

St Bartholomew's CofE VC Primary School

Princess Way, Areley Kings, Stourport-on-Severn, DY13 0EL

Inspection dates 7–8 November 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		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Good teaching enables pupils to make good progress throughout the school and has improved standards since the last inspection.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They develop positive attitudes to learning. Their attendance is improving.
- The school provides extensive, effective and imaginative support for disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and those who have difficulty managing their own behaviour.
- The school contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Relationships between pupils and adults are very good. Pupils feel safe in school.
- The headteacher provides inspirational leadership which has led to many improvements in teaching and pupils' achievement. She receives good support from other leaders and a united team of staff.
- Staff at all levels are fully committed to ensuring that every pupil has an equal chance to succeed, and to helping those facing challenging circumstances.
- Governors are well informed and highly supportive.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although pupils make good progress in reading and writing, standards are below average in reading by the end of Year 6. Pupils' spelling and use of grammar and punctuation are not always secure.
- Teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils, especially the more-able pupils, to use their initiative and develop as independent learners.
- Teachers do not always have high enough expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving. When marking work, they are not rigorous enough in pointing out how pupils might improve it.
- The excellent range of visits and outdoor activities does not link sufficiently well to what pupils are learning in the classroom, or the development of their reading and writing skills.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors visited 30 lessons, observing all classes and all teachers for varying lengths of time. Many of the observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher or the deputy headteacher.
- They held discussions with a representative from the local authority, the headteacher and deputy headteacher, seven members of the governing body, nearly all of the teaching staff, many of the teaching assistants, and groups of pupils.
- They looked at a range of documentary evidence, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan, data regarding pupils' progress, and documents relating to safeguarding and special educational needs.
- They scrutinised pupils' written work in a range of subjects and listened to pupils reading.
- They had informal discussions with a number of parents. They took into account the views of 24 parents and carers recorded on Parent View, Ofsted's online survey of parents' views. They also looked at the results of the school's own survey of parents.
- Inspectors also considered the views of 31 members of staff who completed Ofsted's staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Graham Sims, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Peter Kerr

Additional Inspector

Lesley Voaden

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than average, and the number of pupils is increasing. There are now two classes for pupils in Year 1 and two for Year 2. From Years 3 to 6, there is one class for each age group.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage comprises a Nursery, which children attend either in the morning or in the afternoon, and two Reception classes.
- A children's centre and a private childcare facility for three-year-olds operate from the school site. Both of these organisations are inspected separately, and their most recent inspection reports can be found on www.ofsted.gov.uk.
- The school manages before- and after-school care for pupils.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is high. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, almost one in five, is also very much higher than the national average.
- The large majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. Other pupils come from a variety of minority ethnic backgrounds. The school has a number of pupils from Traveller backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium is well above the national average. The pupil premium is additional government funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, looked after by the local authority or from families with a parent in the armed forces.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress for pupils at the end of Year 6.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' reading and writing skills, and the ways these are taught, by:
 - marking pupils' work more rigorously so pupils can see where they have made mistakes and understand what they need to do to improve
 - linking the excellent range of visits and outdoor activities more closely to pupils' learning in the classroom, and developing related opportunities for pupils to read extensively and consolidate their writing skills through extended pieces of writing
 - providing more opportunities for pupils, especially those who are more able, to use their initiative, carry out research on their own and become more independent learners.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children start school with skills, knowledge and understanding which are well below the levels typical for their age. They make good progress throughout the school and reach standards which are, overall, broadly average by the end of Year 6.
- Children respond extremely well to the stimulating environment, varied outdoor learning opportunities and imaginative teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They make great strides in their personal, social and emotional development and good progress in all other areas of learning. However, their attainment is still below average by the time they enter Year 1.
- In Key Stage 1, there has been a year-on-year improvement for the last five years in the results of the teacher-assessed national tests at the end of Year 2. Standards have improved from significantly below the national average and were just above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics in 2013. Standards have also improved since the last inspection in Key Stage 2 and the Year 6 test results were broadly average overall in 2013. They were, however, below average in reading, as were the results of the test on English grammar, punctuation and spelling.
- The school has worked hard to improve pupils' understanding of phonics (the sounds that letters make). The proportion of pupils reaching the expected level in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 almost doubled in 2013 and was above the national average. The reading and writing skills of older pupils, who did not have such a good grounding in basic reading skills when they were young, are not so secure. While the proportion of pupils reaching the nationally expected Level 4 in reading and writing is close to the national average, relatively few pupils reach the higher Level 5.
- Standards in mathematics have shown the greatest improvement over the last few years. Skills are taught systematically and well, although there are not enough opportunities, particularly for the more-able pupils, to develop independence and apply their skills to problem-solving activities.
- The school is particularly successful in helping the large proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs to develop positive attitudes to learning and to either achieve or get close to the standards expected by the time they leave the school.
- The school uses its additional pupil premium funding well to provide wide-ranging support and highly individualised attention for those for whom it is intended, including those from Traveller backgrounds. Although the eligible pupils who left in 2013 were on average about two terms behind other pupils in reading, writing and mathematics, most pupils who receive additional support make great strides in their learning.
- While almost all more-able pupils make the progress expected nationally, relatively few make faster progress because there are not enough opportunities for pupils to use their initiative or develop their independence through research or extended assignments.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. Weak teaching has been eradicated. The teaching is particularly good in the Early Years Foundation Stage, but in all

