



Date	July 2015
Key stages	EYFS - KS2
School type	LA maintained, primary
Themes	Ofsted outstanding, behaviour, aspirations

From 'requires improvement' to 'outstanding' in two years

Brockswood Primary and Nursery School

Context

Brockswood Primary and Nursery School is a smaller than average-sized school located in the Dacorum district. Around half of the pupils in the school are from minority ethnic backgrounds and 10% of pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium grant for is almost double the national average.

Brief description

Brockswood School was judged as outstanding by Ofsted in May 2015 and became one of the first schools in the country to improve from an Ofsted rating of requires improvement to outstanding in between two inspections. In June 2010 the school was given notice to improve by Ofsted, and in May 2013 it was judged as requiring improvement. In the last four years the Headteacher, Carley Holliman, and other members of the senior leadership team have worked relentlessly to raise standards within the school. Carley believes the key to their success has been remaining consistent in raising standards across *all* areas. Carley worked with staff to raise their expectations of what the pupils could achieve by targeting key areas such as raising aspiration and improving the attendance and behaviour of pupils as part of a whole school effort. This, in addition to having a clear and focused plan to improve teaching and learning, has resulted in the school making significant progress in the last few years.

The journey from RI to outstanding

Improving the quality of teaching and learning

In the last four years the school has invested heavily in the quality and the subject knowledge of its staff which has resulted in outstanding teaching in all areas. The school currently has six mathematics specialist teachers (MaST) who have helped raise standards in attainment and progress in mathematics. There is a rigorous performance appraisal cycle in place for staff and teachers are held fully accountable for the progress of pupils.

Teachers are required to make all learning purposeful and pupils are asked an open question at the beginning of each lesson which encourages them to reason, justify and question what they have learnt. Pupils are not assigned to ability groups in lessons and all teaching is based on assessment for learning in the classroom to ensure that the school does not cap any pupil's learning. All pupils are aware of what stage of the 'learning journey' they are in, and they are constantly challenged to progress.

Rather than requiring pupils to miss lesson time for additional support they are given opportunities outside of lessons on a regular and consistent basis to consolidate their learning or to catch up; “it’s their lesson plus more.” This support is provided by teachers and the time is arranged after communication with parents.

Tackling low attendance

In 2010 the average attendance at Brockswood was 86.4%, which was below the national average. Since then Carley and her team have worked with pupils and parents to address the issue through a system of rewards and sanctions. Attendance at Brockswood is praised through attendance awards and recognition in regular newsletters. Pupils receive points for regular attendance which they can trade in for rewards, providing them with an incentive to come to school.

The school is prompt to contact home if anyone is absent and members of staff consistently work with parents to affirm their statutory responsibility to ensure that their children attend school. The school remains in constant communication with Traveller parents, who form a larger than average percentage in the school, to ensure they are aware of the attendance expectations. Parents are regularly thanked for the good attendance of their child and are proactive in contributing to the reward system for them.

Improving attitudes to learning and behaviour

In 2010 the number of fixed term exclusions at Brockswood was high and several pupils were disengaged with learning. Since then the school has enforced a consistent and positive behaviour policy, which similar to the attendance policy, is also based on rewards and sanctions. Pupils receive points for good behaviour which they can swap for stationery at the school shop. At the end of every half term pupils who have met the school’s behaviour expectations attend a behaviour celebration party, which often involves external trips.

Ofsted has noted that the school has made outstanding use of its sports funding as part of its initiative to invest in sports to improve behaviour. Pupils now have more to do at lunchtimes and can access a wide range of extra-curricular activities such as swimming, gymnastics, karate and dance. All pupils participate in regular sport and exercise and all staff have been given specialist training in physical education to ensure that pupils are better engaged with sport.

