

Blakenall Heath Junior School

Field Road, Bloxwich, Walsall, WS3 3JF

Inspection dates 10–11 January 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	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		Require improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Pupils' progress requires improvement in English and mathematics. Despite recent improvement, their achievement is not yet good.
- Teaching is not regularly good enough, particularly for the average- and lower-ability pupils. In some lessons, work is not set at the right level for them.
- At times, pupils have to spend too long on practising things that they already know, which slows their progress. Teachers do not train pupils enough to get to know how well they are doing and how their work could be better.
- Teachers do not give pupils enough opportunities to learn to express themselves clearly. As a result, they struggle to explain what they are learning. Some of them do not fully understand the text they read.
- Checks made by leaders and the governing body do not focus enough on the impact of teaching on pupils' progress and achievement.

The school has the following strengths

- Standards have risen in the last three years. As a result, the gap between the school's performance and all schools nationally is narrowing.
- Teaching is improving and elements of good practice are found across the school.
- Behaviour is good in lessons, at play and around the school.
- Attendance has improved and is now above average.
- Pupils supported by pupil premium funding are beginning to make stronger progress as a result of the additional support they receive.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 14 lessons or parts of lessons.
- Meetings were held with a randomly selected group of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and two representatives from the local authority, as well as with senior and middle leaders.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of school documents, including the school's own data on pupils' current and recent progress, planning and monitoring documentation, and records relating to behaviour attendance and safeguarding arrangements.
- Inspectors took into account the views of four responses to the online Parent View questionnaire together with the school's evidence of parents' views from one of the consultation meetings.
- Inspectors also considered 22 questionnaires returned by staff.

Inspection team

Krishan Sharma, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Lesley Voaden

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported through school action is higher than average, while the proportion of those supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The very large majority of pupils are White British. A very small minority come from a range of minority ethnic groups and very few of them speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding is much higher than average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the overall quality of teaching to at least good so that an increasing proportion of pupils, particularly those of average and lower ability, make good progress by:
 - setting work at the right level for all groups of pupils
 - moving pupils on to the next stage of their learning as soon as they have successfully completed the tasks set for them
 - preparing pupils to assess their own work and how to improve it.
- Improve pupils' achievement in their basic skills by:
 - creating regular opportunities for pupils to practise their speaking and listening skills in all subjects
 - improving pupils' skills in understanding the underlying meaning in the texts they read
 - making sure that pupils learn from their mistakes and follow up the guidance given to them in their subsequent pieces of writing
 - helping pupils to explain how they work out their mathematical calculations and getting them to use correct mathematical language during discussions.
- Strengthen the way leaders check how well the school is doing by:
 - sharpening checks on teaching, particularly its impact on pupils' learning and progress in lessons and in their written work
 - focusing on the learning and progress of different groups of pupils
 - fine-tuning the effectiveness of all leaders and members of the governing body at identifying what the school does well and what it needs to improve.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils join the school in Year 3 with low attainment. As they move through the school, their progress is not consistently good because of inconsistencies in teaching, and requires improvement.
- However, standards are rising and getting closer to the national average. There is more good progress now and it is improving. As a result, the gap between the school's performance and pupils nationally is narrowing. In general, pupils' progress is stronger in mathematics than in English.
- Progress in reading is improving. Regular guided sessions prepare pupils well for reading on their own. Most show an understanding of the main points in a text, but their understanding of the meaning behind the text is not always secure.
- Writing is improving and shows pupils' growing understanding of the structure of sentences and how ideas could be developed. Pupils' written work shows that it is often well organised but words chosen lack variety.
- Pupils are keen to talk. They are willing to give an opinion. Their skills in developing an idea are not strong. Some struggle because they do not get enough chance to practise their speaking and listening skills.
- In mathematics, pupils handle numbers with enthusiasm, particularly the boys. Pupils make calculations correctly, but they are not very good at explaining how they work them out or in using correct mathematical vocabulary.
- Some pupils of average and lower ability, who form a very large majority in the school, make slower progress. At times, the work given to them is not at the right level and they spend time repeating what they can already do.
- The progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is improving. Regular checks are made to ensure that as a group they do not fall back, and the support provided for them pushes their learning forward.
- While the average point scores show that pupils known to be eligible for free school meals have lower standards than those who are not eligible for extra funding, they are making faster progress and are closing the gap. Senior leaders and the governing body have spent pupil premium money to hire staff to cater for their specific learning needs, and this is proving effective.
- The progress of the very few pupils from minority ethnic groups is improving. Those of them who speak English as an additional language either have a sound grasp of English on arrival or make rapid progress as a result of the close attention paid to improving their command of English.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because pupils' progress in lessons and over time is not consistently good. There is not enough good teaching to speed up pupils' progress, particularly those of average and lower ability.
- Work for pupils is not always set at the right level and teachers do not always move pupils on in their learning when they are ready for harder work.
- Typically, teachers' planning is clear and they aim high. The classrooms are busy places in which pupils feel supported. Pupils work with others to develop their social skills. Pupils are less secure in assessing their own work and have limited understanding about how to improve it.
- Instances of good teaching are found across the school. In the best lessons, teachers' explanations are precise and reflect their strong subject knowledge. In these lessons, all

