

Mere Green Combined School

Mere Green Road, Sutton Coldfield, B75 5BL

Inspection dates 17–18 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		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Teaching, particularly in Key Stage 2, has not been consistently good to ensure that all pupils make good gains in their learning and acquire the academic skills that they need sufficiently well.
- Too many pupils are making adequate rather than good progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6. The proportion of pupils making and exceeding the expected progress is lower than that found nationally.
- Although leaders, including the governing body, have tackled weaknesses in teaching and all pupils are now making better progress, improvements are not yet sustained over time.
- Opportunities for pupils to respond to the teachers' marking of their work are inconsistent across the school.
- Teachers' lesson introductions and explanations are sometimes too long and there is not enough time for pupils to learn and find out things for themselves in lessons.

The school has the following strengths

- Teaching is improving because leaders provide teachers with precise advice about how to develop their teaching skills and expertise after watching them teach. Training helps them to get better. Consequently, all pupils are now making progress at a faster rate, particularly in Year 6.
- The standards Year 2 pupils reach have improved steadily over the past five years, especially in writing. In 2012, Year 2 pupils made outstanding progress in writing.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school. Their behaviour is good and they show positive attitudes to learning.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs in the school, and in the specialist resourced provision, make good progress.
- Under the leadership of the headteacher, together with good support from a local learning partnership, the school is moving forward at a quicker pace.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 15 lessons or parts of lessons and one assembly.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, staff and members of the governing body. In addition, the lead inspector talked with a representative of the local authority, and representatives of the Arthur Terry Learning Partnership.
- Inspectors talked with pupils, listened to them read and observed them at play during break times.
- The school’s safeguarding policies, improvement plans, governing body meeting notes and records of pupils’ behaviour were reviewed. In addition, inspectors looked at the work pupils were doing in their books, and at records of their progress.
- Inspectors took account of the 12 responses to the on-line parent questionnaire (Parent View) and replies from 10 staff questionnaires. The views of parents and carers were sought at the start of the school day as they brought their children to school.

