

Smithy Bridge Primary School

School Performance Review

June 2018

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Smithy Bridge Primary School
QA Visit
June 27th 2018

The information and evidence gathered for this report comprised the following:

- Key data pack
- Discussions with the Leadership Team and members of staff
- Learning walk
- Lesson visits
- Book scrutiny
- Learning talks with children, including a focused discussion with a group of pupils eligible for the pupil premium grant

The school's overall effectiveness was judged as 'outstanding' in February 2009 following an OFSTED inspection. All individual categories were also given an 'outstanding' rating. The Headteacher and all staff were praised for their drive towards excellence, pupils were praised for their attitude to learning, standards of achievement and progress were high and the quality of teaching and learning was outstanding.

Although the OFSTED report was nine years ago the school has continued to be proactive in its approach to teaching and learning, ensuring experiences for children improve personal and academic achievement, well being and progress. All staff have a collective efficacy to improve the quality of education provided for the children in their care and consequently there is a strong feeling of trust and solidarity amongst adults and children. It was a pleasure to spend the day in the school and as a result I am happy to submit this report, detailing my thoughts and findings based on the evidence provided.

Data Pack Discussion

Data provided included:

- School Development Plan
- Self evaluation evidence
- Data summaries
- Assessment information and evidence
- Examples of learning profiles
- Examples of pupil progress meetings

A discussion with the school leadership team about the data pack provided and the challenges the school faces as it moves forward, reinforced my initial thoughts that the school clearly understands its current position and areas for development. The development plan and self evaluation dovetail together and priorities are based on school data and specific needs. Areas identified for improvement are:

1. Improving standards in maths to ensure they are consistently above the national standard and that more children are working at greater depth.
2. To broaden use of assessment systems.
3. Improve communication with parents.
4. Raise standards in spelling.

5. To narrow the gender gap between the number of boys and girls reaching the ELG in Foundation Stage.

The SDP identifies what the school does well in these areas and details what needs to be addressed, with clear success criteria, actions and how outcomes are to be monitored and evaluated.

The school self evaluation document is based on the current OFSTED framework and the leadership team grades overall effectiveness as 'good', mainly due to the understanding that standards and progress, although high, are not consistently well above national standard, particularly in maths. The school summary of their self evaluation is detailed and relevant. The document shows real clarity and expertise in identifying strengths and issues and is an excellent example of evaluating school performance to contribute to improvement.

Learning Walk and Lesson Visits

The main focus of lesson observations was maths and I managed to visit a number of lessons during the day. However, due to a number of maths lessons taking part at the same time it was impossible to see examples of teaching and learning in maths throughout the school. However, I did manage to visit most classes at some point and saw a number of different subjects being taught.

My day at Smithy Bridge confirmed that the school provides a warm, supportive and stimulating environment for children to learn. Pupils are proud of their school and behaviour was excellent. SMSC is clearly a significant strength and children show care and concern for each other. In lessons, pupils were attentive and took part in class discussions eagerly. They work with each other in a very supportive way and take pride in presenting their work neatly. There was a strong sense of teamwork in everything the children do and they were extremely polite and well mannered.

Teaching is highly effective throughout the school and children were enjoying their lessons. Staff have high expectations of the children and consequently the children had high expectations of themselves. Skilled support was provided by teaching assistants and all staff checked pupils' progress carefully in lessons, phrasing questions appropriately to review and enhance learning. A focus on Basic, Advanced and Deep learning is having a positive effect and there were a number of lessons where problem solving tasks and activities were being used to advance understanding. The language of B, A and D was also evident around the school and teachers, when questioned, were aware of the terms and how they applied to their teaching. They were also able to make the link between B, A and D with the schools' Depth of Learning assessment tracker. Books were of a high standard and there was a clear progression of work in all subjects. Examples of good practice observed include:

- The use of 'Active Maths' in Years 1 and 5 to encourage children to participate in problem solving activities. All of the children enjoyed the sessions and were working in teams to find the correct solutions to problems. In Year 1 the activities were pitched to look at different ways of using number bonds to make 20 and in Year 5, one class were matching facts and figures about days, weeks, months and years. The other class was finding solutions to lock combinations. In all classes the activities were differentiated at a Basic and Advanced level of understanding and children were able to reason, question and work together to find solutions.
- In Year 6 I observed two English lessons, one based on writing a letter to Borreaton Park, thanking them for the recent residential visit, the other based around a class reader. In

both lessons the questioning from the teacher was exceptional, really stretching the children to ensure the letters were of a high quality and the other that the text was understood. Both lessons challenged the children effectively and made them think in depth about what they were doing.

