

Tribal Group  
1-4 Portland  
Square  
Bristol  
BS2 8RR  
T 0845 123 6001  
F 0845 123 6002

T 08456 40 40 40  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



30 September 2008

Mr P Bispham  
The Interim Headteacher  
Brownhills West Primary School  
Shannon Drive  
Brownhills  
Walsall  
West Midlands  
WS8 7LA

Dear Mr Bispham

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Brownhills West Primary School

Following my visit with Lois Furness, Additional Inspector, to your school on 24 and 25 September 2008, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in March 2008. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – inadequate.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Children's Services for Walsall.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Watters  
Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Brownhills West Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 24 and 25 September 2008

## Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and talked with groups of pupils. They met with the interim headteacher, the assessment coordinator, and the subject leaders for English, mathematics and science, the chair of governors and the school's local authority (LA) school improvement adviser.

## Context

Following the headteacher's retirement at the end of the summer term 2008, an interim headteacher was recruited to lead and manage the school, on a full time basis, from 1 September. The governors have been successful in recruiting a substantive headteacher, who is expected to start work at the school on 3 November. At this time the interim headteacher will reduce his time at the school, to two days each week, acting as a consultant to the headteacher. The governors have also appointed a full time teacher as a science subject leader. She joined the school on 1 September 2008. The teaching staff absence rate is currently 9%.

## Achievement and standards

The 2008 unvalidated end of key stage test results and teachers' assessments present a mixed picture. At Key Stage 1, standards are in line with the national averages in reading, writing and mathematics, and above in science. At Key Stage 2, standards are close to the national average in English and well above in science. However, pupils' attainment in mathematics and writing in the Year 6 tests was very low. In writing, half the pupils who left the school in July 2008 attained levels below those expected for their age. In mathematics a third of the pupils left the school without the necessary key skills for their age. The school's assessment information for pupils currently in Years 4, 5 and 6 shows that a significant proportion in each of these year groups is underachieving and making too little progress. Achievement in mathematics is poor. Progress in writing is also too slow. Similarly, standards are too variable with far too many pupils working at levels below those expected for their age. For example, in Year 6, the percentage of pupils who are currently behind in their work is 52% in mathematics, 41% in English and 65% in science. In each key stage, standards and achievement in reading are far more positive, with most pupils making at least satisfactory progress.

Progress on the area for improvement identified by the inspection in March 2008:

- improve the rate of pupils' progress in order to raise standards in English, mathematics and more particularly in science, where they are very low – inadequate.

## Personal development and well-being

The pupils behave extremely well and have very positive attitudes. They enjoy coming to school and are very good humoured. They are polite and courteous to visitors, and eager to talk about their work. They try hard to do their best even when their work is too easy or too difficult. Relationships are positive and pupils clearly trust and respect the adults who work with them each day. Adults treat pupils sensitively and fairly.

## Quality of provision

The quality of teaching and learning is not improving at a sufficiently speedy rate. Despite the introduction of a range of appropriate support and advice from the LA, pupils' progress is inconsistent and there is too little teaching of consistently good quality. Teachers work hard, with enthusiasm and a commitment to making learning more effective for the pupils. They are determined to improve the quality of education for all pupils and listen well to constructive advice. These are all important qualities which provide a positive foundation for improving further.

Nevertheless, expectations in lessons are often too low, particularly in Years 3 to 6. Planning is not sharp enough, and there are too many occasions when pupils undertake the same tasks, regardless of their different starting points and capabilities. Lessons are often too focused on the activities teachers intend to provide, as opposed to what pupils should learn next, in order to make better progress. The work for more able pupils is frequently too easy and lacks challenge.

Teaching assistants are generally deployed satisfactorily during pupils' group work, but at the start of lessons they are used less effectively. The quality of presentation of pupils' written work is variable. There are some examples of good quality, but too much is untidy, poorly presented, and not checked sufficiently. The quality of marking is inconsistent. Although there are some helpful comments which show pupils how to improve their work, they are not always followed up or acted on. Some satisfactory progress has been made to introduce more opportunities for pupils to write independently and at length, to organise their writing in other subjects, such as in science, and to improve their spelling.

Important developments have taken place to collect and make better use of assessment information. Pupils' progress and their achievements are beginning to be tracked more carefully than in the past, which is enabling all teachers to see clearly the levels pupils are working at now, and the levels they are expected to attain by the end of the year. This is a very recent development and the information is not yet used effectively enough when planning lessons, to ensure that pupils' work builds on what they already know and can do. Following this inspection, the interim headteacher plans to introduce pupil progress meetings with teachers, to ensure teaching has a more positive impact on the pupils' achievements.

The curriculum in writing, mathematics and science ensures satisfactory coverage of the National Curriculum but has not been sufficiently amended to take enough account of the pupils' different starting points. Some units of work require pupils to carry out tasks when they do not have the skills required to achieve success. This is most evident in writing and mathematics.

Progress on the areas for improvements identified by the inspection in March 2008:

- improve the quality of teaching, especially in Years 3 to 6, so that teachers have higher expectations of all pupils, particularly the more able – inadequate
- ensure teachers have the assessment information they need to build on pupils' previous achievement and learning successfully – satisfactory to provide the assessment information, but inadequate in relation to its use and impact.

### Leadership and management

There have been some important developments to secure better leadership and management. Subject leaders in English, mathematics and science are beginning to benefit from advice and support provided by the school's LA improvement adviser. They are starting to monitor the quality of provision in their subjects, by checking pupils' work and teachers' planning. The assessment coordinator is taking a sound lead in developing systems for analysing and using the results of tests and teachers' assessments. These actions are helping teachers develop a better understanding about their role in school improvement. However, this is not yet translated into a consistent and rigorous evaluation of the impact of actions to ensure consistent and quantifiable improvements in the quality of teaching and learning.

The programme of monitoring in the summer term 2008, carried out by senior leaders, was inadequate. A number of targets identified in the school and LA action plans were not met. There is insufficient rigorous monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning, and what has taken place has been led by the school's LA improvement adviser. Teachers have received too little guidance to improve the quality of their teaching. As a result of this inspection the interim headteacher is planning to introduce a more frequent and systematic check on lessons, in order to eliminate weaknesses in teaching more rapidly.

Self evaluation remains weak. Despite some important and helpful intervention by the LA, the school has been slow to introduce a coherent and robust approach to checking that actions are having a sufficiently positive impact on raising achievement and lifting standards for all pupils, particularly in Key Stage 2. The interim headteacher is confident that improvements can be made at a quicker pace and with a greater sense of urgency than in the past. This is a key challenge now facing the school as it seeks to build a secure, sustainable and demonstrable capacity for continued improvement.

Progress on the area for improvement identified by the inspection in March 2008:

- improve the quality of leadership and management, and ensure leaders at all levels evaluate the school's work more rigorously and drive school improvement more urgently – inadequate.

#### External support

The LA has revised its statement of action and action plan, in line with recommendations made by HMI in July 2008. Following the inspection in March 2008 the LA introduced a range of appropriate actions to bring about the school's improvement. The school's LA improvement adviser has been a regular visitor, leading a number of important developments, particularly with subject leaders. Teachers have received helpful recommendations to improve the quality of the pupils' written work. Advice has also been provided to help governors recruit a substantive headteacher. These are all important actions and some success has been achieved, for example to raise standards in reading and to ensure more time is given to improving writing. Nevertheless, the impact of the LA's work to raise achievement in all year groups and to improve the quality of teaching, leadership and management has been more limited.

#### Priorities for further improvement

There are no further priorities for improvement. The school should tackle the key areas for improvement with greater rigour and a renewed sense of urgency.