Inspection team

Sarah Warboys, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Rowena Green

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Mere Green Combined School is an average-sized primary school. No alternative provision or off-site provision is used by the school.
- Most pupils are White British. An average proportion of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds and, of these, a small number speak English as an additional language.
- A well above-average proportion of the pupils are eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional government funding to the school. The funding is based on the number of children looked after, from Forces families and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The percentage of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who are supported by school action is average.
- The proportion of pupils who require extra help and are supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well above-average.
- The school hosts a specially resourced provision for up to 26 pupils, from 5-11 years, who experience speech and language difficulties or who have moderate learning difficulties. There are currently 24 pupils on roll in this provision.
- The 'Badgers' before- and after-school clubs, managed by the governing body, operate on the school site.
- There have been significant changes to teaching staff. Nine teachers have joined the school since the previous inspection.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school is due to convert to Academy status in April 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Maintain recent improvements in teaching, particularly in Years 3 to 6, and thereby raise pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics by ensuring that all staff:
 - use time more effectively in all parts of lessons in order to increase opportunities for pupils to work on their own
 - increase opportunities for pupils to respond to teacher's marking of their work so that they can practise and improve their skills.
- Ensure that the school's leaders, including the governing body, build on their success to date by:
 - maintaining a strong focus on improving the quality of teaching
 - ensuring teaching across the school secures consistently good progress year-on-year.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- By the time pupils leave Year 6, the standards they reach in reading, writing and mathematics are below average. In previous years, teaching has not been good enough to ensure that all pupils across the school make the best possible progress, particularly in Key Stage 2. Better teaching is leading to all groups of pupils currently at the school making accelerated progress. Year 6 pupils in particular, are making rapid progress. However, recent improvements are not yet sustained over time.
- Nursery and Reception children enter school with basic skills that are lower than those expected for their age. Children get off to a good start, make good progress in all areas of learning and most meet the expected level at the end of the Reception Year. Standards in reading and mathematics in Year 2 are close to the national average. They have risen steadily in the past five years. In 2012, Year 2 pupils made outstanding progress to reach above the national average in writing. This is because younger pupils are systematically taught about letters and the sounds that they make which helps them to read new words. It also supports their spelling when writing.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs in the school, and in the specialist resourced provision, make good progress. This is because individual and small group teaching is sharply focused on tackling specific gaps in their knowledge, skills and understanding. Arrangements for pupils in the resource bases are flexible. They are taught in small class groups, though those who are able learn alongside their peers in the mainstream classes. Adults provide valuable opportunities for pupils to practise and develop their speaking, and listening skills on a one-to-one basis, free from other distractions. As a result, these skills are developed effectively.
- By the end of Year 2, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals reached similar standards in reading, writing and mathematics to similar pupils nationally and to other pupils in the school. In 2012, the oldest pupils' attainment in English and mathematics was below similar and all pupils nationally. Additional funding received by the school in the form of the pupil premium has been used effectively to provide extra support for pupils in lessons, in small group work and on a one-to-one basis. It has provided music tuition, access to residential trips and to before- and after-school clubs. Consequently, these pupils are making progress at a faster rate and attainment gaps with other pupils in the school are closing.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Previous weaknesses in teaching have led to underachievement for some pupils. Rates of progress, particularly for those pupils in Years 3, 4, 5 and 6 have been too variable. Teaching has improved so that in recent times, all pupils are making progress at a faster rate and the oldest pupils are catching up rapidly and are in line to reach national average levels of attainment at the end of this academic year.
- In the most effective lessons, teachers have high expectations of learning and behaviour. They set work for pupils that is well matched to their needs and capabilities. Adults provide good support for pupils who need extra help by breaking down learning into smaller steps. They set more demanding tasks for those who are more-able and provide interesting opportunities for all pupils to practise new skills. In other lessons, teachers' explanations are too long and this means pupils do not have enough time to work on their own and to think for themselves.
- Teachers' marking of pupils' work is positive. It clearly indicates what they have done well and

what they need to do to improve. Pupils fully understand the 'pink for think' and 'green for good' marking system that is used consistently well across the school. Teachers regularly set additional tasks for pupils so that their thinking can be extended. However, they are not always given sufficient time to respond to the teachers' marking before the next lesson. Consequently, there are missed opportunities for pupils to address their errors and improve their skills.

- In the specially resourced bases, teachers use a range of teaching strategies that are closely matched to the very specific needs of each pupil. Lessons are enjoyable because learning is conducted at a brisk pace and pupils are actively involved in practical activities. Adults provide good role models and encourage pupils to practise their speaking and listening skills regularly. Pupils receive immediate feedback from staff so that they know what they have done well and how they can improve. As a result, these pupils make good progress in class and over time.
- The best learning happens when teachers take account of what pupils already know and plan activities which help move learning on. They listen carefully to pupils' responses and reshape tasks so that they are at just the right level of difficulty to make certain all pupils make the best possible progress. All adults ask pupils questions that check their understanding and consolidate and extend learning. They provide rich and varied opportunities for pupils to share their ideas with a 'talk partner' and this is particularly helpful in enabling pupils to clarify their thoughts before writing. Computer technology is used effectively to motivate pupils and maintain their interest.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, there is a good balance between adult led activities and those that children choose for themselves. Adults interact well with children's play and interventions help to move learning on at a good pace. They use children's interests effectively and plan activities that help to develop their speaking and listening skills at a good rate. For example, they learned new words such as 'icy' and 'freezing' as they excitedly explored the sight, sounds and textures of ice and snow outside.
- Teachers plan interesting activities which foster pupils' curiosity, increase their engagement in learning and support their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. For example, in Year 3, pupils were fascinated by a science experiment in which they investigated the effects of soaking eggs in a variety of liquids. In an assembly a film clip illustrated being 'resourceful' and stimulated discussions about how the idea might be applied to their own lives.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Close partnerships with families, including the provision of the 'Badgers' before- and after-school club, have led to an improvement in attendance rates that have risen for three successive years to average levels. Those parents and carers who responded to the on-line questionnaire and spoke to inspectors indicated that their children are happy to come to school and are well cared for in school and in the childcare provision.
- Adults manage pupils' behaviour consistently, positively and effectively. Pupils have a good understanding of the rewards and sanctions of the school's systems for promoting good behaviour. Alongside the benefits of using the internet as a tool for information and research, they are actively taught how to treat it with caution and keep themselves safe.
- Pupils say that they feel safe and secure and enjoy school. When asked by an inspector how the school could be improved, one pupil said, 'It's perfect already!' Pupils say that there are a few occasions when there is bullying, such as name-calling, on the playground. However, they know how to seek help and are confident that adults will deal with their concerns.

