

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



31 October 2016

Lynne Cherry
Headteacher
Hillary Primary School
Hillary Street
Pleck
Walsall
West Midlands
WS2 9BP

Dear Ms Cherry

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Hillary Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 13 October 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 February 2016. 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:

- refine how assessment information is collated at a whole-school level so that pupils' achievement can be more closely scrutinised
- ensure that teachers' planning focuses clearly on the skills that pupils will learn.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with senior leaders, the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan and self-evaluation document were also evaluated. I jointly observed lessons in every year group with senior leaders. During classroom observations, work in books was scrutinised. I met with administrative staff to check the school's single central record and review the contents of some personnel files.

Context

Since the last section 5 inspection in February 2016, several teachers have left the school. Governors have appointed a number of new staff, including an assistant headteacher to lead early years, a lead learning practitioner to improve the quality of teaching and learning and six newly qualified teachers.

Main findings

Since the previous inspection, the newly formed leadership team has taken appropriate action to improve teaching, learning and assessment across the school. The revised school action plan effectively targets the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Leaders are ambitious and are committed to raising standards at Hillary Primary. Some work is quite new and has not yet resulted in a sustained impact on pupils' progress over time.

Leaders have revised the school's approach to teaching, learning and assessment and have set out clear expectations for teachers and teaching assistants. Leaders check that these agreed approaches are in place during regular visits to classrooms. Where there are any shortcomings, teachers are given clear areas for development. This is resulting in a greater consistency in the quality of teaching across the school.

Leaders use assessment information to track the performance of different groups of pupils, but this information has not been brought together clearly and concisely at a whole-school level. As a result, leaders and governors are not fully aware of any patterns or gaps in pupils' achievement.

Leaders now have sufficient time to carry out their roles and impact on standards. New appointments have added leadership capacity to Hillary Primary. Leaders have devised a training programme which successfully meets the needs of staff at different points in their careers. The training programme places an emphasis on sharing good practice and working alongside staff in class. This approach to school improvement has ensured that teachers new to the profession are appropriately supported. The school's monitoring records show that newly qualified teachers are responding to feedback quickly. Teachers new to the school have established clear expectations. As a result, pupils listen well and respond quickly and courteously to

instructions.

The impact of leaders' work is evident in the improvements that have been secured in teaching, learning and assessment. Leaders use diaries to reflect on the impact that they are having on raising standards. Some of these records are cross-referenced to the priorities identified in the school improvement plan, which ensures that leaders' work is focused and purposeful. The leadership team acknowledges that there is scope for them to share their effective practice more widely so that the pace of improvement is even more rapid.

Teachers' feedback to pupils has improved. Teachers are accurately identifying the next steps for pupils in their learning and helping pupils to move onto work that is more challenging. Teachers also set different tasks for pupils with different levels of ability so that they are suitably challenged and supported. This was particularly evident in Year 1, where the most able pupils were writing at length and building on their skills.

In most classes, teachers' explanations and expectations are clear. However, in some year groups, teachers' planning focuses too much on the activity that pupils will do, as opposed to the skill that they will learn. As a result, the intended outcomes for learning can lack clarity for pupils. This aspect of teachers' practice requires further development.

The school's assessment procedures have been adapted to ensure that teachers take responsibility for analysing pupils' progress every half term. Teachers have received additional support to help them explore the performance of different groups of pupils. This analysis of assessment information is helping teachers better understand the needs of their pupils and has improved the overall quality of planning.

Teaching assistants receive focused training from higher-level teaching assistants. This training is helping teaching assistants to offer appropriate support to pupils and secure better rates of progress.

The inclusion leader monitors attendance carefully and uses the support of the education welfare officer to specifically target any persistent absence. As a result, rates of attendance have improved since the last inspection and are currently in line with national figures.

Outcomes across the school remain variable. Inconsistencies in the quality of teaching last year hampered rates of progress. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development in Reception in 2016 was lower than the previous year. However, school assessment information shows that children made good progress from their starting points. The proportion of pupils who passed the Year 1 phonics screening check rose in 2016 and was close to national levels. At the end of key stages 1 and 2, attainment in mathematics was close to national levels in 2016.

Attainment in reading in key stages 1 and 2 was lower than national levels. Leaders are aware that some rates of progress were not high enough last year. This was particularly the case for reading in some year groups. The school has plans in place to tackle this variability in pupils' progress. Plans include the provision of additional reading classes which will be led by the school's lead learning practitioner.

External support

The local authority provides an appropriate level of support. This support is helping to strengthen the leadership within the school. The local authority adviser has conducted observations and analysed data with leaders. This work has helped leaders focus their priorities and develop the overall quality of teaching.

Areas for development that have arisen from external reviews undertaken by the local authority are acted upon quickly by leaders. For example, extra support is scheduled for governors to help them better analyse assessment information and offer a higher level of challenge to leaders.

The headteacher has worked with a local partner school to broker the support of an advanced skills teacher who works with the school for two days a week. The advanced skills teacher's work includes working alongside teachers in class, checking on the quality of work in books and supporting the development of reading. The work of the advanced skills teacher has brought about improvements in the overall quality of teaching.

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

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Keay
Her Majesty's Inspector