Raising aspirations

A key way of raising standards at Brockswood has been to raise the aspirations of pupils by making them aware of all of the possibilities and opportunities they have in life. Carley believed that previously “there were low expectations of children in our area and we wanted to show them that they can go as far as they wish, if they put the work in.” The school regularly focusses on the impact of education in later careers and teachers draw upon examples of different careers to explain why attending school is so important for pupils’ futures. “We get our pupils to understand that the journey of your life starts at primary school, not later,” said Carley.

Every year the school has a careers week where pupils take turns to come out of lessons to do career based activities. Employers, including journalists, nail technicians and builders, visit the school to run sessions, talk about qualifications and teach children key skills. The following week children apply for several positions throughout the school including house captains, sports ambassadors, members of the eco squad, cooks and even for the role of the headteacher. Children then get shortlisted and if successful will be able to carry out the role. Pupils are informed about post-16 opportunities through visits to the University of Hertfordshire and local secondary schools, and this familiarises them with these academic surroundings from a young age.

All pupils are encouraged to consider a wide range of different secondary schools and to pick the one which best suits their interests. As part of the school's transition project every secondary school in Hemel Hempstead visited Brockswood to pitch to pupils and explain why they should pick their school. Children were then encouraged to think about what *they* can offer to a school and carefully consider their options when applying.

Impact

Improved attendance and behaviour

The attendance figures at Brockswood have increased by 10 ppts since 2012 and in 2015 the figure stands at 95%. Carley believes that the school has sustained "a relentless drive to make sure that children want to be in school, and make sure that all parents understand the importance of consistent attendance." The proportion of children achieving 100% attendance has grown every year, and the school has been able to reduce the use of rewards for parents and children as a result. Ofsted noted that 'pupils enjoy school which has led to attendance rising rapidly from below average to above average, and punctuality being good.'

All pupils buy into the school's rewards and sanctions system which has resulted in improved behaviour. This system has improved the resilience and perseverance of pupils who are all willing to work hard to earn their rewards. Each term fewer children miss the behaviour celebration party. All parents who spoke to Ofsted inspectors, and 96 per cent of those who responded to the online questionnaire, made very positive comments about pupils' behaviour.

Higher aspirations for pupils

According to Ofsted, leaders of the school 'have created a culture of high expectations where all pupils, whatever their backgrounds or abilities thrive and achieve exceptionally well.'

Activities and events aimed at increasing the aspirations of pupils have also served to enhance their resilience through introducing them to the world of work.

Familiarising pupils with local secondary schools has resulted in them moving on to a wider range of

secondary schools than in previous years, when for example all siblings would tend to go to the same secondary school. This year five children at Brockswood will be going to five different schools individually as a result of thinking about what they want from a school. Brockswood has also recently supported a pupil who was awarded a full scholarship to an independent girl's school. The close relationship that Brockswood has with secondary schools eased transition and encouraged pupils to consider their options which has made them more aware about their new chosen secondary school.

Strong academic results

The attainment of pupils by the end of key stage 2 has risen rapidly from below average at the time of the last inspection to above average. The percentage of pupils achieving a level 4 or above in reading, writing and maths combined has increased from 42% in 2012 to 91% in 2014. This figure is 13 ppts above the national average and 8 ppts above the local authority average. All pupils in all year groups make rapid progress in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2015 93% of pupils made more than two levels of progress in maths and writing and 100% make more than two levels of progress in reading.

Disadvantaged pupils make the same level of progress as their peers. In 2015, 88% of disadvantaged children, who make up half of the current cohort, achieved a level 4 in reading, writing and maths, 5 ppts higher than the national average.

Next steps

The headteacher believes that consistency has been the key to the schools success and plans on remaining consistent in rigorously enforcing high standards for teaching, behaviour and attitudes to learning in the future.

Contact	Carley Holliman, Headteacher at Brockswood School
Related documents and links	http://www.brockswood.herts.sch.uk/

If you have an aspect of interesting practice that could be shared or are interested in finding out more about a case study please get in touch by emailing exchangingexcellence@hertsforlearning.co.uk



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