- Around the school and in lessons, almost all pupils are keen to learn and behave well. An overwhelming majority of pupils show positive and responsible attitudes to learning in lessons and demonstrate good work and study habits. Occasionally, a very small number of pupils exhibit low-level, disruptive behaviour when working on their own and this limits learning.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Leaders have successfully addressed weaknesses in teaching and consequently, it is improving. Those in charge are taking the right steps to improve pupils' progress and are clearly focused on the right priorities. They know what the school does well and what needs to be done to improve. The leadership of teaching has improved provision and outcomes and inadequate teaching has been eliminated. However, teaching is not yet good enough and leaders recognise that teaching improvements must be sustained to secure consistently good progress in all subjects.
- Led by a determined headteacher, the new senior leadership team is now driving the school forward at a quicker pace and have shown an increased capacity to secure further improvement. Staff morale is high and all are behind the headteacher's drive to improve teaching. Parents and carers are positive about the work of the school and appreciate improvements to methods of communication between home and school. Partnerships with support agencies for pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable ensure that they get the support that they need.
- Due care and attention is given to ensuring equality of opportunity by staff who take appropriate steps to tackle discrimination. They meet regularly to discuss the progress that each pupil is making and to identify those that are not making enough progress and ensure that they get extra help. The work of the resource base provision is well led and managed and pupils are fully integrated into the school community leadership ensures that they are achieving well.
- After watching them teach, leaders discuss with teachers and other adults how their skills can be improved. Staff training is tailored to suit their individual needs, leadership roles and areas of expertise. Leaders, including governors, ensure that only those members of staff that have achieved their targets are awarded pay increases. They ensure that staff with additional responsibilities receive appropriate financial incentives.
- The school is set to convert to Academy status in April 2013 and to become a member of a Learning Partnership with a local cluster of schools. This partnership has already provided effective support to the school's leaders, governors and staff in joint projects, planning and training.
- The local authority has provided effective support for the school in the past, particularly in developing the skills of its leaders and in improving teaching.

■ The governance of the school:

- The governing body is undergoing significant reform in preparation for the move to Academy status later this year. They bring a range of skills and expertise to governance that is used appropriately in the existing committee structure. They ensure that the national safeguarding requirements are fully met and that the childcare provision is managed effectively. Governors challenge the school to improve its performance, though its written records of their discussions in holding the school to account are not as thorough as they could be. They are clear about the school's strengths and areas for improvement and are aware of the school's performance. Governors have provided good support to the headteacher in taking decisive action to address weak teaching. They are becoming more sharply focused on teaching and its effectiveness on pupils' learning. They use the information to inform performance management decision-making; thereby rewarding good teachers and tackling any

underperformance robustly. Governors are making the most of training opportunities so they can make more informed decisions about the work of the school. They ensure that the school's finances, including the pupil premium, are spent wisely and in pupils' best interests.

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	103389
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	400617

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	221
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Toby Smith
Headteacher	Anna Balson
Date of previous school inspection	12 July 2010
Telephone number	0121 3081384
Fax number	0121 323 2644
Email address	admin@meregrn.bham.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. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email 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, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: 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.

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
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2013

