

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



8 February 2016

Ruth Nixon
Executive Headteacher
Barnby and North Cove Community Primary School
Beccles Road
Barnby
Beccles
Suffolk
NR34 7QB

Dear Mrs Nixon

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Barnby and North Cove Community Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 27 January 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 second 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:

- Ensure that teaching and learning is at least good in all classes, so that pupils' progress is as good as it should be in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Improve outcomes in writing, by ensuring that activities meet the needs of all pupils, particularly boys and all pupils in key stage 2, ensuring that pupils take pride in their written work, and use a consistently fluent handwriting style.
- Ensure that leaders and governors regularly and robustly check on how well lower-achieving pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or

disabilities are doing, so that they make as much progress as they are able.

- Build on the start that has been made in leading English to improve writing, and evidence the impact of actions taken.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, the new English subject leader, a group of governors, including the chair and two governing body advisers, the new interim executive headteacher, and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the previous inspection. I evaluated the school improvement plans and spent time reviewing school documentation relating to pupil assessment, attendance, performance management and governance. I observed learning in all of the year groups, along with you, and we spoke to many pupils and looked at the work in their books.

Context

Since the previous inspection, the school has faced many challenges. You were not present after the school was last inspected, and following which there were some staffing issues. The senior leader, who was also responsible for leading English, gained a promotion and left the school in July. You employed a teacher who was known to the previous interim headteachers. The appointment ensured a smooth transition for pupils into upper key stage 2 and achieved what you wanted – a stable start to teaching this academic year. The school also has a new special educational needs coordinator who is working across the two schools. The local authority has allocated two governor advisers who are working with school leaders and governors. There have been some other changes to members of the governing body, including parent, community and staff governors.

As you venture into pastures new, I would like to wish you well in your retirement. You are rightly proud of your determination to ensure that every pupil at Barnby and North Cove receives the good education they deserve. You have accepted support and guidance from every possible source in order to move the school towards being a good school at its next Section 5 inspection.

Main findings

The school's plans to tackle the areas requiring improvement that were identified at the recent inspection are fit for purpose. They clearly show the actions that have been taken and those that are planned. The timelines are appropriate and there has been little slippage in carrying out the actions, with the notable exception of a careful analysis of how well pupils who find learning harder achieve. Leaders and governors continue to monitor the impact of the decisions they make, and are mostly quick to respond if something is not working as well as they had hoped.

Pupil outcomes in 2016 were largely above the national average. Children in the Reception class continued to achieve well. The proportion of children who reached the expected good level of development was above the national average, although boys did less well than girls. The proportion of pupils who achieved the required standard in the Year 1 phonics check was above the national average. Pupils at key stage 1 attained well in reading, writing and mathematics. Progress of some boys from the end of their time in the early years was below that expected. We explored the reasons for those individuals concerned. Outcomes currently in the school appear to show a more even picture of boys' achievement, although not in writing. You and your governors were pleased with the outcomes for Year 6 pupils in reading, writing and mathematics, which were above the national average. The difference in achievement between writing, and reading and mathematics, however, was noticeable.

You have improved the tracking and use of assessment throughout the school. This has enabled you to prioritise where outcomes need to improve for all pupils. Governors and leaders now have a better understanding of how well most groups of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are progressing. However, the tracking of lower-achieving pupils, who may or may not have special educational needs and/or disabilities, has not been systematic or robust. As a result, these pupils are not doing as well as they should. The school's assessment information shows that progress for this small group of pupils is slower than that of their classmates. This is the very group whose progress must be accelerated to ensure that they catch up in their learning.

From your careful analysis, you recognised that aspects of writing were not being consistently taught throughout the school. The new leader has now prioritised writing and is beginning to identify and put in place some actions to address this issue. However, at this point, and particularly in key stage 2, pupils do not take as much care with their daily written work as they should. As a consequence, some pupils' achievement is not good enough. This is compounded by the lack of a consistent handwriting policy throughout the school. As a result, pupils' handwriting is often immature for their age and does not aid fluency of writing. During my visit, we both saw examples of pupils not achieving well in lessons because the emphasis was on the activity itself rather than 'writing'. For example, in one lesson, pupils were reorganising a non-fiction text with the aim of them understanding how headings and sub-headings helped them write in sections. However, too much time was spent on pupils cutting up the sentences and sticking them in their books. As a consequence, little learning was taking place. When asked, pupils did not really understand the purpose of what they were doing or how it would help them when they eventually write their own non-fiction text. Those who did appreciate what a sub-heading was did not need to do this task and, therefore, their learning was not meeting their needs. 'You don't need to read the entire page of writing just to get one little bit of information that you can get from a section with a sub-heading,' said one girl.

