

Clifton Primary School

St Paul's Road, Balsall Heath, Birmingham, B12 8LY

Inspection dates

8–9 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Pupils make excellent progress in their learning, and achieve outstandingly well in English and mathematics.
- From low starting points, all groups of pupils reach at least the levels of attainment expected for their age by the end of Year 6, and the number who reach higher levels is increasing every year.
- Excellent individual help and guidance means that pupils who are supported by additional funding, such as those supported by the pupil premium, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, all do especially well.
- Teaching is outstanding in all year groups. Lessons are challenging and focus on giving pupils the basic skills they will need in their future lives.
- Teachers do not always develop pupils' speaking skills quite as well as their other literacy and numeracy skills.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are outstanding. They are lively, energetic and curious, and their relationships with each other and with adults are excellent. They feel safe, and parents have great confidence in the way the school teaches and looks after them.
- The headteacher is a leader of the highest quality, and the exceptional team of senior and other leaders is highly effective in constantly improving the quality of teaching and learning.
- The governing body is well led and plays a large role in driving school improvement. It is very effective in promoting the school as the thriving centrepiece of a diverse multicultural community.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 34 lessons taught by 31 teachers, including 18 that were observed jointly with either the headteacher or other senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with pupils, the headteacher, deputy headteacher, assistant headteachers, members of management teams, four governors and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the school's work. They examined the school's improvement plans and its checks on how well it is doing, safeguarding arrangements, health and safety records, school policies, a range of pupils' work and information about their progress.
- Inspectors took account of 14 responses to the online Parent View survey. They also held informal discussions with parents before and after school.
- The inspectors examined 73 questionnaire responses from members of staff.

Inspection team

Rodney Braithwaite, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Anthony Green	Additional Inspector
Marian Driver	Additional Inspector
Rosemary Barnfield	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Clifton Primary School is much larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The great majority of pupils come from a wide range of ethnic heritages. The largest groups are of Asian or Arabic-Yemeni heritage.
- Almost all pupils speak English as an additional language. Nearly a quarter of the pupils speak little or no English when they enter the school. At present, 30 different languages are spoken.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported by school action is above average. The proportion supported by school action plus or a statement of special educational needs is also above average.
- Well over half of the pupils are known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium (additional funding for children in the care of the local authority, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children of service families). This is double the national average. There are currently no children of service families in the school.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.
- The school is organised into 23 single-year classes and a nursery. It is in the process of changing from three classes to four in each year group.
- A small group of pupils are educated on a part-time basis at Calthorpe Special School.
- The school provides a breakfast club, which is managed by the governing body.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' speaking skills, especially in the nursery and Reception, by:
 - improving teachers' questioning skills so that pupils gain confidence in giving longer answers, and use more of the vocabulary they are learning
 - encouraging pupils to speak out more clearly in whole-class situations, so that all other pupils are able to hear and respond
 - asking individual pupils specific questions according to their needs, and helping them to explain their thinking and learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Children come into the nursery with skills that are much lower than expected for their age, especially in their language and personal and social development, and make outstanding progress across the school. By the time they leave at the end of Year 6, standards have reached average levels and the proportion of pupils exceeding national expectations for their age in English and mathematics is increasing every year.
- Achievement is outstanding for all groups of pupils. This includes pupils from over 40 different nationalities, almost all of whom speak English as an additional language, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.
- Most pupils who are supported through the pupil premium reach levels of attainment in English and mathematics that are similar to, or higher than, those of other pupils. There is no longer a gap between their attainment and that of others anywhere in the school. They do so well as a result of extra teaching, based on a rigorous analysis of the needs of each individual pupil. The school leaves no stone unturned in its ambition for every pupil to achieve as well as they can.
- High achievement in writing has been a notable success. In several of the lessons observed, pupils and teachers worked enthusiastically together on many aspects of English grammar and punctuation. Pupils do not find such activities a chore, because they are bursting to learn and improve their skills.
- This was illustrated when pupils in Year 5 wrote about the feelings of characters in *Romeo and Juliet*, and discussed the meaning of words like 'trait' and 'colon'. Pupils in Year 4 enjoyed learning the difference between writing formal and informal letters, defining 'alliteration' and trying to work out what an 'agony aunt' does.
- The school has worked hard on raising attainment in speaking through giving pupils numerous opportunities to talk and work together in class activities. However, progress has been a little slower than in other aspects of literacy and leaders have recognised this.
- Children in the vibrant and lively nursery and Reception classes make rapid progress in their acquisition of skills. In particular they make excellent strides in becoming more independent and knowing how to be polite and respectful to each other. Their speaking skills are developing at a slower rate, and the staff do not always make the most of opportunities to develop these key skills from an early age.
- Reading standards have been rising consistently in the last 18 months. This is mainly because the school has concentrated on improving pupils' knowledge of letters and sounds (phonics) after a disappointing screening check for Year 1 pupils last year. The sharp focus on helping small groups and individuals to read is leading to a rapid rise in progress, as observed in Reception and Year 1.
- Pupils enjoy reading widely. They have regular opportunities to read with adults in school, and pupils in Year 6 say that they still read to one 'every day'. They eagerly show their individual 'Bookworm' sheets, which they record what they have read and their comments.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Teaching is consistently at least good and frequently excellent across the school. Lessons build very effectively on pupils' previous learning, based on high levels of understanding of pupils' needs by the teachers and their highly competent teaching assistants. By keeping outstanding and detailed records of progress, staff develop a complete picture of the academic and personal needs of their pupils.
- Lessons are stimulating, exciting and consistently well planned in all year groups to harness the enthusiastic attitudes of the pupils. These characteristics were seen when Year 5 investigated the habitat of the woodlouse, Year 6 learned to retrieve information from advanced texts, Year 3 wrote a persuasive letter to the headteacher requesting a vegetable patch, and Year 2 discovered with the use of a thesaurus the meanings of words with 'ious' endings like 'delicious' and 'obnoxious'.
- An exceptional feature is the shared teaching in different classes and focus groups between experienced teachers with advanced skills and teachers less experienced, who benefit strongly in the development of their own skills.
- A group of more-able and gifted and talented pupils are provided with weekly specialist teaching in mathematics. This helps them to make rapid progress.
- Relationships throughout the school are excellent, and teachers make sure that pupils are never allowed to struggle with their understanding of how to improve their work. Effective marking and verbal discussions enable pupils to understand clearly their targets and next steps in learning.
- Teachers build into many lessons, across a wide range of subjects, objectives for promoting literacy and numeracy skills. They also use excellent resources in information and communication technology, such as the school's new tablet computers, to promote pupils' learning and development of basic skills for their future lives.
- Teachers throughout the school regularly ask pupils questions to assess their understanding, and give them many opportunities to talk to each other in small groups or pairs. However, some questions lead to only very short responses, which are occasionally inaudible. Questions are not always directed enough at the pupils who would benefit most from prompting and some show little confidence when speaking in front of the whole class, especially when asked how they had tried to solve problems.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils have outstanding attitudes to school. They have a huge enthusiasm for learning, not just in practical and stimulating activities, but also for learning basic skills such as English grammar and punctuation. This was exemplified by a group who named almost every subject taught in the school as 'my favourite' learning activity.
- Pupils relate very well to each other, to staff and to visitors alike. They enjoy welcoming adults and show great curiosity in people and the world around them. Although very lively and energetic, pupils are always respectful of others and have a clear understanding of acceptable behaviour.
- Pupils say they feel safe, and that everyone behaves safely in and around the school. This was observed frequently when pupils were enjoying lunch together or in the playground.

