

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



12 September 2017

Mrs Beckford-Bond
Blakedown CofE Primary School
Birmingham Road
Blakedown
Kidderminster
Worcestershire
DY10 3JN

Dear Mrs Beckford-Bond

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Blakedown CofE Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 20 July 2017, 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 July 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:

- ensure that leaders' monitoring of the work in pupils' books is meticulous enough to identify the specific impact teaching has on pupils' learning.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders and three members of the governing body to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. A telephone conversation was held with a representative of the local authority. Visits were made to classrooms to look at pupils learning and the work in their books. The school improvement action plan was evaluated. Other documents were evaluated, including information about pupils' attainment and progress and evidence of leaders' monitoring of the quality of teaching.

Main findings

Leaders and governors have responded with resilience and drive to the outcome of the previous inspection. They were disappointed at the judgement but have set about systematically tackling the areas requiring improvement with determination and tenacity. Leaders used the inspection judgement as an opportunity to review the way they work and to develop more effective approaches. As a result, leadership has improved and is having greater impact on pupils' progress.

The school development plan and subject leaders' action plans are sharply focused on the areas for improvement. All leaders, including governors, have a shared understanding of what the priorities are and what is being done to address them. These plans are used well to focus leaders' time and resources. Actions are carefully tracked to ensure that the implementation of plans is on track and leading to the expected rates of improvement.

The quality of teaching has improved as a result of effective training and support provided by senior leaders and subject teachers. For example, pupils now have more opportunities to apply their mathematical knowledge in complex tasks. This is now a strong feature seen in some pupils' books. However, the books show that not all pupils have similarly frequent opportunities to engage in this level of thinking. This is because the quality of mathematics teaching is still variable. In particular, some middle-to-high-attaining pupils are not working at the degree of depth that they should because they are required to spend too much time practising skills before being allowed to apply them.

Teachers have generally increased their expectations of what pupils can do, although some work for the most able is still not challenging enough. Teachers encourage pupils to challenge themselves by choosing harder activities. Teachers often intervene to re-shape tasks during lessons so as to speed up progress. Again, this is still stronger in some classes than others. Consequently, pupils' progress remains inconsistent.

Pupils are now expected to work on their own for longer periods of time. Some teachers employ effective strategies to support them in doing this. Some, however, are less skilled in helping pupils keep going without direct adult input. Therefore, this aspect of teaching has improved but remains variable.

Senior leaders make effective use of assessment information to check that pupils are working at the expected standards for their age. This information is now shared more widely and effectively. As a result, all leaders, including governors, have a clear understanding of what the data is telling them about pupils' outcomes. The work of middle leaders now contributes more strongly to monitoring and improving the quality of teaching. Subject leaders have time allocated for them to observe lessons, talk to pupils about their learning and look at the work in their books. Increasingly, subject leaders are generating useful information from these activities in support of senior leaders' evaluation of the quality of teaching. Governors hold middle leaders to account for this work, for example by expecting them to provide detailed reports which show what difference they are making to their subject. Subject leaders' checks on pupils' books show that teachers are generally following the agreed approaches to teaching. However, the scrutiny of books has not been meticulous enough to spot some common weaknesses in teaching. For example, subject leaders have not spotted that teachers do not routinely insist that pupils use correct spelling, grammar and punctuation in their writing. As a result of this oversight, pupils' writing outcomes are not as high as they should be. Similarly, leaders have not spotted that some pupils are not being challenged enough during mathematics lessons in some classes.

Governors have been proactive in reviewing and improving the quality of their work. The external review of governance identified positive changes that governors had made to their own practice. Governors have a strong understanding of their strategic role and are able to balance this with a more hands-on approach, which ensures that they are now better informed about the school's strengths and weaknesses.

External support

The school values the external challenge brought by the school improvement adviser. This has helped leaders to verify their own evaluation of the school's progress. Other support has been requested for improving early years provision and that for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders appreciate the local authority's response to these requests. However, a planned package of support from a local multi-academy trust has not been delivered as agreed. The headteacher has been proactive in accessing other support as necessary in lieu of this.

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

Yours sincerely

Sandra Hayes

Her Majesty's Inspector