There are, however, some good examples of where the teaching of writing is very effective. Children in the Reception class show good use of phonics in their early writing. A variety of activities encourage children to write for a number of purposes, both inside and outside the classroom, their achievement being charted well in their online records of achievement. Pupils in Year 1 were so excited about the stories that they were writing about a dinosaur egg. The teacher had clearly explained well how stories are developed. She referred to prompts on a display of the 'problems' and the 'successes' that stories need in order to make them interesting. Pupils eloquently explained their stories and were keen to use exciting language. 'The spotty, pink egg is going to hatch,' said one boy, while another explained that the dinosaur 'Will be angry and ginormous when it comes out!'

In September, you introduced a new system for checking pupils' progress and attainment. Teachers and leaders are beginning to consistently use this system to highlight areas of the school where achievement is not yet where it needs to be. However, the accuracy of some assessments has not been rigorously checked. You and I looked, for example, at pupils' writing in Year 6. There appeared to be some discrepancy between the evidence we saw and that which was recorded on your system. What is more, the recorded assessments do not reflect learning seen during my visit. As we discussed with governors and the new interim headteacher, it is a matter of urgency that the accuracy of teachers' judgements must be addressed. As indeed must be the drive to ensure that pupils' daily teaching is at least good. I appreciate that the system is new and that you have some new staff to the school. However, the emerging picture of outcomes for 2017 is not necessarily a true reflection of pupils' progress and attainment. The opportunity to moderate teachers' judgements with a wider range of schools will be beneficial and is expected shortly.

We visited all year groups to see how well lessons are now planned to meet the needs of all pupils. It is recognised that some staff are new to the school and that there may well be more changes. Learning is inconsistent across the school. The younger children and pupils are making good progress and are actively engaged in their learning. The quality of discussion in both the phonics and story-writing sessions was impressive, as was the writing that followed from the Year 1 pupils. Children's thinking was regularly but appropriately challenged by the teacher's skilful questioning and prompts to take their learning forward. 'What was the problem we had to solve in this story so that it made sense?' the teacher interjected. The sessions were littered with such examples, which clearly influenced the flow of what were often quite complex stories!

In other learning we saw, the experience of pupils was different. Although learning had been planned meticulously in some cases, it did not always meet the needs of the pupils. For example, in one mathematics session, the teacher was exploring early algebra using a variety of numbers, some of which were up to the thousands. However, this was not appropriate for some of the mixed-age class as it was too complex and, as a result, they became disengaged with the learning. In another class, the level of noise was high. Although pupils said that 'We get used to it,' they

did also say, 'It is sometimes distracting.' With constant interruptions to their learning, pupils did not achieve very much at all during the lesson we jointly observed. While you assured me that this is very unusual, pupils obviously did not think so. It should be stressed, however, that no pupil that I spoke with was unhappy; it was more that they were resigned to this being the norm.

Your monitoring of teaching shows clearly the strengths and areas of development for each teacher. You know the staff well and support them in their learning. Evidence shows that there have been improvements in teaching and that some pupils are benefiting from those improvements. However, there is still some way to go to ensure that teaching is at least good and that pupils' outcomes are as good as they could be, particularly for the lower-attaining pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders and governors will need to continue to monitor closely pupils' outcomes and to compare this with work in pupils' books and what is seen on a daily basis in the classrooms.

External support

The school is drawing effectively on the considerable and effective advisory support which the local authority continues to provide. This has focused primarily on improving teaching and learning, and increasing the school's leadership capacity. The programme has included interim leaders, whose support finished in the autumn term, and establishing an effective link with an outstanding school. The support has enabled you and the governors to prioritise and focus on all of the areas for improvement identified at the previous 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 Suffolk. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Ruth Brock
Her Majesty's Inspector