

Edgar Stammers Primary School

Harden Road, Coalpool, Walsall, WS3 1RQ

Inspection dates 15–16 May 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 good because:

- Weaknesses in pupils' literacy skills, especially speaking and writing, hold back pupils' progress. Staff sometimes do not question pupils well enough to develop their speaking skills. Occasionally, there is a lack of good resources to support pupils' writing.
- Teaching in Years 1 to 6 is not consistently good enough to ensure pupils achieve well.
- Teachers do not always demonstrate high expectations for pupils' progress or plan lessons in ways which ensure that time is well used and pupils can learn independently and quickly.
- There are weaknesses in monitoring pupils' achievement in reading and the progress of disabled pupils and those pupils with special educational needs.
- Although attendance has improved in the last few years, there has been a small recent decline. Most pupils attend regularly, but a small minority of pupils are persistently absent.
- Some actions senior and subject leaders take are not checked rigorously or swiftly enough to ensure teaching and pupils' achievement improve rapidly.
- Teachers' verbal feedback and marking do not provide pupils with enough opportunities to reflect on their learning and take responsibility for improving their work.

The school has the following strengths:

- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is consistently good and enables children to make good progress.
- Senior leaders have recruited well and improved the proportion of good teaching since the previous inspection. There are a few examples of outstanding practice.
- Attainment in Year 2 rose in 2012 and these pupils continue to achieve well in Year 3.
- The school's welcoming, caring environment supports the large number of pupils who have significant social or emotional needs effectively.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are mainly positive. They get on well with each other and with adults. They play happily together, behave well and know how to stay safe.
- Governors know the school well and are active in helping it improve.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in 20 lessons taught by 16 teachers. No joint observations took place as the headteacher and deputy headteacher had other commitments during the inspection, including the administration of Year 6 SATs tests.
- Samples of pupils' work in English and mathematics were analysed. An inspector listened to some Year 2 pupils reading.
- Meetings were held with school staff, a group of pupils, governors and representatives from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 15 questionnaires completed by staff. There were insufficient responses from parents and carers for these to be recorded on the online questionnaire (Parent View). An inspector also spoke informally to a few parents and carers at the beginning of the school day.
- Inspectors looked at a range of evidence including: the work in pupils' books; monitoring records; school improvement plans; the school's own data on pupils' attainment and progress; and policies, procedures and records relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.

Inspection team

Derek Aitken, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Brenda Iles

Additional Inspector

David Beddard

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than most primary schools.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium (extra government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those who are looked after by the local authority and those from service families) is high. Currently there are no children of service families attending the school.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is average. The proportion of those pupils supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in two Nursery classes and two Reception classes.
- Childcare facilities are offered on the school site by Sure Start. This provision is subject to a separate inspection.
- There have been major staffing changes among subject and department leaders in the last 15 months.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching to good or better by ensuring all teachers:
 - have high expectations for pupils' progress and plan lessons carefully to enable all pupils to learn independently and at a brisk pace
 - make good use of questioning to ensure pupils improve their speaking skills
 - use verbal feedback and marking well to involve pupils in assessing their learning, so they can take more responsibility for their own progress.
- Raise pupils' achievement, especially in English, by:
 - providing them with a broad range of exciting source material to stimulate their imagination and to enable them to take small, successful steps in structuring their writing
 - checking their progress in reading more closely
 - monitoring the progress of disabled pupils and those pupils who have special educational needs thoroughly.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - improving the rigour of monitoring processes and reviewing new initiatives thoroughly and in a timely way to ensure they are having a positive impact on teaching and learning and on pupils' achievement.
- Improve attendance by:
 - finding new ways to work with the parents and carers of pupils who are persistently absent and ensuring that the new system which has been implemented for investigating attendance is effective in raising attendance to meet the local authority target of 94.5% by December 2013.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Children enter Nursery with low levels of skills, especially in communication, language and literacy. Although staff set a good example of how to speak well, most nursery children respond in simple sentences and some use only single words and gestures.
- Children make good progress in identifying letters and sounds in short words. Some weaknesses in children's skills remain, especially in literacy, as they lack confidence when opportunities arise to apply their skills independently and most children start Year 1 with below-average attainment.
- Pupils' attainment in Key Stage 1 remains below average but rose last year and this improvement is being maintained in Year 2 this year, except in writing. Year 3 pupils are working in line with the levels expected for their age.
- Less able pupils in Year 2 know what they have to do to help them to sound out words but sometimes misread words or are hesitant when they encounter everyday words in stories. Some older pupils have a limited range of vocabulary and find it hard to express their views orally or in writing when they have to rely on their imagination to write their own stories. Support groups, including booster classes, help most Year 6 pupils to reach the nationally expected Level 4 in reading and writing.
- Most pupils make the progress expected of them over Key Stage 2 in English, but few pupils make better than expected progress, and attainment remains below average by the end of Year 6. Pupils do a little better in mathematics, because most pupils understand mathematical vocabulary, enjoy number work and respond well to the 'mini-challenges' set by teachers to work out calculations correctly.
- By the end of Year 6 most pupils achieve similarly overall, although girls do better in writing and boys do better in mathematics. Disabled pupils and those pupils who have special educational needs achieve better in mathematics than in English.
- The achievement of pupils eligible for the pupil premium varies across year groups. However, in the last two years eligible Year 6 pupils achieved a little better than their classmates. In 2012, eligible pupils were working two terms behind all pupils nationally in both English and mathematics, but they were in line with similar pupils across the country.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Over time, teaching has not been good enough to make sure pupils achieve well enough across the school and securely acquire the range of skills they need to succeed by the end of Year 6.
- Teachers do not always plan lessons carefully to ensure pupils learn at a brisk pace. In some lessons pupils spend too long on undemanding tasks, which give them little scope for learning independently and using their own ideas to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding.
- In a few English lessons there are not enough good learning resources to stimulate pupils' imagination, to help them to take the small steps needed to structure their writing and to write more creatively and in suitable depth. There is an over-reliance on tasks directed by teachers, so that pupils have few opportunities to discuss their work and make their own decisions about what to write. Consequently, some pupils find it hard to think for themselves and occasionally become discouraged.
- Sometimes staff do not question pupils in sufficient detail to reinforce expectations for pupils' progress, make sure pupils think hard, understand how well they are learning and develop their speaking skills confidently.
- Pupils' learning logs provide them with some useful information about their levels and targets. Staff regularly mark pupils' work and indicate what pupils have done well. However, their comments often lack detail and thus provide pupils with limited opportunities to respond and to

take more responsibility for improving their work.