- In Year 3 I observed, only briefly, a 'market place' activity about the Romans. Children had to find out in groups about Roman life and share with their peers their discoveries. When talking to them at the end of the lesson they were able to articulate clearly what they had found out and what they had been using as sources of evidence to help them. They knew they were being historians and why.
- In Year 4 there was a fabulous discussion taking place about male and female stereotypes. Children were debating whether or not males or females should be able to be in various professions. Again, the questioning from the teacher was really thought provoking and the standard of the children's responses and discussion between themselves was exceptional.
- In Reception children were using the 'Tales Toolkit' to generate story telling. This is a recently new resource aimed at improving learning through story telling. Children have to choose characters, settings, problems and solutions to generate story ideas. I loved the engagement I witnessed between staff and children. Discussion was enthusiastic but purposeful. The children were willing to use their imagination and be creative. I know the 'Tales Toolkit' is now being used in Year 1 but the idea is something that has real potential and could be developed throughout the school. Katy Copeland, the EYFS lead talked passionately about the benefits of the resource and shared data and pupil assessments to show how children had improved the effectiveness of their writing.
- A constant theme across the school was the importance of basic maths non negotiables, which were taught with relentless consistency to ensure children had an understanding of key skills. All staff talked about the impact this initiative was having, allowing more children to become fluent in maths and allowing them to tackle problem solving activities with more confidence.

Staff Discussions

It was not possible, due to time, to have detailed conversations with all staff but a few key conversations took place as follows:

- Mrs Duffy is the TA whose responsibility it is to deliver intervention work in maths for the more able pupil premium children. She talked at length about the change to her role and how she was enjoying working with selected children on a regular basis. Her focus is on providing challenging, problem solving activities to promote mathematical fluency and reasoning, leading to some children being able to work at greater depth. These interventions take place three or four times a week and can be class based, individual or small group sessions. She talked with passion about how she has found the self confidence of children boosted and as a result their mathematical skills have improved.
- A discussion with Mrs Russell focused on her role as 'Catch Up' teacher. She has been trained to deliver the maths and literacy programme but is currently concentrating on maths. She sees a number of pupil premium and SEND children twice a week to deliver the programme. Their progress is assessed half termly and she commented that the programme is having a positive impact on all children involved.
- Mrs Taylor is the school SENCo and she talked at length about how the school supported SEND children. She had a secure knowledge of data and could articulate clearly the learning journey of various children. She showed me examples of detailed individual action plans and shared how progress meetings focus on barriers to learning. I suggested to her

she might put together one or two case studies of SEND children to show their learning journey through the school.

- Mrs Ramsbottom, the KS1 lead talked in particular about maths. During the last couple of years the school has implemented a number of initiatives to boost standards in maths. She discussed the success of Active Maths and the introduction of the non negotiables. She also discussed the need to teach basic skills relentlessly in KS1 so that children have the best chance of reaching the national standard by the end of Year 2. Also, the need to 'chunk' certain maths concepts and skills together to free up time. As a result of the various initiatives she believes the knock on effect for KS2 in the next few years will be greater fluency in maths, particularly for targeted groups eg. Disadvantaged, SEND and boys.
- Mrs Copeland, as already mentioned, discussed the impact of 'Tales Toolkit'. She also gave me a detailed profile of children entering Smithy Bridge. Although children enter school with skills at or below those typical for their age, most make rapid progress with 75% of children achieving GLD by the end of Foundation Stage. From my own observations, the EYFS staff provide a vibrant and exciting environment in which children can learn to the best of their ability. The classrooms and outdoor areas are carefully planned to be stimulating and inviting and resources are used most effectively to promote learning. Children were motivated, enthusiastic and eager to share what they were doing. Ongoing assessment was evident everywhere with detailed records of childrens' achievements and goals available for all staff to contribute to. Assessment procedures are based on the close observation of children and the information gained is used very well by staff to match new learning to meet children's needs.

