

Blanford Mere Primary School

Mimosa Walk, Kingswinford, DY6 7EA

Inspection dates 8–9 October 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	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.

- In 2013, the school's unvalidated national test results show that at the end of Key Stage 2 pupils' attainment is rising owing to good teaching, effective monitoring and careful planning. Standards in mathematics have risen from well below in 2012 to just below the average. For the first time some pupils have attained Level 6 in reading and writing, and the proportion attaining Level 6 in mathematics has risen and is above the national average.
- Good teaching means that pupils are making much better progress than in previous years, with all pupils making at least expected progress and a significantly increased number making good progress.
- Pupils behave well and work hard. They know how to keep themselves safe and attend regularly.
- Training for all staff has secured their understanding of what makes effective learning. Teachers and teaching assistants support and challenge pupils to maintain high levels of learning.
- The headteacher has built an effective team who constantly strive to do better. The headteacher and senior leadership team regularly monitor the quality of teaching and learning. They identify good practice and share it. Expectations of what pupils can achieve are high and successes are celebrated.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough teaching is outstanding because pupils do not apply their core skills sufficiently in all subjects.
- Not all boys make the same progress as girls.
- New teachers have settled in quickly but have not had chance to fully benefit from the school's induction and professional development programme.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 13 lessons taught by seven teachers and five parts of lessons. Nine observations were made jointly with the senior leadership team. A group of pupils took inspectors on a walk around the school to look at displays and their work. Inspectors listened to a small group of pupils read.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior and middle leaders, groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and other governors, and a representative of the local authority.
- There were insufficient responses to Parent View, the online questionnaire to be analysed. Inspectors spoke to parents and carers during the inspection.
- Inspectors analysed the 2012, 2011 and 2010 end of Key Stage 2 results and the unvalidated results from 2013. They analysed the school's own data on the progress pupils had made from their starting points and their current progress. Inspectors reviewed a range of school documents including the minutes of meetings, curriculum plan, records relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance and exclusions data. They looked at the school's self-evaluation, improvement plans and performance management targets.

Inspection team

Michelle Parker, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Dennis Brittain

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- The vast majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. A few pupils are from a variety of minority ethnic backgrounds. There are no pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who are supported through statements of special educational needs or at school action plus is above average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action is smaller than average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, the additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, looked after children and other specific groups, is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the amount of teaching which is outstanding so that all pupils make rapid progress by:
 - ensuring that pupils set themselves more challenging targets
 - ensuring that all pupils extend and develop their core skills through applying them consistently in all subjects.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- At the time of the last inspection, mathematics was in decline. At the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment was consistently below average and their progress was slow. Pupils' progress in English in Key Stage 2 was satisfactory. Too few pupils attained Level 5 in mathematics.
- Pupils' understanding and application of mathematics have improved. Pupils enjoy mathematical challenges and apply their mathematical understanding well in other subjects and everyday situations. Higher attaining pupils in Years 5 and 6 enjoy using the skills they have developed from attending an extra weekly mathematics group to explain mathematics problems to others.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1, pupils apply their learning of number and two-dimensional shapes well in a wide range of familiar situations. Reception children went to the 'dentist' and booked a time for their next appointment, weighed ingredients to make a soup, and talked about 'more than' and 'less than' during their activities. Year 2 pupils weighed accurately using scales and higher attaining pupils measured in units of grams and kilograms.
- Children start in the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and experiences that are broadly typical for their age. They achieve well and this is maintained through Key Stage 1. More able pupils now make the same rate of progress as others as they are being better challenged.
- Pupils' writing has improved. Current work in books reflects the appropriately high expectations of teachers. The presentation of work is of a high standard. Pupils enjoy writing and have plenty of opportunities in all subjects to practise their writing skills. All pupils' vocabulary is developed and extended.
- By the end of Key Stage 1, all pupils know how to punctuate correctly, take care to learn common spellings and use the rules of grammar with increasing accuracy. In Key Stage 2, pupils confidently apply their knowledge of writing to analyse texts and use technical terms to explain how a writer has used language.
- Reading is a strength of the school. Pupils enjoy reading a wide range of books and have a rich diet of reading throughout the day. Pupils in the Early Years and Foundation Stage used the sounds of letters to read simple words. In Key Stage 1, pupils enjoyed talking about the characters in books and used texts to help them tell their own stories. They blended sounds accurately and applied their understanding of letters and sounds to read new words. In a Year 6 lesson, pupils confidently described the meanings within a text and explained how different authors had used punctuation and language to create pace. The Years 5 and 6 pupils who are reading buddies to younger pupils explained how they helped them to read more fluently so 'that they do not read like robots'.
- The progress of pupils eligible for the pupil premium has greatly improved and is now the same as that of other pupils. The gap between these and other pupils has reduced to about two terms in both English and mathematics because staff are now better skilled at matching work to pupils' needs. This is the result of much more accurate checks on what pupils know and can do, and the sharper focus on what they need to do to improve.
- The progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs has also improved as the result of improved assessment and more closely focused support. Regular tests of pupils' reading identify any weaknesses. Careful monitoring checks that support helps pupils to improve quickly. Equipment provided to pupils enables them to complete mathematics challenges at

home. Reading buddies provide additional opportunities to practise for pupils who are not able to read as frequently at home and those who are practising their skills further.

