

Birches Green Junior School

Birches Green Road, Erdington, Birmingham, B24 9SR

Inspection dates 16–17 January 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils make good progress in their learning and leave the school with standards that are above average in English and mathematics.
- Attendance is above average and pupils feel safe in school. Behaviour is good. Pupils have a good understanding of the dangers of using the internet.
- Pupils benefit from many opportunities to use and apply their literacy and numeracy skills in a wide range of different subjects.
- The quality of teaching is good and improving thanks to careful checking of lessons by subject leaders, and helpful training to improve staff skills.
- The headteacher, supported by the senior leadership team, has a real determination to ensure every pupil makes at least good progress from their various starting points.
- Leaders, managers and the governors have a good understanding of the progress pupils make, especially by gender and ability.
- Staff and governors work as an effective team that has made a considerable impact in moving the school from satisfactory to good.
- The local authority rightly considers this to be a good school, and so provides only 'light touch' support.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not provide enough opportunities for more-able pupils to practise their skills on their own, or to be involved in deciding the course of their own learning.
- The quality of teachers' marking is not consistent across the school, and so does not always give pupils enough information to help them improve their work.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors visited 16 lessons taught by nine teachers; 13 were joint observations with the headteacher and assistant headteacher.
- Inspectors observed and spoke to pupils during lessons and at lunch and break times. They met formally with a group of pupils.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders and managers, and the Chair of the Governing Body. A meeting also took place with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documents, including arrangements for safeguarding, performance management, attendance, information about pupils' attainment and progress, and pupils' books.
- They took into account the 13 responses from parents and carers shown on Parent View (the online questionnaire), responses to the staff questionnaire and 21 replies to a recent school questionnaire.

Inspection team

Ronald Hall, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Michael Onyon

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is an average-sized junior school.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average, as is the proportion supported at school action plus or through a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils supported by additional funding through the pupil premium, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, is well above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage, but the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above average.
- No pupils are currently educated in alternative provision away from the school site.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching to outstanding, by making sure all teachers provide regular opportunities for more-able pupils to practise their skills on their own and to be more involved in deciding what they learn and how.
- Raise pupils' achievement further by making sure that:
 - all teachers' marking gives pupils the information they need to help them improve their work
 - pupils respond to marking comments to show that they have understood how to improve their next piece of work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Pupils' skills when they join the school are broadly average. Over several years, progress in English, and more recently mathematics, has improved considerably and has been above average. This is because the school closely tracks pupils' progress and has a clear awareness of exactly where each pupil is in their learning.
- Progress in reading is good. By Year 6, pupils read with confidence across a range of subjects. For example, in Year 6, pupils showed exceptional skills in reading and sentence construction when creating descriptions of a forest.
- The school is successful in narrowing gaps in attainment, and analysis of data confirms that there are no marked differences in achievement between any groups of pupils. Due to the very positive support and highly individualised work set, many of the pupils supported by pupil premium funding make outstanding progress. The 2012 results for Year 6 showed that the points scored by pupils who were known to be eligible for free school meals were much closer to the points scored by other pupils than was the case nationally.
- Those who find learning difficult, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, are making good progress in line with their peers. They are well supported and the quality of their learning is good.
- The pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress and their achievement is above that of their peers nationally.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is typically good, as confirmed by the school's effective monitoring systems and the lessons seen during the inspection. Leaders and managers check the impact of teaching on learning thoroughly. Purposeful and well-organised performance management arrangements have resulted in good training for staff, and opportunities to observe each other's work.
- Teachers show high expectations for what all ability groups can achieve, and their planning makes sure that all groups are catered for and the work set is interesting and challenging. They take advantage of every opportunity to raise attainment, for example by giving extra support to pupils who find learning more challenging. However, the most able pupils are not always encouraged to work alone or in groups to explore their own ideas, and this occasionally results in lost opportunities to accelerate their learning.
- Teaching has improved in mathematics. In a typically good lesson observed, the teacher's enthusiastic approach and an excellent questioning style motivated the pupils, who were keen to demonstrate how much they had learnt.
- Teachers work closely with the other adults to make sure they provide valuable support to pupils both in and out of the classroom. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs receive particularly good-quality help and guidance.
- Some teachers use marking well to accelerate progress. However, this is not consistent across the school and pupils are not always expected to demonstrate that they know how to improve

their work. Nevertheless, all pupils know their individual and school targets and many are aware of exactly what they need to do to reach them.

