

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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



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Miss Zoe Bushnell
Headteacher
Brownhills West Primary School
Shannon Drive
Brownhills
Walsall
West Midlands
WS8 7LA

Dear Miss Bushnell

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Brownhills West Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 13 April 2016, 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 June 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 last section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- build on the work already being done to increase the proportion of children in the early years reaching a good level of development, particularly in literacy, communication and mathematics
- make sure that teachers use their assessments of pupils' achievement and progress, including the newly introduced writing and mathematics portfolios, to identify gaps in learning that need to be addressed
- in addition to the assessment information already provided for governors, provide more detail about how much progress each year group is making and where improvements are still needed

- make sure that the governing body builds on the good start made following the external review of governance to implement fully the recommendations of that review.

Evidence

During the inspection, all classes and the early years were visited with you and the deputy headteacher. Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders and three governors, including the vice-chair of the governing body. I spoke to staff and pupils during brief visits to lessons and met with a specialist leader in education (SLE) from the partner teaching school, Ryder Hayes Academy. The SLE is currently providing support and advice in the early years. During these meetings we discussed the actions taken to address the areas for improvement identified during the last inspection in June 2015. The school improvement plan and subject action plans were evaluated. I also scrutinised samples of pupils' writing and mathematics work in books and samples of work in the new portfolios. I checked the school's own evaluations of the quality of teaching, the single central record, staff vetting and safeguarding procedures.

Context

There have been a significant number of staff changes since the school's inspection in June 2015. Three teaching staff have left, including a seconded deputy headteacher. The current permanent deputy headteacher joined the school in September 2015 along with three class teachers, including one who leads mathematics. One teacher is currently on family leave and has been replaced by a temporary teacher until their return. One of the new teachers is newly qualified.

Since September 2015, the governing body has managed extended part-time early years provision for two-year-olds. This is called 'Bright Beginnings', and operates every afternoon during normal school days between Monday and Friday, 12.30 until 3.30.

Main findings

Since the previous inspection in June 2015, you, your staff team and governors have put in place effective strategies and improvement plans that provide a clear route map for sustained improvement. Action plans identify the right priorities for improvement. The core of these priorities are, rightly, focused on improving pupils' achievement in writing and increasing the proportion of children in the early years attaining a good level of development by the time they start Year 1.

Your evaluations of the impact of actions to raise standards, and those of your deputy headteacher, are accurate and based on routine and rigorous checks of teaching and pupils' work.

Since the previous inspection, staff and governors have worked together to set more ambitious targets for pupils to aim for. The learning objectives set for pupils now include clear references to 'aspire, believe, challenge and dream'. Pupils respond well to these new targets and the approaches adopted by teachers. As a result, pupils appreciate the way their work and efforts are now being valued and their learning extended.

Teaching is improving well and has been strengthened by new appointments and by redefined roles and responsibilities of senior and middle leaders. You and your governors have been diligent in recruiting quality staff and have established clear systems for professional development, support and challenge for all staff that aim to see at least good teaching in every class. The partnership with the local teaching school, Ryder Hayes Academy, is already bearing fruit. The specialist leader in education (SLE) has influenced the work of staff and made a significant contribution with your deputy headteacher to improving the early years provision. The addition of provision for two-year-olds is also being managed well and is very popular with parents and carers. This has the potential to enhance and extend the early years provision further, with clear transition arrangements into the part-time Nursery class for two- and three-year-old children.

Assessments of pupils' progress, using accurate measures that gauge the pace of learning each term, show that standards are rising in reading, writing and mathematics. This is also reflected in last year's validated national assessments at key stages 1 and 2 where a higher proportion of pupils than previously made or exceeded the expected rate of progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Last year's national assessments also show a significant increase in the percentage of children reaching a good level of development by the end of the Reception year, although this was still below the national average.

Evaluations of teaching and performance reviews of classroom practice, together with regular scrutiny of pupils' work in books, show that teachers and support staff are improving the way pupils learn. Teachers and support staff are now better placed than previously to assess pupils' progress and performance. Nevertheless, some of the writing and mathematical calculations seen in books do not always demonstrate that teachers have identified gaps in pupils' learning.

Leaders' monitoring of pupils' progress and teachers' performance is robust and includes regular reviews of pupils' work in books and lesson observations. The writing and mathematics portfolios introduced recently already show some marked improvement in pupils' achievement in writing and mathematics, although there are still some pupils that should be making more progress in writing. Assessment information is detailed and the school has managed to adapt well to the new national curriculum requirements that include assessment without levels. Assessment information is now more accessible to staff and governors. Nevertheless, this information still lacks clear analysis for governors and the local

authority setting out how much progress is being made by each year group across the school.

Governors have responded well to the recent external review of their effectiveness carried out by the local authority. Governors have already put in place more opportunities for them to work with leaders when checking the quality of teaching and learning across the school. Most of the recommendations made by the review have been implemented successfully. For example, governors now make a significant contribution to the school improvement plan and undertake regular and systematic reviews of the school's work that include visits to lessons and book reviews carried out with staff. Assessments of pupils' progress and performance are being shared with governors, but there is not yet a clear analysis setting out relative strengths and weaknesses in pupils' achievement, particularly that of the most-able pupils.

Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school remains good. Pupils are attentive and engaged in lessons. They try hard and persevere with tasks and activities, and they cooperate with other pupils very well during class and group discussions. Pupils are safe and happy in school. Attendance rates are improving, although remain just below the national average. Safeguarding and staff vetting procedures are effective.

External support

Following the inspection in June 2015, you and your governors have brokered effective support from a number of sources within and beyond the local authority. The partnership with the SLE from Ryder Hayes Academy Teaching School is making a significant contribution to improving the early years provision. The use of advisers and consultants to improve the teaching of literacy and writing is helping teachers to improve their practice. External advisers, brokered by the governing body, are adding impetus to the school's improvement through greater support and challenge to the school's leaders and staff. With the support and challenge offered by the local authority's school improvement partner, effective systems and processes have been put in place to secure accurate evaluations of the school's work. The school is working productively with subject advisers within its local partnership cluster of schools to enable staff and governors to see and share good practice. The use of an independent external adviser is also contributing to improvement through regular and robust monitoring and accurate self-evaluations. The combined efforts of leaders, staff and governors, working with external partners and advisers, are helping to identify the right priorities aimed at taking the school forward on its journey to becoming a good school.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the executive director of children's services for Walsall. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Charalambos Loizou
Her Majesty's Inspector