

Blakeley Heath Primary School

Sytch Lane, Wombourne, Wolverhampton, WV5 0JR

Inspection dates 13–14 December 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
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

- Teaching has improved and is often good, but it is not consistently so and, consequently, pupils are not achieving well.
- Teachers do not always check pupils' learning accurately so work is sometimes too easy, and some pupils do not make good progress in lessons. Other adults are not always used effectively to support pupils' progress.
- Teachers do not always provide pupils with enough information to help them improve and take an active part in learning.
- Teachers do not use questions often enough which give opportunities for pupils to say what they have learnt.
- The activities and subjects planned by teachers are beginning to inspire pupils to do their best, but changes have not had time to raise attainment.
- The headteacher has implemented plans to improve teaching but it is too soon to see the impact on pupils' progress.
- Governors are focused on supporting the school towards improvement and they challenge senior leaders effectively. This good practice is relatively new following changes in the governing body intended to stimulate a greater drive for improvement.
- Pupils feel safe, behave well, and understand how to stay safe and healthy.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher provides strong leadership and knows what is needed for the school to improve. His efforts have already resulted in some better teaching and progress, improved behaviour and stronger partnerships with parents.
- Pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable have the strong support of all the staff.
- Children in the Reception class settle well into the school and make good progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 21 lessons taught by 13 teachers. Four of these lessons were joint observations with the headteacher.
- Inspectors observed and spoke to pupils during lessons and at lunch time. They met formally with a group of pupils.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders and managers, governors, a representative from the local authority and with the School Improvement Partner.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documents, including: arrangements for safeguarding, the management of staff performance, pupils' attendance and information about their attainment and progress. Inspectors also reviewed the work in pupils' books.
- Inspectors took into account the 21 responses from parents shown on Parent View (the online questionnaire) and the views of a number of parents who were dropping their children off at the school.

Inspection team

Ronald Hall, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Carolyn Wood	Additional Inspector
Alison Lamputt	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger than average-sized primary school.
- The headteacher was appointed in January 2012 and, in the last year, the governing body has undergone a number of changes in its membership and leadership.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is well below average; the proportion supported at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is average. A few have behavioural difficulties.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding for those eligible for free school meals, those in local authority care and those with a parent in the armed services) is average.
- The school meets the current floor standard set by the government, which sets minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- There is nursery provision on the site which is not run by the governing body.
- Pupils are educated on site. There is no alternative educational provision.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching so that all is at least good, by:
 - making sure that all teachers use the information they have on pupils' progress so that work in lessons always matches the range of pupils' abilities
 - ensuring that all teachers give spoken and written feedback to pupils so pupils understand how to improve their work, and take more responsibility for their own learning
 - requiring all teachers to use questions which give pupils with better opportunities to explain what they have learnt and show they understand it
 - making sure that all adults support pupils' progress effectively throughout lessons.
- Leaders and governors should drive forward the improvements in the quality of teaching and in the range of learning opportunities so that work is demanding for all pupils and all make at least good progress and reach higher standards.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Although improving, pupils' progress is not consistently good across the school due to variations in the quality of teaching.
- Children enter Reception with a range of skills and knowledge that is usually below that typical for their age. They make good progress to reach broadly average levels of skills by the time they move into Year 1.
- The quality of pupils' work by Year 2 and Year 6 has improved over time. Attainment is just below average in both key stages and has improved rapidly since the appointment of the headteacher. This is a marked improvement from the attainment seen in Year 6 following a decline in standards since the last inspection.
- Reading has improved in the past year and pupils in both key stages reach standards in line with those of other pupils nationally. The teaching of letters and the sounds they make is well established in the youngest classes and the daily sessions on the teaching of reading in all classes are enabling pupils to make better progress.
- Due to a concerted drive for improvement, progress in writing has improved and is broadly average.
- Although attainment in mathematics is still below the national average, pupils' achievement is better over the past year due to the introduction of new teaching methods.
- Progress in all year groups is improving. The previous poor progress in some classes has been tackled and all pupils now make at least the expected progress, with many making good progress. The attainment of pupils who benefit from pupil premium funding is now in line with that of other pupils in the school, although attainment is still slightly below average overall.
- The gap between pupils' attainment and national standards is closing. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are supported well. They are making stronger progress than in the past as teaching improves and activities are better adapted to match pupils' abilities. Those pupils who are potentially vulnerable to underachievement are also making better progress and so are broadly in line with their peers nationally.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because, although it is often good and is sometimes, outstanding, it is not always of this quality. Consequently, it does not enable pupils to make consistently good progress in their learning.
- Teachers' checks on pupils' work and progress during lessons are not yet accurate enough. This sometimes leads to work not being adapted enough during the lesson to make sure all pupils are given demanding work. Similarly, the information teachers have on pupils' progress is not always used well enough to ensure that work is matched closely to the range of pupils' abilities.
- Teachers do not always provide pupils with enough information to improve their work and move on. Teachers' marking does not always provide sufficient information or involve the pupils enough in how to improve their work. During lessons, some teachers provide excellent guidance on how to improve but this is not consistent across the school.
- Teachers do not always use the other adults present in lessons to support all pupils' learning during the whole session. Consequently, pupils are not always fully engaged with activities that are demanding enough for each of them throughout all parts of the lesson. Where teachers direct support closely, it is more effective.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, and those pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium funding, get extra support from teachers and other adults. The teaching they receive is good and has resulted in these pupils making much better progress.
- Teaching in the Reception class provides the children with a good start to their education. The

staff there have a good understanding of how young children learn and provide a stimulating and safe environment for children to experiment and explore.