- The school has correctly identified variations in the progress of boys relative to girls across the school. Staff have listened to pupils' ideas and views, and introduced topics that have greater appeal to boys while still maintaining the interest of the girls. An improved and wider range of reading books has captured boys' interests and accelerated their progress; this has also resulted in more positive attitudes to learning and improved attendance.
- The school's use of the new primary school sports funding is already having a good impact on pupils' attitudes to being healthy and taking exercise. Pupils are successfully developing their language skills and use of specialist vocabulary in assessing each other's performance.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is exciting. Teachers use their subject knowledge well to provide imaginative lessons which engage pupils well. Teachers foster pupils' thirst for learning. Work is planned which is appropriately challenging and deepens learning.
- Teachers' questioning of pupils is a strength. Teachers are responsive to the gaps in pupils' understanding or misconceptions revealed by pupils' answers and reshape learning to address them effectively. This encourages pupils to express their thoughts but does not always ensure that they fully develop their language skills in explaining their learning. For example, in a Years 5 and 6 lesson the majority of pupils could contribute to a discussion about a poem using accurate technical language, but lower attaining pupils were not given sufficient support to enable them explain their ideas clearly.
- The work provided for different groups of learners is accurately matched to pupils' starting points and teaching assistants are effectively deployed to support high quality group work. Teaching assistants understand how to question pupils about their work and use their answers to adapt work and maintain their engagement in the activity.
- Pupils use the school's 'stepping stones' for self-assessment to comment on teachers' marking and set their own targets for improvement, but these are sometimes too modest to progress learning fast enough.
- Teachers' marking is of a high quality and provides clear guidance for pupils on how to improve their work and their next steps in learning. Personal targets given to pupils at the beginning of each lesson help them guide their learning towards the lesson objectives and success criteria.
- The refurbished school library and information, communication and technology area have already made a big impact on pupils' reading. Books are banded to match pupils' reading ages. Pupils can select a book of their own choice and decide whether to choose a book which is a bit more challenging. The guided reader is a more challenging book, and is discussed and read together so that all pupils enjoy it. Reading journals and reading logs are monitored to ensure all pupils read frequently and widely.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The good behaviour of pupils around the school and in lessons makes a strong contribution to the school's positive climate for learning. Pupils are independent and display high levels of perseverance and good levels of concentration. They work hard. Pupils work cooperatively and help each other. They are courteous and respectful towards one another. They understand how

to keep themselves safe and take responsibility for themselves at break and lunchtimes.

- E-safety is promoted well and pupils understand the need for good sense when using the internet and new technologies. The take up by parents and carers at workshops to promote e-safety awareness is not as good as the take up for those in mathematics.
- Pupils have a good understanding of what constitutes bullying and stated that bullying was rare and tackled effectively by staff. There is no evidence of extremism and racism is rare and swift action taken.
- Attendance has improved. The school uses a wide range of strategies to promote good attendance, including help with transport to school for those families who live some distance away.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is a determined driving force behind improvements the school has made. Leadership at all levels, including governance, is strong. The headteacher has built an effective team and has carried all the staff with her on the journey of improvement. Consequently, all staff are part of school's improvement and support the school's ethos.
- The strong leadership of teaching has led to significant improvements in teaching in a relatively short period. The monitoring of teaching is rigorous. Monitoring information helps staff to develop their practice, because good teaching is identified and shared. Coaching and mentoring are used effectively to share good practice. Leaders now critically evaluate all aspects of the school's work and the development plan, and consequently they have an accurate picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The pupil premium is used well and its impact is carefully monitored. As a result, the rate of progress of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is improving and the gaps in attainment between them and others are closing.
- Since the previous inspection, the tracking and frequency of monitoring of pupils' progress have been improved. All teachers are held to account for the progress of their pupils. Interventions are monitored and are used to support pupils who are identified as underperforming instead of propping up inadequate teaching. The performance of all teachers is tightly linked to the progress made by pupils and the issues for school development. A system is in place that links teachers' pay to pupils' achievement.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. It provides well for pupils' learning across the school, promotes the good development of knowledge, skills and understanding, and deepens pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. There are rich opportunities for pupils to develop their technological and scientific understanding and enquiry. Music provides a wide range of opportunities. Every pupil in Year 2 learns the violin; clarinets and flutes are played by pupils in Years 3 and 4 and saxophones by pupils in Years 5 and 6. In addition to this, a wide range of before- and after-school activities, school visits and visitors enrich the curriculum. The school is making effective use of the primary school sports funding to extend its physical education provision.
- The school fully meets statutory safeguarding requirements.
- The school works well with parents and carers. All parents who spoke to inspectors were fulsome in their appreciation of the work of the staff.

- The local authority provides timely and good quality support and challenge to school leaders at all levels.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body has a detailed and accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development. It has reshaped its committee structures so that governors are more responsive to the needs of the school. Governors have established clear roles and protocols for all aspects of their work. They have a rigorous system for monitoring the school and holding leaders to account for their work. They ask challenging questions about the progress of all groups of pupils and ensure that the progress of those pupils eligible for the pupil premium is tracked carefully. Governors have an accurate view of teaching because of their systematic approach to work as link governors. They use this information about learning to inform questions to the senior team regarding staff performance and pay. Governors evaluate the impact of their work and understand how it supports and challenges the school.

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	103792
Local authority	Dudley
Inspection number	423779

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	236
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Allan Weaver
Headteacher	Nikki Miller
Date of previous school inspection	15 October 2013
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