classes pupils are given positive learning experiences which enable them to make good progress.

- Teachers engage pupils' interest and apply the school's systems for managing behaviour extremely well. As a result, the learning of the class is not disrupted by individuals who may have behavioural and emotional difficulties. Because good learning behaviour is rewarded, pupils are developing positive attitudes to learning.
- Teachers' planning is thorough and based on a good understanding of what pupils already know and can do. Lessons are well structured. Teachers are methodical in the way they introduce new learning and make sure that pupils understand what it is they are supposed to learn.
- The additional support provided for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is exceptionally good. Pupils' progress is tracked carefully and a whole range of additional support is provided for any pupil or groups of pupils who are falling behind. Alternative experiences, such as outdoor activities and working in the school's garden, are provided to engage those who find it difficult to learn in class. Through positive encouragement and a different approach, such pupils make really good progress in developing positive attitudes to learning which enable them to reintegrate with their classmates.
- Teaching assistants make an effective contribution to pupils' learning and collaborate well with class teachers. They provide well-judged support for individuals or small groups within the classroom and run purposeful sessions outside the classroom for pupils who have specific learning needs.
- The teaching makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Adults use stories well to help pupils develop empathy for others and an understanding of different emotions. They encourage pupils to reflect. Teaching in assemblies, instrumental lessons for every pupil in some year groups, and the wide range of trips and visitors develop their spiritual and cultural understanding well.
- Teachers work hard to overcome barriers to learning, but do not always have high enough expectations of what pupils, especially those who are more able, are capable of achieving. This is seen in the marking of pupils' work, which is undertaken regularly but is not rigorous enough in helping pupils to see where they have made mistakes or how they might improve their work. Activities are carefully structured and directed by the teachers, but pupils are not given enough opportunities to become truly independent by learning how to think, plan and respond to problems and tasks using their own initiative.
- Teachers do not capitalise on the excellent range of visits and outdoor activities to consolidate and extend pupils' reading and writing skills. Some of the reading activities for older pupils do not have immediate relevance to other aspects of their learning and there are not enough opportunities for pupils to write at length.

The behaviour and safety of pupils is good

- The great majority of pupils behave well in lessons, have positive attitudes to learning and are keen to do well. They respond well to teachers' questions, collaborate with each other and settle down to their work quickly. There is a purposeful atmosphere in all lessons.
- Pupils' behaviour around the school is also good. Pupils are polite and courteous and are learning well how to show consideration to others. Older pupils enjoy taking on responsibilities, helping to ensure playtimes run smoothly or acting as buddies for the youngest children, a task

they carry out with great care and attention.