- Although there were mixed responses in the Parent View and school questionnaires, the majority of parents feel that teaching is good in the school.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning, shown by their eagerness to take part in lessons and the way they respond to their teachers.
- Behaviour in and around the school is good. Pupils enjoy working together and often do so without direction from the teacher. Pupils like the systems for rewarding good behaviour and the skilled staff use them effectively, so there are few incidents of misbehaviour.
- Pupils say that bullying is rare and that they feel very safe. Initiatives to support families who may be in challenging circumstances have had a good impact on the positive learning environment.
- Racist incidents, inappropriate behaviour and disruption of lessons are all rare. Pupils have great confidence in the adults around them and feel that they are always available to deal with any issues. If any incidents occur, thorough procedures ensure that they are managed effectively.
- A very small minority of parents raised concerns about pupils' behaviour. Inspectors found behaviour to be typically good in and around the school. Records show that a recent exclusion was a rare incident.
- Attendance is above average. The school works closely with some families to ensure pupils attend school regularly. Partnerships with external agencies are used regularly to ensure the very best outcomes for pupils and their families.

The leadership and management are good

- The leaders and managers have made significant improvements since the last inspection and senior leaders have a much more detailed picture of the progress made by pupils, especially by gender, ability and eligibility for the pupil premium. Regular checks each half term mean that staff can quickly identify individuals or groups at risk of falling behind in their learning and so put in extra help as needed.
- All teachers, as part of the management of their performance, have targets that are linked to all pupils in their classes achieving well. The progress staff make towards these targets is checked every half term so senior leaders know where any potential issues with teaching may need to be addressed.
- The headteacher, senior leadership team and all staff have a very clear expectation that this is a school where all pupils will make good progress within each year group and during their whole time in school. Aspirations are high. Senior leaders have been most successful in improving pupils' achievement, the quality of teaching, and leadership and management since the last inspection.

- Strong partnerships with the feeder infant school and the secondary school to which pupils move on result in smooth transfers. The school also uses other partnerships to provide its pupils with a wide range of learning opportunities. For example, its strong community links give the pupils a good understanding of other cultures and religions.
- Discrimination is not tolerated in any form. Careful checking of the progress of all groups of pupils and a clear focus on closing any gaps in performance demonstrate that the school promotes equal opportunities well.
- The school works well with the local primary schools support group, and makes good use of local authority support and training. This has resulted in improved teaching and more effective governance.
- Pupil premium funding is used well to provide one-to-one support for pupils and access to a wide range of both day and residential visits so that any gaps in the performance, confidence and self-esteem of these pupils compared with other groups are small.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school enhances pupils' learning through music, art and sport. Pupils benefit from many good opportunities to experience a wide range of situations, including annual residential visits.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has undergone training and makes sure it gathers a range of evidence about the school's performance. It meets all of its duties in relation to safeguarding pupils and child protection. The governors have a good understanding of the quality of teaching through visits and reports from the headteacher, and maintain their knowledge through further regular training. They also have a firm understanding of how well the school does compared with others nationally. Governors ask senior leaders searching questions in relation to pupils' progress, including those benefiting from the pupil premium. They have a good understanding of the link between the management of teachers' performance in the classroom and salary scales. The governing body has supported senior leaders particularly well in driving the considerable improvements made since the last inspection.

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	103168
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	400594

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	218
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Beverley Roberts
Headteacher	Mary McManus
Date of previous school inspection	8 February 2010
Telephone number	0121 373 3457
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