

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



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Rebecca James
Forestdale Primary School
Wareham Road
Frankley
Birmingham
West Midlands
B45 0JS

Dear Mrs James

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Forestdale Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 13 March 2018, 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 June 2016. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

At its section 5 inspection before the one that took place in April 2014, the school was also judged to require improvement.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order for the school to become good.

The school should take further action to:

- provide more opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical skills in problem-solving and reasoning activities.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, pupils, parents and carers, the governing body and a representative of Birmingham Education Partnership (BEP) to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school action plans were evaluated, including the pupil premium and governance reviews. I conducted a learning walk with senior leaders and talked to pupils about their work. I examined pupils' books during lessons. Meetings were held with various leaders including the leader of mathematics, English, pupil premium and attendance. Other documents were evaluated, including information about pupils' attainment and progress and evidence of leaders' monitoring of the quality of teaching.

Context

A new chair of governors was appointed in September 2016, along with two other new governors. A new deputy headteacher was appointed in September 2016 as well as three other teachers.

Main findings

You and your senior leaders have a clear understanding of the urgency with which your school needs to improve and you communicate an ambition that all pupils need to make good progress. You are making sure this happens by setting ambitious targets. The best teaching in this school has been identified and plans are in place to share this more widely across the school. You are rigorous in the monitoring of teaching, learning and assessment and feed back immediately to your staff team regarding any improvements that need to take place. As a result, the proportion of good and outstanding teaching is beginning to increase. Following the review of governance, governors now receive ongoing training which enables them to challenge leaders and ensure that improvements are rapid and have impact. Governors are much more involved in the life of the school. For example, they check the school's improvement journey by attending regular 'scrutiny committees'.

As a result of the much more rigorous quality assurance systems that are now in place, leaders are more able to hold teachers to account for pupils' progress. Teachers know exactly what is expected of them and they have risen to the challenge. School action plans are clearly focused on areas for improvement. Presentation has been a real focus for the school since the last inspection. The impact of this is clearly visible in books and pupils are extremely proud of their work. Pupils talk confidently about their work and are engaged fully in their lessons. Punctuation, handwriting and spelling have also been a priority and, as a result, work in books shows that there has been a significant improvement in all these areas across the whole school.

There is more to do to raise standards in mathematics. Precise mathematical language is now being used by the staff and pupils. However, in some lessons children are expected to do too many calculations with limited amount of problem solving and reasoning. You and your leadership team have identified this as a priority area and have begun to put training in place for staff. Outcomes in mathematics are improving across school, especially for the disadvantaged pupils. However, standards are still not high enough at the end of key stage 2.

A pupil premium review was commissioned in December 2016. You have acted on the recommendations in the report and as a result disadvantaged pupils are now making accelerated progress in both mathematics and writing across all year groups. The gap between the other pupils and those who are disadvantaged is starting to diminish due to well-planned, fit-for-purpose interventions, the commitment of all staff and the use of assessment to inform future planning.

You and your staff team have worked relentlessly with outside agencies to ensure that you have robust systems in place to monitor attendance and punctuality. As a result of this commitment and persistence, pupils' attendance is beginning to improve. However, this improvement is still not rapid enough and remains one of the areas of focus for the school and its community.

External support

Birmingham Education Partnership has given high-quality support and has assisted in brokering additional challenge from an educational consultant. This has helped the school to continually evaluate the impact that its work is having on school improvement.

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

Yours sincerely

Kate Brunt

Ofsted Inspector