

Lapal Primary School

Priory Road, Halesowen, B62 0BZ

Inspection dates

28 February–1 March 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		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The determined leadership of the executive headteacher, head of school and Chair of Governors has secured rapid and strong improvement to pupils' personal and academic achievement in a very short time.
- All pupils make good progress. Their progress is excellent in reading. They are very good at working on their own in English lessons.
- There has been considerable and strong improvement to the quality of teaching over the last two years, thanks to very good training. Teaching is at least good and some is outstanding.
- Teachers present learning in interesting ways that motivate and engage pupils thoroughly throughout lessons.
- Pupils' exemplary attitudes and high personal aspirations are reflected in a strong commitment to do their best in lessons. Their behaviour is excellent and they feel very safe.
- Leaders keep a very close check on how well individual pupils are doing, so they can act quickly if anyone drops behind.
- The whole school team including governors have high expectations for pupils' success.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In some mathematics lessons progress is not as rapid as it could be because teachers do not change activities or teaching quickly enough when pupils do not fully understand.
- Pupils do not work as well on their own in mathematics, because there are not so many prompts or supports to help them.
- Teachers have visited lessons with teachers from Lutley Primary, but have only just started to watch regularly some of the outstanding lessons that take place in Lapal, in order to help them further improve their own teaching.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 18 lessons taught by 11 teachers. In addition, they made a number of short visits to lessons.
- The inspectors heard some pupils read. They looked at past and current information about pupils' progress and pupils' work in books and on display.
- The inspectors also looked at documents relating to behaviour and safeguarding, the school's checks about what is going well, and school improvement planning.
- The inspectors met with small groups of pupils to talk about their learning and to find out what they thought of the school. Inspectors also met with staff, and with representatives of the governing body and the local authority.
- The inspectors talked to parents informally at the start of the day. They took into account 54 responses shown in the online questionnaire (Parent View) and also the school's own parent and pupil surveys.
- The inspectors took note of 19 staff questionnaires.

Inspection team

Georgina Beasley, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Christopher Webb

Additional Inspector

Frances Millett

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Lapal Primary School is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The large majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The remainder of pupils are from a number of different minority ethnic backgrounds.
- A very small number of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- A well-below-average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children in local authority care, and those who have a parent in the armed services. None of the children in this school are in local authority care.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average.
- The proportion supported at school action plus and with a statement of special educational needs is also below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards (the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress).
- The school has been federated since January 2012 with Lutley Primary School, with which it shares an executive headteacher, who is a national leader of excellence, governing body, school business manager and inclusion leader.
- The school makes use of alternative provision off site for two pupils, at Quarry Bank Language Centre and The Intensive Learning Unit for support with dyslexia.
- The on-site breakfast club and after-school club, and Lapal Preschool are not managed by the governing body and are inspected separately.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make more teaching outstanding by extending opportunities for all teaching staff to watch each other teach and to share the different ideas and methods that result in outstanding learning.
- Consolidate the improvements in pupils' achievement in mathematics by:
 - ensuring teachers always use the information they get from checking pupils' learning during lessons to change the level of support or challenge as required
 - extending prompts to show pupils the different ways that they can solve problems.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Pupils make good progress across the school. By the time pupils leave the school, standards are well above average in reading and writing and above average in mathematics.
- Children make good progress in the Reception year from starting points that are at the levels expected for their age. Nearly all reach average levels by the end of the year and a good number do better than this. The extremely well organised learning enables children to make excellent progress in their reading and personal, social and emotional development. They are inquisitive and curious learners and confident readers by the time they start in Year 1.
- Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are able to work out unfamiliar words quickly to help them read fluently. They find evidence in the writing to justify their view when talking about the characters and plot in stories. An above-average proportion of pupils reached the expected level in the Year 1 phonics screening check last year.
- Pupils in Years 3 to 6 read for enjoyment and to research facts for their learning in other subjects. Boys' reading has improved particularly well. They are motivated because they are given a varied choice of things to read including football magazines and e-books.
- The strong focus on improving writing standards has proved successful over the last two years. Pupils refer to working walls, which display ideas and prompts from previous lessons, sentence and punctuation 'ladders' and vocabulary lists to help them write to a high standard when working on their own.
- Pupils currently in the school make good progress in mathematics because they are increasingly using their knowledge and understanding to solve real-life problems. Evidence from last year's books and the school's information about progress indicates that more-able girls underperformed in the Year 6 test last year. A good proportion of pupils, including girls, are on track to reach above-average levels this year. However, progress in mathematics is not yet as rapid as in English.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good and sometimes excellent progress and most reach at least average levels by the end of Year 6. There is no difference in the progress of pupils of different ethnic backgrounds. Those who speak English as an additional language receive good support and make good progress.
- The very small number of pupils who are supported by the additional funding for pupil premium make good progress. Because numbers are small, attainment data can be very distorted by, for example, the presence of pupils who have special educational needs. In 2012, those known to be eligible for free school meals were about two terms behind other pupils in writing and one term in mathematics. This was a smaller gap than nationally.
- The progress and attendance of pupils who are taught off site have improved extremely well as a result of the alternative provision.
- Curricular themes motivate and interest pupils and so they are highly engaged in their learning. As a result, pupils make good progress in a number of subjects including history, art, music, science, physical education and information and communication technology.