- Relationships between pupils and adults are very good. Pupils value the care and support provided by their teachers and teaching assistants. As a result, they feel safe in school and know that there is always someone to turn to in time of need.
- A few pupils have difficulty managing their behaviour and complying with the high expectations of behaviour within the classroom. Excellent support systems, 'nurture' groups, one-to-one tuition and alternative learning activities, which often take place outdoors, nip any problems in the bud and lead to rapid improvements in behaviour and quick reintegration into normal activities.
- Bullying, name-calling and insensitive behaviour are rare. Any incidents are given high priority and are handled sensitively and well. Appropriate action is taken to avoid any reoccurrence.
- As with academic standards, the level of attendance has improved year on year since the last inspection. This is a result of concerted action by the school, close monitoring of attendance figures, good liaison with parents and whole-school efforts to reinforce the importance of good attendance. The number of pupils who are persistently absent has dropped dramatically, and the overall level of attendance is now above average, having been well below average in the year before the last inspection.

The leadership and management is good

- Parents, governors, staff and pupils all comment on how much the school has improved over the last few years. There is a calm, welcoming and purposeful atmosphere. Standards of attainment and attendance continue to improve. The level of care, guidance and support, particularly for those whose circumstances make them vulnerable, is excellent. One member of staff attributes the school's improvement to the inspirational leadership of the headteacher. The headteacher attributes it to the hard work and dedication of the staff. Both viewpoints are correct.
- Although the number of parents responding to Ofsted's questionnaire was low, their responses, the results of the school's own survey and the parents spoken to during the inspection indicate that parents are very pleased with the care and attention given to their children.
- The headteacher receives very good and complementary support from the deputy headteacher, and other leaders are playing increasingly important roles in leading new initiatives and contributing to the drive for improvement. There has been a concerted effort to develop their leadership skills, and staff appreciate the way this has contributed to their professional development.
- Arrangements to improve the quality of teaching have been effective and staff appreciate the support they have been given to help them become more effective teachers. Decisions on salary increases are now linked closely to teachers' performance and their impact on pupils' progress.
- There is an unerring commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity, and for improving the life chances and educational experiences of those who join the school with low levels of skill, fall behind in their work or face difficult and challenging circumstances at home. The support systems for such pupils are extensive, imaginative, caring and effective. The progress of all pupils is tracked in detail and analysed exhaustively to ensure all are given maximum opportunity to succeed. As a result, the school's own priorities for development reflect the need to have a greater focus on the progress of more able pupils for the coming year.

- Systems for ensuring the safety of pupils are thorough and extensive. All who come into contact with pupils are suitably vetted. There is good liaison with the neighbouring children's centre and good cooperation with other agencies to assess needs, provide support and meet the needs of vulnerable pupils.
- The school makes very good use of additional funding. It has a clear idea of how its pupil premium funding is spent, which pupils benefit and what impact the funding is having. Short-, medium- and long-term plans have been drawn up for spending the new primary school sport grant and for evaluating its impact on pupils' health and physical well-being.
- The local authority has provided effective support in the past, but the level of support has diminished in recent months as the authority has rightly judged the school to have the capacity to make further improvements under its own steam.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are well informed and highly supportive of the school. They provide a good level of challenge for the school's leaders. Through their links with individual classes or areas of responsibility, they have a good understanding of what is happening in the school. They know how well the school is doing in comparison with other similar schools.
 - Governors receive detailed reports and information from the headteacher about the quality of teaching and what is being done to improve it. They have a good overview of how teachers' performance is managed.
 - Governors have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities and undertake necessary training. They keep a close check on the progress made in dealing with issues outlined in the school's development plan.

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	135041
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	427022

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	280
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	June Thomas
Headteacher	Susan Helps
Date of previous school inspection	4 October 2011
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