

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Gary Nicholls
Brockhurst Junior School
Avery Lane
Gosport
Hampshire
PO12 4SL

Dear Mr Nicholls

Special measures monitoring inspection of Brockhurst Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 8–9 March 2016, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions that have been taken since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection that took place in January 2015. The full list of the areas for improvement that were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

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

Leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of special measures.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Hampshire County Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Amanda Gard
Ofsted Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection that took place in January 2015.

- Improve the quality of teaching and pupils' progress in mathematics and reading, including that of disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs, by ensuring that:
 - all teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and the amount of work they are expected to produce
 - pupils' work is marked regularly so that they know what they need to do to improve and are encouraged to act upon teachers' advice
 - teachers make regular checks on how well pupils are progressing in their reading and provide support if progress falters
 - all pupils are motivated, on task and fully engaged in learning
 - leaders monitor the effectiveness of the extra help given to pupils with disabilities or special educational needs and intervene if their progress is too slow.
- Increase school leaders' and governors' effectiveness in quickly bringing about improvements by:
 - ensuring that information about pupils' achievements is used consistently well to identify areas for improvement, and the impact of actions is closely monitored and evaluated
 - making sure that leaders promptly tackle any inconsistencies which may occur when there are changes to staffing, so that this does not prevent pupils from making good progress
 - working with advisers and other schools to share good practice and enable external, independent checks to be made on the school's performance
 - making sure leaders focus on pupils' progress when checking the quality of teaching
 - developing the role of middle-level leaders so that they can more effectively contribute to improvements
 - ensuring that the governing body has a good understanding of how well the school is doing compared to other schools so that governors can effectively hold the school leadership team to account.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 8 March 2016 to 9 March 2016

Evidence

The inspector observed teaching and learning in every class, accompanied by senior leaders, and also looked at pupils' workbooks. Meetings were held with the interim executive headteacher and the deputy headteacher (who is also the special educational needs coordinator), and the subject leaders for English and mathematics. The inspector also met a group of pupils, a group of teachers, two governors, and representatives from the local authority and the Pioneer Teaching School Alliance. The inspector spoke informally to parents at the school gate and reviewed 19 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View). A range of documentation was considered, including minutes of the governing body, information about pupils' progress, the school's action plan, safeguarding checks, attendance figures, behaviour records and the school's records of checks made on the quality of teaching.

Context

The headteacher left the school at the end of the autumn term. The headteacher of Brockhurst Infant School was appointed interim executive headteacher at the start of January 2016. Hampshire County Council has consulted parents about the amalgamation of Brockhurst Infant and Junior Schools, to form one primary school, which would open on 1 September 2016.

Year 5 has been reorganised from one class of 39 pupils into two smaller classes.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The interim executive headteacher and the deputy headteacher form a strong team. They are unwavering in their drive to improve the school, with all decisions underpinned by what is best for the pupils. Leaders listen carefully to teachers' views and trust their professional judgement. This is helping build teachers' confidence to try out different approaches to benefit their class. Parents also value the new leadership. They appreciate the more effective communication and say that they can approach the headteacher with any concerns. One parent commented, 'It is like coming to a different school.'

The 'Rapid Action Plan' (RAP), written after the last monitoring inspection, focuses everyone sharply on the right areas for development. Time is sensibly allocated to staff training in important areas such as in-class provision for disadvantaged pupils. The clear success criteria ensure that everyone knows what they are aiming for, and the useful timeline helps leaders check actions are on track. Now the school has more accurate information about standards of achievement, leaders rightly intend to include robust targets for pupil progress and attainment when they update the plan

shortly. This will help leaders and governors keep a closer check on standards for different groups of pupils.

Each teacher now has a personal plan to help improve specific aspects of their work. These plans link sensibly to key areas on the RAP, to ensure that they maintain a strong focus on important whole school issues. Leaders guide teachers to reflect on their teaching and consider how it might improve. This supportive but rigorous approach is welcomed by teachers, who now take more responsibility for their own development. Increasingly, staff debate what is working well, and share good ideas. This is helping to improve the quality of teaching, although it is too early to see the impact on pupils' achievement.

The English and mathematics leaders are now properly allocated more time to develop their subjects. Their work includes helpful support for planning, so that teachers set more work at the right level of challenge. The English leader has rightly improved the library, to raise the profile of reading. Each subject leader has carried out separate checks on teachers' work, which have provided some useful pointers for teachers to improve. However, senior leaders agree this work could more beneficially be tackled together in order to avoid duplication of effort and identify common strengths and areas for improvement across the school.

Governors continue to make regular visits to see the school in action, and receive reports from the headteacher and subject leaders to keep them up to date. They rightly link their work closely to the RAP, checking the school's progress against key targets. This gives them a good understanding of where leaders need to focus their efforts to improve the school, so they can hold leaders to account. Following the monitoring inspection in November 2015, governors undertook training to help them better understand the school's achievement information. As a result they ask more specific questions about pupil progress, to challenge school leaders and raise aspirations.

Parents have been consulted about the amalgamation of Brockhurst Junior School with Brockhurst Infant School. Consultations with staff are underway. If the amalgamation goes ahead, the proposed new primary school would open on 1 September 2016.