groups of pupils have work that is hard enough, learn at a brisk pace and make good progress.

- The teaching of reading is becoming increasingly effective. It promotes reading in all subjects. In 2012, pupils' attainment in reading was close to the national average by the end of Year 6.
- The teaching of writing is systematic and practical for pupils to follow. Marking is conscientious and guides pupils to improve their writing, but teachers do not always make sure that pupils follow the advice given in their subsequent work.
- The teaching of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs and of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding is tailored to make sure that both groups improve their basic skills. Teachers and teaching assistants provide regular support and timely interventions through small groups and one-to-one teaching sessions. This additional support is beginning to close the gap between the attainment of these groups and that of other pupils.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Typically, pupils' behaviour in lessons and in and around the school is good. They behave responsibly in the playground and mix with other pupils. In lessons, pupils work well in pairs and in small groups.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive. They are polite and welcoming. In lessons which do not fully capture their interest, while most pupils work hard, some lose concentration.
- Staff manage pupils' behaviour consistently and well. Parents agree that the school makes sure its pupils are well behaved. A few members of staff expressed concerns about behaviour. The inspection evidence, which took into account inspectors' own observations, what pupils said to them in discussions and parental satisfaction, did not support these reservations.
- Pupils say that they feel safe at school in the secure knowledge that their worries will be listened to.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the different forms that bullying can take, including that which is prejudice-based. They are also aware of the dangers that careless use of the internet poses. Pupils understand that they have responsibility for keeping themselves and others safe.
- Senior leaders and governors have been successful in raising attendance to above average. The deployment of a learning mentor assists the school in promoting good attendance.

The leadership and management require improvement

- The impact of leadership and management has not been good enough to make sure that pupils' achievement and teaching are consistently good.
- Current checks made on teaching by key leaders provide a general rather than a precise view of its quality. Their approach is not as rigorous as it should be. They do not always examine fully the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and progress, particularly of different groups. Recent checks have led senior leaders to form a somewhat generous view of the proportion of good or better teaching. However, they have removed all inadequate teaching.
- The current priorities set by senior leaders and the governing body are rightly focused on improving pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching. Pupils' attainment is improving and the quality of teaching is getting stronger.
- The regular use of progress information helps the school to promote equality of opportunity for all groups of pupils. The individual needs of pupils, particularly those being supported by pupil premium and those who have special educational needs, are carefully identified and

met through teaching in small groups and one-to-one interventions.

- The governing body and the headteacher have set targets for teachers in line with their pupils' performance. How well pupils are doing influences decisions about training for staff and whether teachers should move up the pay scale. The recent training has contributed to the improving quality of teaching and the growing effectiveness of teachers who are in charge of subjects in the school.
- The way the school teaches different subjects and topics caters for the needs of most groups of pupils. The school's main focus, rightly, is to help pupils acquire basic skills. Combined themes that bring a range of subjects together and the enrichment provided through music, art and sport promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The school fosters good relations with parents and keeps them informed about their children's progress at school, inviting them to see exhibitions of topic work.
- The local authority has provided worthwhile support, particularly in helping the school to improve what it offers pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable and those pupils who join in Year 3.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body has a good knowledge of many of the school's strengths. In general, governors are less sure about its weaknesses, particularly the unevenness in the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' learning and progress. The governing body looks into the school's progress information and its understanding of how well the school is doing in relation to other similar schools is growing. Governors have put in place arrangements that establish clear links between teachers' performance and their progression through the salary structure. The governing body manages the school's budget well and it has a good grasp of how pupil premium funds are being used to provide additional support for eligible pupils, and how effective it is in helping them. It makes sure that safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. Governors have had some training relevant to their roles, but have not had training to improve how robustly they check the work of the school.
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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	104144
Local authority	Walsall
Inspection number	404926

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	187
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sukhy Somal
Headteacher	Peter Heath
Date of previous school inspection	30 March 2011
Telephone number	01922 710145
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