

# Highfields Primary School

Elder Lane, Burntwood, WS7 9BT

## Inspection dates

7–8 November 2012

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Although there is some good and outstanding teaching, there is too much teaching that requires improvement.
- Information about how well pupils are doing is not used carefully to plan the next steps of learning needed for all pupils to make good progress from their starting points in writing and mathematics.
- More able pupils are sometimes provided with activities that are too easy for them.
- There are too few opportunities for pupils to practise their literacy and numeracy skills in subjects such as science, history and geography.
- The marking of pupils' work does not consistently give them clear enough guidance about how to make their work better.
- Teaching assistants are not used well enough during all parts of the lesson.
- Systems for checking pupils' progress and the quality of teaching lack rigour. As yet, the training and support for improving teachers' performance are not making sure that lessons are constantly good.
- Governors do not ask sharp enough questions about pupils' progress and the quality of teaching over time.

### The school has the following strengths

- Children get a good start to their education in the Reception class, where they quickly develop good attitudes towards learning.
- Pupils make good progress in reading in Years 3 to 6.
- Pupils behave well, they enjoy school and their attendance is above average.
- The new leadership team have a good understanding of the areas requiring improvement but have not had enough time to make all teaching good or better.
- There is a strong team spirit in school and all staff share the same determination to improve.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 17 lessons, including three observed jointly with the headteacher. Pupils' work in books was also analysed with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, three governors, middle managers, parents and groups of pupils. A telephone conversation was held with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 56 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and talked to groups of parents in the playground at the start of the school day. Responses to the staff questionnaire were also considered.
- A number of documents were analysed, including the school development plan, school self-evaluation, the school's data on the current progress of pupils, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to safeguarding.

## Inspection team

Lois Furness, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Malcolm Johnstone

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- In this broadly average-sized primary school, almost all pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well below average as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- A well below-average proportion of pupils is known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in local authority care and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is below average, and is well below average at school action plus and with a statement of educational needs.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Following a two-year period of unsettled leadership, the headteacher was appointed in April 2012 and the deputy headteacher in May 2012.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Eliminate the uneven progress in writing and mathematics and increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching in Years 1 to 5 by
  - teachers using information about what pupils already know to plan learning that matches the needs of all pupils, especially the more able
  - raising teachers' expectations further of the quality and quantity of pupils' work
  - providing pupils with regular opportunities to practise their grammar, punctuation and spelling skills in subjects such as science, history and geography
  - ensuring that teaching assistants are involved in supporting pupils' progress during all parts of lessons
  - marking consistently informing pupils about how to improve their work, and giving time for pupils to respond to the comments made
  - sharing the outstanding elements of existing teaching regularly with all teachers so that they are clear about how to improve their own teaching.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
  - establishing a rigorous cycle of monitoring which includes an evaluation of teachers' planning, a review of the quality of work in pupils' books and an analysis of termly assessment information so that pupils' progress can be regularly evaluated
  - ensuring that lesson observations focus on the impact of teaching on pupils' progress
  - agreeing precise targets with staff to improve their teaching skills, and providing any necessary training to help them to achieve these performance targets
  - sharing detailed information on pupils' attainment and progress and the quality of teaching regularly with the governing body to improve its ability to hold the school to account.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement requires improvement because pupils do not consistently make, in Years 1 to 5, the good progress they make in Reception and Year 6.
- Children start in the Reception with skills and knowledge that are broadly in line with those expected for their age in all areas of learning. Good teaching means that children make good progress and by the end of the Reception Year, their attainment is above average.
- At the end of Year 2, attainment fluctuates. In 2011, attainment rose to above average in reading and mathematics, and broadly average in writing, but, in 2012, it declined to broadly average in all three subjects. Too few pupils attained the higher level in writing in 2012.
- By the end of Year 6, attainment is average in English and mathematics, and the proportion of pupils making expected progress from the end of Year 2 is similar to that found nationally in both subjects. However, assessment information shows that progress varies too much between year groups, especially in writing and to some extent mathematics. It accelerates in Year 6 due to outstanding teaching.
- Throughout the school, the best progress is made in reading. Pupils' knowledge of letters and the sounds they make (phonics) is improving as a result of a step-by-step approach to the teaching of this skill. Older pupils enjoy reading and, by the end of Year 6 in 2012, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected level in reading was above average. However, relatively few pupils exceeded the nationally expected level.
- Progress in other subjects such as history, geography and science varies according to the quality of teaching. Work in pupils' books shows that pupils have too few opportunities to apply their writing skills in these subjects, and pupils continue to make errors in basic grammar, punctuation and spelling.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make progress similar to that of their classmates. This is also the case for pupils who are supported by pupil premium funding. At times, the progress of groups of pupils improves when they receive additional support. However, leaders do not check carefully to confirm whether or not additional support is accelerating the progress of pupils eligible for pupil premium.

### The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because, while it is good and outstanding in some lessons, it is weaker in others and so is not consistent enough to speed up pupils' progress. This is especially the case in writing and mathematics, where teaching varies in effectiveness from class to class. Expectation of the quality and quantity of work varies. At times, teachers place too much reliance on low-level worksheets.
- All staff have detailed information about pupils' attainment but teachers do not consistently use this to plan lessons to help all pupils learn as much as they can. Activities are not matched closely enough to pupils' abilities, resulting in some pupils finding the work too easy or too hard.
- Relationships in class are good. and, in most classrooms, there is a positive ethos for learning. Praise is used effectively to encourage good behaviour, and pupils are well motivated and

interested in their work. However, occasionally, pupils lose concentration and adults do not make it clear to pupils how much work is expected to be completed by the end of the lesson.