Governors have ensured that safeguarding arrangements currently continue to meet requirements.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Overall, the quality of teaching is improving. There are more pockets of good practice on which to build, but this is not consistent across the school. Where teaching is most successful, teachers use information about pupils' achievement effectively to provide the right level of support in lessons. This helps pupils succeed in their learning. In some classes, pupils move on to a different challenge once they have grasped a concept, so teachers can check their understanding is secure and that they can apply what they have learned.

Where teaching is less effective, teachers do not explain tasks well enough, or show pupils what they are expected to achieve. Consequently, pupils either set off on the wrong track, or do not begin work at all, wasting valuable learning time. In some classes, where all pupils tackle the same basic tasks, there is no opportunity to move on quickly to more challenging work. On these occasions, progress stalls. Teachers do not routinely maximise possibilities for learning. For example, in some classes they hand out simple worksheets to fill time, rather than taking the opportunity to teach precise skills; this slows the rate of learning.

Teachers continue to mark work conscientiously and in accordance with school policy. They more often provide useful feedback to move learning on. Where feedback is most effective it relates precisely to the day's learning objective, so pupils can see just how well they have done. Pupils say they know where they need to improve and have time to check and develop their work.

A new initiative, 'Catch up, keep up', has been introduced across the school. Teachers aim to note and quickly tackle misconceptions which arise in lessons so that pupils do not fall behind. Some pupils are well supported by this approach, which helps them understand their day-to-day learning better. However, the system is not refined enough to ensure that teachers target specific pupils who need to make more rapid progress over time.

Each classroom now has 'working walls' to map out learning in English and mathematics. These help remind pupils what they are learning about and some show them the purpose of their learning. However, hardly any of these displays show pupils what they need to do in order to achieve success. Leaders know that more work is needed to ensure that the environment includes useful resources to support learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Pupils' conduct around the school and in lessons is generally good. They usually settle quickly to their work and are willing learners who try hard. A small minority of pupils have challenging behaviour on occasion, and some parents who responded to Parent View raised this as a concern. However, leaders tackle this effectively. The new behaviour policy recognises and rewards good behaviour, celebrating those who make the right choices. Where there is repeated poor conduct, adults meet to ensure a consistent approach to behaviour management and instigate individual behaviour plans. Pupils are responding well to these approaches, with a decrease in recorded incidents of poor behaviour.

Attendance is in line with the national average. Leaders follow up persistent absence more rigorously, which has substantially reduced the proportion of pupils who regularly miss school.

Pupils say they feel safe in school and know who to go to if they have a problem. There are more robust procedures to close the school gates during the day and dismiss pupils at the end of the day, which have increased site security.

Outcomes for pupils

The new system to track pupils' progress is now fully in place and running effectively. The first measure of progress is very recent and covers only a short time span. Nevertheless, there are early indications that standards in reading, writing and mathematics are improving across the school. Progress is stronger in reading and writing than mathematics.

Leaders' analysis indicates pupils' mental mathematics is weak, and is holding overall progress back. Consequently, regular sessions for pupils to practise their skills using 'Maths Express' have been introduced, to help them improve their swift recall of number facts. Teachers appreciate the useful support to plan mathematics lessons and observe skilled practitioners, which they say is helping them develop good practice. It is too soon to see the impact of this work on pupils' achievement.

Reading now has a higher profile across the school. Pupils enjoy using the recently revamped library and more class book corners are now inviting places to read. Books for guided reading sessions are held centrally so that teachers can see what is available and choose suitable texts for their pupils. There has been recent training to assist teachers in setting more challenging activities to develop pupils' reading skills. However, there has not been enough time for leaders to check how well this is working and the difference it makes to pupils' progress.

In writing, many teachers plan sequences of lessons more carefully, helping pupils build the skills they need in order to tackle independent writing confidently and successfully. Teachers motivate pupils to write by using stimulating texts and providing tasks which engage their interest. For example, some older pupils wrote convincing and lively application letters to be a spy, inspired by *Stormbreaker*. Such approaches help to promote better progress, although this is not secure across the school.

There is a mixed picture of achievement in reading, writing and mathematics for pupils who have special educational needs or disability. Most of these pupils make progress at the same rate as their peers. Where progress is slower, there is extra support to help pupils succeed, although it is too early to measure the success of this approach. The newly revamped individual education plans are more accessible to pupils and parents, setting out clear short-term targets to work on. Useful practice sheets show parents exactly what to work on at home, strengthening partnerships between home and school.

Disadvantaged pupils also generally make progress at the same rate as others in the class. However, where these pupils need to catch up faster there is no additional provision to help them. Consequently the gaps in achievement remain between these pupils and their peers.

The most-able pupils likewise make similar progress to others in the school, from higher starting points. In common with the rest of the school, these pupils make less progress in mathematics than in reading and writing.

Leaders recognise the need to set well-considered targets for all groups of pupils in order to raise expectations, accelerate progress and close the gaps in reading, writing and mathematics.

External support

The local authority continues to offer effective support to drive improvements. For example, the leadership and learning partner provided useful guidance for the deputy headteacher to write the RAP. Local authority advisers also provide valuable help for teachers and subject leaders to develop their skills.

Better links are developing between Brockhurst Infant and Junior schools. Staff work more closely together, sharing expertise and developing systems to improve leadership and teaching. Pupils enjoy their visits to share work on a common theme such as Roald Dahl, or to read together. These opportunities help to build pupils' skills, increase their confidence and develop their enjoyment of learning together.