since the last inspection. A number of roles and responsibilities have changed and teachers have the skills and knowledge to drive improvements in their areas. Staff with responsibilities for particular areas have received additional training and they are able to rigorously check the quality of learning that is taking place. They all have high expectations of what pupils of all abilities can achieve in their subject areas.

All members of the governing body are now fulfilling their responsibilities effectively. They have responded positively to a thorough review of governance, which took place in June 2015, and have developed an action plan to further improve their practice. They have attended relevant training and updates, recruited a new governor with the skills that they required and they have provided appropriate support and challenge to help the headteacher to drive rapid improvement in the school.

Governors have ensured that the safeguarding policy has been updated and that administrative and procedural arrangements to keep children safe are in place. They have also improved communication with parents through a comprehensive and easy-to-use website. However, governors have not yet managed to inform all parents of the significant improvements that have taken place in the school since the last inspection.

### **External support**

The local authority has provided effective support to the school. As a result of regular visits and formal meetings, the link officer knows the school well. She helped the school's leaders to refine their effective action plan, trained governors on how to conduct visits to lessons and helped senior leaders to quickly get to the point where they have the capacity to improve the school rapidly. The local authority also commissioned high-quality support to improve provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage. This, along with changes in leadership and staffing, has led to significant improvements in this area.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director for People for Staffordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Simon Mosley  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**