- Children in the nursery and Reception settle quickly and happily into school routines. This is particularly helpful for the considerable number of children who speak little or no English on arrival, and have had no previous experience of pre-school opportunities.
- Behaviour in lessons is excellent because pupils are fully challenged in all their learning. Parents express great satisfaction with behaviour and safety in the school, and none raised any concerns. Virtually the whole staff strongly agree that behaviour is exceptional.
- There have been no reported racial incidents in a school with pupils from a wide number of backgrounds, and no exclusions of pupils in the last three years. The highly effective promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development contributes to a very positive environment where all pupils are valued.
- Pupils feel that there are no problems with behaviour and bullying. The quote at length what they have learnt from anti-bullying days, much of which shows their awareness of the dangers of bullying through the internet or mobile phones.
- Strong and effective links to external professionals support the school in fully meeting the needs of pupils whose circumstances make them the most vulnerable. Learning mentors are especially effective in linking with families.
- Attendance has improved well in the last two years and is now similar to the national average. The school has successfully discouraged families from taking extended holidays abroad, which now happens far less frequently as there is such high demand for places in the school.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The exceptionally effective and experienced headteacher has developed a highly motivated and very well organised management team. This has ensured that the school has remained outstanding since its last inspection, and never stands still in its search for improvement.
- All teachers get the opportunity to be involved in well-led and ambitious teams, which are fully accountable to senior leaders for maintaining the highest quality of education in their areas of responsibility. They do this through rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning, which has led to a remarkable consistency of approach throughout all classes. Careful planning for the needs of all pupils is based on teachers' extensive knowledge about their individual progress.
- Teachers know that they are held responsible for the improvement and successes of their pupils. They are greatly helped by the highly effective linking of their performance targets to frequent opportunities for further training to develop their skills.
- Astute use of the pupil premium grant has consistently promoted effective and focused teaching of eligible pupils, leading to their exemplary progress. The grant has also been used to boost resources, and to provide much one-to-one adult support.
- The school has a fine track record of promoting excellent teaching that results in high achievement by all groups of pupils, and its leaders have made great strides in providing a wealth of rich and stimulating learning opportunities, both in and out of school time. These improvements and pupils' excellent behaviour have further strengthened their spiritual, moral, social and cultural education.

- A considerable strength of the school is its thoroughly inclusive multicultural environment, which promotes equal opportunities at all times. The school tolerates no discrimination through gender, ethnicity, disability or special educational needs.
- The local authority has very high regard for the school and regularly invites leaders to be involved in supporting other schools. Any support it provides is usually at the request of the school.
- Although very few parents responded to Parent View (all positively), all those who spoke to inspectors were highly supportive. Surveys conducted by the school in the last two years from a much wider parent base support these findings.
- The school makes every effort to reach out to the many parents who are traditionally nervous about involvement with schools.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is very well informed. Governors support the school in all its activities and stay very closely in touch with leaders and the staff. They hold the school rigorously to account, and have been very conscious since the last inspection of 'not allowing any drift' in its performance. As the governing body has some new members, the Chair has made sure that suitable training opportunities are provided for them. Governors monitor pupil premium spending in great detail and have an excellent awareness of the achievement of all groups of pupils. They are developing their expertise in ensuring that staff performance is linked to pay rises, especially in relating the quality of teaching and pupils' progress to school targets. The governors are well informed about safeguarding and ensure that the school fully meets national requirements.

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	134840
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	411706

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	770
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sylvia Fry
Headteacher	Christine Mitchell
Date of previous school inspection	29 April 2009
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