- Teaching assistants are deployed effectively to work in small groups or with one-to-one activities, often supporting the learning of the less able or those with special educational needs. However, their deployment is less effective in some lessons, especially when the teacher takes a long time to introduce a lesson or during whole-class question and answer sessions.
- There are good examples of marking, especially of pupils' writing, but the impact is variable. Marking does not consistently provide pupils with enough guidance on what they need to do to improve their progress. It does not focus enough on improving basic skills of spelling, grammar and punctuation, especially in subjects other than English. Pupils are not given enough time to respond to the comments made.
- In almost all lessons, pupils are encouraged to share their answers to questions. This promotes good social and moral development as pupils take turns and listen to each other's ideas. This was seen in an outstanding English lesson in Year 6, when pupils eagerly shared their thoughts about important information to include on the timeline of the life of Nelson Mandela.
- In the Reception class, teaching is good. Activities whilst interesting carefully ensure that children make good progress in their learning. For example children were encouraged to independently solve problems when they created bridges using an assortment of pipes and gutters during their outdoor play.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- Pupils feel safe in school and behaviour is typically good in lessons and around school. Almost all parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire agree that behaviour is good and all think their children are kept safe. Pupils themselves say behaviour is good, although, as one pupil put it, 'There are 'a few children who let themselves down.'
- In the Reception class, children behave well. Good relationships between adults and children help them to settle and feel happy and safe in school. Children follow instructions willingly and are learning the importance of taking turns and sharing their toys.
- Pupils know about different types of bullying including name-calling, racism and cyber bullying. They say that some bullying occurs in school but activities such as anti-bullying week makes sure they know what to do if it does occur. However, in relation to cyber-bullying they say that they would be more likely to tell their parents rather than a member of the school staff.
- Attitudes towards school and towards learning are good. Pupils speak enthusiastically about their lessons and were eager to tell inspectors about the work they had done investigating the tunnels that are appearing underground in Staffordshire. They enjoy extra responsibilities, such as being members of the school council, and they are proud to say they make a difference, for example in improving playground resources.
- Pupils' enjoyment of school is confirmed by their above-average attendance. Punctuality is also good.

### **The leadership and management requires improvement**

- Leaders check termly the quality of teaching. However, lesson observations do not focus well enough on how well pupils are learning. The checking of pupils' progress in books is not regular and the evidence from this work scrutiny is not checked against pupils' progress information. As a result, leaders have too rosy a view of the quality of teaching.
  - The school has used its allocation of funds for the pupil premium appropriately by investing in an additional teacher to accelerate the progress of underachieving pupils and to enable an author to visit school to inspire pupils' writing. However, the school has not carried out a detailed analysis to check if the impact of this spending has shown it to be worthwhile.
  - The management of teachers' performance is developing. Recently, staff have agreed targets which are linked to the new national Teaching Standards, which are designed to improve the quality of teaching. As yet, however, there has been insufficient time for improvement. Also not enough use is made of the outstanding practice within school to ensure that all teachers are clear about how to advance their own teaching.
  - The school teaches an appropriate range of subjects but does not ensure that pupils have the opportunity to practise their basic skills of literacy and numeracy in subjects other than English and mathematics. Too often low-level worksheets or drawing activities are given rather than expecting pupils to write independent extended pieces of work.
  - The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is enhanced through lessons and a range of clubs, activities, trips and visits. Pupils are also given opportunities to take on responsibilities such as school councillors and eco-warriors.
  - Almost all parents and carers would recommend this school to others. They are pleased with many aspects of the school's work including the amount of homework their children receive and the information on the website which tells them what is due to be taught over the term.
  - The new leadership team has been effective in raising staff morale after a long period of unsettled leadership. Staff are positive about working in the school and are fully onboard with the plans for school improvement.
  - The local authority provides appropriate support for this school, as the governing body has chosen to buy in an external consultant to support the school's progress.
  - **The governance of the school:**
    - Governors regularly visit the school, meet with staff and receive reports from the headteacher and the external consultant. They recognise the school requires improvement and that pupils' attainment and progress should be better. They know assessment information is not used well enough and that there are weaknesses in teaching. However, they have not checked regularly how the headteacher is managing teachers' performance and ensuring that pay awards are linked to this performance. They know that the pupil premium money has provided a teacher for small-group sessions and an author to visit the school. However, they are less knowledgeable about its impact on the progress of eligible pupils. They recognise they need training so they are able to ask more probing questions and hold leaders to account for the achievement of pupils. The governing body ensures that safeguarding requirements are met.
-

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	124211
<b>Local authority</b>	Staffordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	402242

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	214
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Geoff Elton
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mark Wilkes
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	10 December 2009
<b>Telephone number</b>	01543 510445
<b>Fax number</b>	01543 510445
<b>Email address</b>	office@highfields.staffs.sch.uk



Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit [www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk), or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store St  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

© Crown copyright 2012