- In all classes, relationships between all adults and pupils are very positive. Pupils enjoy their lessons and say their teachers help them to understand new work. Teachers have high expectations for pupils' good behaviour and use a wide range of positive strategies so there are rarely any interruptions in lessons.
- In the best lessons, particularly in the oldest classes, teachers use a good range of ways to help pupils learn effectively. They often question pupils well, probing their understanding of ideas from the lesson and then adapting the activities so they move them on more quickly. However, this is not the case in all lessons. Too often, pupils are not given the opportunity to show the skills and understanding they have learnt because some teachers do not focus questions sharply enough on testing pupils' understanding and reinforcing previous learning.
- The teaching of reading through the school has improved. There is a greater focus on teaching the skills pupils need to be able to read more widely to support their learning. The daily sessions of guided reading and learning about letters and sounds are enabling pupils to make better progress.
- Teaching encourages pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development. Activities often interest pupils and motivate them to find out more.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils behave well in their classes, at break times and around school. They enjoy the work set them and want to do well. Pupils often show good levels of concentration and attention in lessons and respect for each other's work and effort. Lessons are rarely disrupted.
- All pupils are developing good levels of confidence in tackling their work and, increasingly, recognise how to make it better. They take difficulties in their stride and try again. This was clearly shown in a mathematics lesson, where pupils were challenged to add and subtract a range of decimal numbers. All the pupils, even those finding it difficult, persevered well with the work.
- Pupils are polite, friendly and courteous to visitors. They say behaviour has improved in the last year and is now good. Bullying of any kind is rare, especially any physical, emotional or cyber bullying. There are a few pupils with behavioural difficulties but teachers support these pupils well.
- Pupils recognise that some children are easily distracted, but most are really trying to be sensible and behave well. Pupils say any problems they encounter are quickly sorted out by the staff. A small number of parents justifiably raised concerns about past behaviour, but others acknowledge it has improved.
- Pupils say they feel very safe at school. They identify possible hazards and sensibly suggest ways to keep themselves and others safe. They have a good understanding of the dangers of the internet.
- Pupils' attendance in school is improving although not all attend regularly enough. The school uses a range of strategies to encourage parents to get their children to school regularly and these are having positive outcomes.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The headteacher's leadership is clear and purposeful. His determination that all pupils should have the best chance of achieving well has been at the heart of school improvement since he arrived. He quickly addressed the issue of inadequate teaching and practice has improved. He and other senior and middle leaders are working on ways to improve teaching further, but there has been insufficient time to see the full impact of this work.
- The need to make sure teachers' checks on pupils' learning are accurate and used effectively to

plan new work was quickly identified as an essential factor in raising achievement. Systematic checks on the quality of teaching and information on pupils' progress are providing essential information to identify the next steps for improvement.

- The new system of setting targets for pupils' next steps in learning is shared with all involved in the school. Consequently, pupils now have a better understanding of what they are working towards. This has allowed the older pupils, in particular, to be more independent in their learning and have a desire to produce a better standard of work.
- Good levels of support for new teachers and well-chosen, training linked to the school's priorities underpin school improvements. The school manages teaching well and setting targets for teachers' improved performance is helpful to their practice. Teachers' promotion and pay are carefully linked to improvements in pupils' progress.
- The range of learning opportunities has been broadened so pupils have the appropriate breadth and balance in the subjects taught. Pupils say they are, increasingly, enjoying their lessons but these changes have not had time to have the impact intended on pupils' achievement.
- There is strong leadership of the provision for pupils who are potentially vulnerable and those with special educational needs. This leadership is having a positive effect on improving these pupils' learning and progress. The additional pupil premium funding is used well to provide small teaching groups and support, particularly when pupils' emotional needs stop effective learning.
- Partnerships with parents have improved. The headteacher has used a variety of successful strategies to make parents feel welcome in school and improve communication. The school has developed good links with a range of schools and agencies in its drive to raise standards. The school also uses the local authority's expertise to assist it to improve, and this is proving to be an effective partnership.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body has undergone several changes since the previous inspection. Governors have undertaken a wide range of training to enhance their skills. They successfully appointed a headteacher who is leading better teaching, progress and attainment. Governors are getting more comprehensive information about the school's performance, which is enabling them to ask more searching questions of the senior leadership team. They understand what the quality of teaching is and know that it is not consistently good. They are calling on senior leaders to drive through the improved practice of the last year so that the impact of better teaching on pupils' progress and attainment is fully realised. Governors are fully aware of the effect of their funding decisions, such as the use of the pupil premium. They check that this money is spent on the pupils eligible for it and they know what difference this makes from measurable rates of progress. They are working strategically with the headteacher and with local schools to develop more cooperative working. The current cycle of reviewing the management of teachers' performance has not yet been completed, but governors are fully involved in decisions to improve teaching and to address the inadequate teaching of the past. They are acutely aware that teaching must show the capacity to improve pupils' progress if it is to be rewarded by pay and promotion. Governors meet their statutory requirements, including those for the safeguarding of pupils.

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

Unique reference number	124192
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	403550

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	266
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lyndon Farley
Headteacher	Christopher Ludlow
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2008
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