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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Mr Jonathan Smart
Headteacher
Brookvale Primary School
Mallard Drive
Erdington
Birmingham
West Midlands
B23 7YB

Dear Mr Smart

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Brookvale 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 January 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 last section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- sustain improvements to pupils' achievement by the end of key stage 2 by focusing on increasing even more the number of pupils reaching the higher standard in reading and writing
- build on the work already done to raise standards in mathematics by continuing to focus on improving pupils' reasoning and problem-solving skills.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, the two deputy headteachers and three members of the governing body including the chair. I also met with the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the Arthur Terry Learning Partnership, and an executive headteacher from one of the trust's outstanding primary schools. I held a telephone conversation with a national leader of governance who was commissioned by the trust to carry out a review of governance and of pupil premium spending. I visited lessons with you and your senior leadership team and we discussed in detail pupils' achievement in mathematics and the measures taken to improve teaching and learning since the previous inspection. I considered the school's self-review of its progress since the inspection in January 2016 and evaluated with you and your senior leaders the impact of actions taken and set out in your development plan. I checked the school's single central record, and staff vetting and safeguarding procedures.

Context

At the time of the previous inspection in January 2016, you were an executive headteacher of two schools, including this one, in the Arthur Terry Learning Partnership. You returned to Brookvale Primary School full time in September 2016 to secure more rapid improvement. The chair of the governing body took over from the previous chair in April 2017. The previous chair is now vice-chair of the governing body. The trust and governors have appointed five new teachers, who will start in September 2017, to replace staff who will be leaving at the end of this school year.

Main findings

- In a relatively short space of time, significant improvements to pupils' achievement demonstrate that you and the two deputy headteachers provide very effective leadership. There have also been improvements in the quality of governance. The external reviews of governance and of the oversight and spending of pupil premium funds have been effective. Changes to the composition and involvement of the governing body also indicate that there is much improved capacity for governors to hold leaders and staff to account for pupils' achievement and teachers' performance.

- There is a strong consensus among leaders, staff and governors that everyone is

pulling together. School improvement is gathering momentum. You and the senior and middle leadership teams, including subject coordinators and phase leaders, are regularly and effectively monitoring teaching and learning. You have empowered leaders and staff to take on more direct responsibility for the quality of teaching and learning. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection. Staff are increasingly gaining confidence in managing the subjects and topics planned across the curriculum which enliven and interest pupils. The pupils I spoke with during the visit are energised by what you and the staff provide for them. They thoroughly enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in good attendance rates.

- Much improved outcomes for pupils show that leaders' and governors' actions, as well as the effective intervention of the trust, are having a very positive effect on raising achievement and improving teaching. The most recent pupils' outcomes show a significant rise in pupils' attainment and progress at all key stages. Early years outcomes, phonic screening results in Years 1 and 2, and outcomes by the end of Year 6 compare very well with last year's national figures. The recent results from this year's national tests and teacher assessments show marked improvement in pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stages 1 and 2. More remarkable has been the significant increase in the proportion of pupils reaching high standards and more of them than previously are now learning in greater depth. As you well know, this was the first of three areas for improvement cited at the time of the previous inspection. In addition, the difference in the achievement of disadvantaged pupils compared with that of other pupils nationally who are not disadvantaged is diminishing and closing quickly. This was the second of three areas for improvement highlighted by the previous inspection.
- We discussed the methods being adopted by teachers and support staff that have led to high standards in phonics in key stage 1. These very positive outcomes build on the very good achievement of children in the early years. For the last three years, outcomes in the early years and key stage 1 have been very positive and are improving still further. Leaders and governors are also building on these improved outcomes by recruiting teachers and leaders who have a strong track record.
- The trust and senior leaders have been instrumental in checking and monitoring teachers' performance to eradicate weak or inadequate teaching. There are now very clear accountability measures that lie at the heart of you and your leadership team's endeavours to continue improving outcomes and teaching. Assessment has also improved as teachers and leaders are now able to track accurately pupils' progress. This was also cited as a weakness at the time of the previous inspection.

- The leadership and oversight of provision for pupils who have special educational

needs and/or disabilities have improved very well. One of the deputy headteachers explained to me the measures she has adopted to monitor, track and plan the right interventions and support for pupils who have additional learning needs. All policies and reports to parents, staff and governors comply with requirements, which was not the case at the time of the previous inspection. There are now more robust and accurate assessments of pupils' additional learning or behavioural needs which are helping teachers and support staff plan the right work and interventions for pupils.

- Senior leaders carry out rigorous checks of teaching, and pupils' work and progress, which accounts for your accurate assessment of improvement since the previous inspection. The two deputy headteachers are very active and effective in managing improvement. One is overseeing the teaching of mathematics and we discussed during this monitoring inspection the improvements we could see in pupils' mathematics books and assessment outcomes. Senior leaders and staff with management responsibilities have effective strategic plans in place that guide them towards sustained improvement. The school's action plans identify the right priorities for improvement and areas that still need further work. The deputy headteachers have been particularly effective in helping you to monitor the quality of teaching and improve pupils' outcomes in mathematics as well as the achievement of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Your staff team recognises that there is still work to be done to sustain improvements. For example, there is scope to increase still further the proportion of pupils capable of exceeding age-related standards in reading and writing in key stage 2. The current focus on problem solving and reasoning in mathematics is raising standards, although we discussed that here too there is still room for improvement. Leaders and staff recognise, rightly, that pupils still need to be given even more opportunities to apply their calculation skills to challenging and varied problem-solving activities.

External support

Following the inspection in January 2016, the support and challenge provided by the trust have been effective. In addition, the headteacher has a strong track record for school improvement. After carrying out an executive headteacher role across two schools in the trust, the decision to appoint the headteacher full time to Brookvale Primary School has also been very effective. The partnerships with other schools across the trust are now well established and effective. For example, the use and involvement of an executive headteacher from an outstanding primary school in the trust are also helping staff and leaders to see and share best practice. The trust and the school's leaders and governors have effective systems in place to secure accurate evaluations of the school's work. Leaders, staff and governors are clearly steering the school on a journey towards becoming a good school.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the chief executive

officer of the Arthur Terry Learning Partnership, which is the multi-academy trust that is the responsible authority for this and six other schools, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Birmingham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Charalambos Loizou
Her Majesty's Inspector