The quality of teaching is good

- An outstanding aspect of teaching is the positive climate in lessons that promote pupils' active learning and full engagement. Lessons are interesting and so pupils remain attentive throughout and concentrate extremely well.
- Pupils are given every opportunity to talk to teachers about their learning. They know their targets, which are linked to national curriculum levels so that they know whether they are doing as well as they should. Teachers check pupils' work carefully and written and oral comments help pupils make the improvement they need to do even better. Targets are included in the pupils' individual planners and ticked when achieved to give pupils and parents on-going information about progress in reading, writing and the number aspect of mathematics.
- Examples, such as those displayed on the 'working wall' for English, guide pupils' learning effectively and help them to check for themselves that they are always doing their best when working on their own. The same sort of learning tools or prompts are less evident in mathematics, where pupils are not always so good at checking that they have thought of different methods that can be used to solve problems without the help of adults.
- Teachers' questions always find out what pupils are thinking so that they can explain something in more detail if they find pupils do not fully understand what is expected. Pupils value this and say, 'teachers always help us to understand if we get stuck'. In some mathematics lessons teachers do not always act quickly to change things if anyone is finding the work too challenging. As a result, in some lessons pupils do not always achieve as well as they can.
- Teaching assistants support learning in lessons well. They know pupils' needs and provide effective support to help them use and develop reading and writing skills. They ensure good learning by asking questions that guide pupils and that enable them to do things for themselves rather than telling pupils what to do.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils' exemplary attitudes to learning and excellent behaviour ensure that learning is never interrupted in lessons.
 - Pupils have an astute understanding of what constitutes bullying including cyber-bullying. They say that any very rare fall-outs are sorted out very quickly. Almost all parents who spoke to inspectors or completed the online and school questionnaires confirmed this view.
 - Every pupil asked, confirmed by responses in the recent pupil survey, said that they feel safe and that they would go to any adult if they had a concern. The recent visit from the charity Childline reminded pupils of the importance to tell and to talk about any concerns that they may have.
 - Pupils know the dangers of online messaging. They value being able to have full access to the internet via the local authority learning platform to find e-books to read and the information that they need to support their learning in a range of subjects.
 - Pupils regularly post compliments to each other on the compliments corner board to show
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respect and thanks for others' good deeds, accomplishments and conduct. The snakes and ladder chart in every classroom helps pupils manage their own behaviour effectively.

- Pupils have excellent opportunity to take responsibility in school. The school council has three committees that look at all aspects of the school's work and enable pupils to have a direct influence on decision making. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 enjoy being 'play pals' and organising games and activities at lunchtimes, and being 'buddies' to younger pupils.
- Attendance has improved significantly since the previous inspection and is now above average. The number of pupils who are late has fallen dramatically as a result of rigorous checks and subsequent support given to families who need it.

The leadership and management are good

- The substantial and rapid improvement to teaching, pupils' achievement and leadership including governance is due to a whole-school approach to improvement.
- The outstanding leadership of the executive headteacher and head of school has established high expectations and a commitment from all staff to take responsibility for their performance. Teachers and leaders only receive a salary award if they meet stringent and challenging performance targets as measured by pupils' progress.
- Training and support are effective. Teaching has improved due to the personal expertise of teaching staff and the adoption of successful methods gleaned from observing the outstanding teaching of colleagues in the federated school. Teachers have only just started to observe the best practice within Lapal.
- The progress of different groups is checked regularly to ensure everyone has equal opportunities to learn. Teachers meet formally at least every half term to discuss pupils' progress, and in reality more often than this if necessary. They devise action plans across the different year groups. The teachers with responsibilities for areas and subjects check these closely to ensure that teaching continues to be successful in speeding up every pupil's progress.
- The curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through a varied range of events and activities. Pupils have an astute understanding of their own and others' feelings and emotions. Year 6 pupils considered carefully how children must have felt during the Second World War bombing of London. Pupils learn about their own and other cultures through a varied range of activities and subjects.
- Pupil premium funds are spent on ensuring that all pupils can take part in all activities and events regardless of their ability to pay. Additional staffing supports pupils in small groups or individually in lessons or in small groups outside the classroom. As a result of their work, pupils who receive the pupil premium make the same good progress as their classmates.
- The local authority facilitated the initial school-to-school support and supported the setting up of the federation with Lutley Primary School. The school has also benefited from some privately sought consultancy support.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The effectiveness of the governing body has improved dramatically since the previous

inspection. Its three committees ensure all aspects of the school's work are checked and reviewed regularly. Well-focused training ensures that the governing body has at least one person with the knowledge and expertise required to ensure all statutory requirements are met, including those relating to safeguarding and for the performance management of staff. Governors know the school well because of their full involvement in school events and in improvement planning and development. They understand performance data, and how good teaching is and what is being done to improve it. As a result, governors ask the school searching questions about its work. The Chair of Governors in particular has a good understanding of performance information and is quick to ask if pupils' progress slows, including those who receive the pupil premium.

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	103797
Local authority	Dudley
Inspection number	400657

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	308
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	George Craig
Headteacher	Jeannette Mackinney
Date of previous school inspection	22 September 2009
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