- The teaching of disabled pupils and those pupils who have special educational needs is variable. Their achievement is not tightly monitored and support is sometimes not matched well enough to their needs. This was observed in a Year 4 lesson, when weaknesses in questioning and lack of resources held back their progress.
- Nursery and reception children are consistently well taught. Staff use assessment well to match activities to children's different stages of development and question children very effectively to help them make their own decisions, for example about the good and bad characters in 'Red Hen'.
- Mathematical skills are usually taught well in Key Stage 2. Teachers gradually increase the difficulty of the tasks they devise for pupils and question pupils well to ensure that all pupils work at a brisk pace and feel confident about moving on to harder work.
- When teaching is good or better, it is marked by strong expectations, carefully chosen and well-timed activities to sustain pupils' interest, active participation by pupils and quick responses by staff to any individual misconceptions. Teachers assess with pupils what they have achieved so that they recognise what they have learnt and how well they are doing.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Nearly all children in Nursery and Reception settle well in school and build strong relationships with each other and adults. They show enthusiasm and persistence in self-chosen tasks and cooperate well in pairs and small groups.
- In other year groups pupils play contentedly together and behave well. When teaching is good or better, pupils are motivated and responsive, keen to be challenged and eager to please staff. In the less successful lessons, pupils' behaviour is rarely disruptive but some pupils lose interest at times and do not complete their work.
- Pupils respect and trust staff. Pupils report that they can turn to an adult at any time for help. They value rewards for good behaviour and feel safe in school because they believe they are well cared for by staff. They are taught what they need to know to stay safe in different situations, for example on the internet and through 'stay safe weeks'.
- Pupils have a good understanding of different types of bullying and say that when rare instances of bullying occur, staff take prompt action to resolve the matter. Pupils judge that, on most occasions, they have the skills necessary to sort out the consequences of any minor 'fall-outs' to everyone's satisfaction.
- Staff apply procedures for managing pupils' behaviour consistently and respond sensitively to pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable or who are prone to sudden mood swings. The parent advisor works well with parents and carers to reduce barriers to their children's learning, including those whose pupils have had difficulties in other schools. Parents and carers agree that the school is a welcoming place where their concerns are listened to and their children are effectively supported. The school successfully fosters good relationships.
- Pupils' attendance, while remaining below average, had risen over the last few years until the beginning of this year, but rates fell due to illness and low attendance when the school remained open during snow falls. While most pupils attend regularly, there is a small, but significant minority of pupils who are persistently absent. A new system has very recently been set up to investigate patterns of attendance.

The leadership and management require improvement

- Recent changes in subject and department leaders and some other inconsistencies in the quality of leadership at all levels have reduced the school's capacity to plan strategically for the future.

Several initiatives to raise pupils' achievement have been implemented, but some are at an early stage and longer-established ones are often not checked thoroughly or in a timely way to drive improvement quickly.

- While the school has suitable systems for checking pupils' academic achievement and their pastoral welfare, the evidence that emerges is not always analysed carefully. For example, there are gaps in the monitoring of pupils' progress in reading and the progress of disabled pupils and those pupils with special educational needs.
- Since the previous inspection, a few good new staff appointments have helped to improve the overall quality of teaching. Leaders make suitable use of the Teachers' Standards framework to check on the quality of teachers' work. There are plans to link pay rises for staff to pupils' progress and the school's development, but this new process is not yet established in the school's work. Timescales for securing further improvements and standards for analysing the impact of training are imprecise.
- Good leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage has established consistency in practice across the setting.
- The school promotes equal opportunities and tackles discrimination adequately. Pupil premium funding has been used for eligible pupils in numerous ways, including one-to-one teaching, learning mentor support and additional materials for mathematics, but the impact of this expenditure has not been precisely assessed.
- The curriculum is adapted more successfully to meet pupils' needs in mathematics than in English, where, for example, there is sometimes an over-reliance on worksheets. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted adequately. Pupils enjoy learning about different cultures and religions.
- The local authority audited the quality of teaching last year and provided leaders with a clear summary of its strengths and weaknesses. However, it does not have a clear enough picture of pupils' performance or the effectiveness of leadership to enable it to challenge school leaders' over-optimistic evaluation of the school's performance.
- The governance of the school:
 - Governors ensure that the school fulfils its statutory duties for safeguarding pupils. They have a secure understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and a clear view of priorities for action. Their data training enables them to assess how well pupils are performing in relation to pupils in other schools. Through one of their committees and their visits they monitor actively the quality of teaching and learning. They understand and apply the link between the quality of teaching and pay rises for staff. Governors update their training regularly and keep a close check on finances. They know the strategies used to raise attainment for pupils eligible for pupil premium funding and have some awareness of their impact on pupils' achievement.

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	130153
Local authority	Walsall
Inspection number	402415

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	345
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Claire Myers
Headteacher	Jane Mason
Date of previous school inspection	8–9 December 2009
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