Pupil Discussions

I met with twelve pupil premium children from Years 3 to 6 to ask various questions about their learning, attitude to school etc.

What do you like about your school?

- We are given lots of opportunities to learn.
- We like teachers.
- We get a good education.
- Other activities eg. Gardening club, recorders, football, Frisbees.
- Athletics.
- Cultural awareness weeks.
- We enjoy being given responsibilities in the class and to help other children.
- School is fun and teachers make lessons fun.

What are your favourite subjects?

- We like maths because our teacher is always helping and encouraging.
- PE. We do a lot of sport.
- Active Maths because it makes maths fun.

Would you change anything?

- No, we understand not every lesson is fun but they're all for a purpose to help you learn.

How do teachers help you to learn new things?

- Teachers support us.
- Interventions help us in reading and maths. Mrs Duffy works with some of us in maths to help us get better.
- Teachers help us when we struggle.

How do teachers tell you you've done well?

- Stamps.
- We really like Achievement Assembly, getting certificates and stickers from Mrs George or Mr Brown.
- Comments in our books.
- Steps to success tell us what we need to do to improve.

How do Interventions help you?

- They help us to do tests.
- They help our confidence.
- They help us to do better when we get back in classrooms.

Is work hard or easy?

- Some find it easy, some find it really hard.
- Sometimes we do different work from each other, particularly in maths.

What's behavior like?

- It's really good. Some children are silly sometimes to get attention.
- Mrs George is the ultimate sanction but sometimes it's Mr Brown!

Do you feel safe at school?

- We feel safe.

What have been your proudest moments in learning?

- To keep trying and don't give up.
- Trying to do things on my own.
- Being called out in Achievement Assembly.
- Playing for the Year 4 football team.
- First Sports Day medal.
- Outsmarting the teacher in Year 5.

What do you need to get better at?

- Tests
- Maths, sometimes I get confused.
- My reading isn't as good as it should be.

What do you want to do when you grow up?

- A You Tuber!
- A vet or a gymnast.
- A luthier, someone who makes or sets up guitars.
- A pilot in the RAF.
- A footballer or game creator.
- A farmer.
- Own a restaurant.

The children displayed a strong sense of pride in their school reflected in the comments they made. They clearly felt valued and important and in turn they valued their school and the support given to them.

Summing Up

What shines through at Smithy Bridge is the passion and positivity of the whole school community. The Head and Leadership Team have high aspirations and communicate these very effectively. All staff have ownership of the drive towards excellence and give nothing but their best. Senior staff welcome the responsibilities delegated to them and contribute very effectively to the well thought out programme of school improvement. All pupils are exceptionally well provided for in a caring and supportive atmosphere.

The quality of teaching was excellent throughout the school. All staff have high expectations of pupils, who respond by working conscientiously at the challenging and interesting tasks and activities planned for them. Teachers assess pupil's progress in depth and are quick to identify any who are falling behind.

As a result, most children make good or rapid progress. However, where progress or standards are slightly lower the school has been proactive in implementing new procedures, interventions and initiatives etc. to improve outcomes. In maths, for example, these initiatives are starting to have an impact with results in KS1 improving. The knock on effect should be an improvement in KS2 standards over time.

Areas for Development

There are very few suggestions I can make other than keep on doing what you are already doing. Your self-evaluation is extremely effective and drives your SDP. All staff know the school and what needs to be done to improve. The introduction of the non-negotiables in maths is having a major impact and 'chunking' of content in KS1 is allowing time to be freed for other areas of the curriculum. Perhaps this could be extended into KS2 as there are many opportunities where maths can be 'drip fed' or taught in a cross curricular or intra curricular way. Consistency of teaching is another area that needs to be monitored and evaluated continuously. I saw great examples of effective teaching and progress being assessed using the basic and advanced cognitive domains. Continue to ensure this common language is used throughout the school and activities are appropriate to the children's level of understanding.

Thank you for making me so welcome during my visit and for the open and honest discussions with staff. Smithy Bridge is a fabulous school and the children are very fortunate to be in such a

vibrant, friendly and challenging environment. Good luck for the future and enjoy a well-deserved summer break.

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