

Water Mill Primary School

Water Mill Close, Selly Oak, Birmingham, B29 6TS

Inspection dates 28–29 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.

- Achievement in reading, writing and mathematics is good throughout the school because pupils are taught well.
- Children get off to a good start in the Reception class because they receive good quality support that helps them to succeed.
- Attainment in mathematics in Key Stage 2 is above average because pupils develop a mature understanding of the subject.
- Teaching is good. Teachers and other adults are particularly good at helping pupils who are new to the school to settle quickly. Some of these pupils make outstanding progress.
- Pupils are valued as individuals, and their wide range of cultural backgrounds is celebrated.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils enjoy their work, have very positive attitudes towards learning, feel safe and are proud of their school.
- The school provides many good-quality opportunities for pupils to develop into mature individuals.
- Leadership and management, including governance, are good.
- Senior leaders work together effectively as a team and are the major driving force behind the improvement in the quality of teaching and the rise in standards.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Too few pupils throughout the school reach higher levels in English because teachers sometimes do not demand enough of the most-able pupils or encourage these pupils to think for themselves.
- There are too few opportunities for pupils to write at length or practise and improve their reading and writing skills in different subjects.
- Teaching is not yet outstanding. Sometimes teachers do not let pupils know how to improve when they mark their work or set them individual targets.
- Some parents would like to be given more information about their children's progress and behaviour. They would like to be more involved in their children's learning.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 14 lessons, three of which were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with pupils, the past and present Chair of the Governing Body, representatives from the local authority and staff, including senior and subject leaders.
- There were too few responses for inspectors to take account of the online questionnaire (Parent View). Inspectors analysed the school’s own parental questionnaires and spoke informally with parents and carers.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of documentation, including the school’s development plan, policies, information about pupils’ progress and attainment and how the school sets targets for teachers to improve their work. They also looked at child protection and safeguarding procedures.

Inspection team

Kath Campbell, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Linda Brown

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Water Mill is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Just over a third of pupils are White British. An increasing proportion of pupils come from minority ethnic groups and the proportion who speak English as an additional language is high.
- An above-average proportion of pupils are supported by pupil premium, which provides additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those looked after by the local authority and those with a parent in the armed services.
- An above-average proportion of pupils are supported at school action and at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- A higher than usual number of pupils joins and leaves the school at different times throughout each school year.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The school provides care for pupils before and after school that is overseen by the governing body and formed part of the inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the proportion of pupils reaching higher levels in reading and writing throughout the school by:
 - moving the most-able pupils on to harder work earlier in lessons
 - encouraging the most-able pupils to think for themselves and develop greater independence so that they do not rely too much on adult support
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to write at length and practise their reading and writing skills in different subjects.
- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching by making sure that teachers:
 - have the highest expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - use marking more effectively to let pupils know how to improve their work
 - use pupils' individual targets for improvement more consistently across the school.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - improving communication with parents so that they are better informed about the progress their children make and how the school manages behaviour.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- The turnover of pupils at Water Mill is higher than usual. Nearly half of the current pupils in Key Stage 2 did not start the school in the reception class. An increasing number of pupils arrive at the school at different times of the year with very little spoken English. Pupils from all backgrounds make good progress throughout the school and achieve well. Although some White British pupils do not reach average levels, they do make good progress, but from a lower starting point. Some pupils who have English as an additional language make exceptional progress. There are many examples of pupils making two years' progress in one academic year.
- Children start in the Reception class with skills that are below those expected for their age. Some do not have any pre-school experience and speech and language skills and social development are particularly weak. Children make good progress and are well prepared for the move into Year 1.
- Attainment has risen year on year since 2011. In 2013, the attainment of pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 was broadly average overall, with attainment in mathematics being above average in Key Stage 2. On the surface, it would appear that pupils did not make enough progress in English in Key Stage 2. However, further investigation showed that a large number of these pupils joined the school in Key Stage 2 and half had special educational needs. Their progress was good, with evidence of some pupils within Year 6 making outstanding progress.
- Although there is some way further to go before some of the most-able pupils reach the levels of which they are capable in English, initiatives designed to raise attainment by creating greater enthusiasm for reading have already had a positive impact. Reading has been given a much higher profile and new reading materials introduced, together with effectively targeted one to one support for pupils. Achievement in phonics in Year 1 is above national standards and reading is now an important part of daily work. Younger pupils are confident to have a go at unfamiliar words and older pupils develop a firm enjoyment of reading by the time they leave.
- The school's focus on developing writing skills is raising attainment but not enough pupils reach higher levels. The impact of initiatives, such as the introduction of extended writing sessions, is measured far more closely than in the past and has resulted not only in raising attainment but in improving pupils' attitudes towards writing. Some older pupils produce high quality written work in a range of different subjects. However, there is not yet enough consistency of quality and quantity of written work across a range of subjects throughout the school.
- Attainment in mathematics has risen, chiefly because the school has focused its attention very successfully on developing pupils' calculation skills and has increased the opportunities for pupils to apply their knowledge to real-life situations. As a result, several older pupils show very mature reasoning skills because they have been encouraged to work things out for themselves.
- The school is good at narrowing the gap between its least able pupils and the rest. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs achieve well because the work they receive is matched well to their individual needs.
- The school has used its pupil premium funding effectively to provide extra support and to improve pupils' basic skills. In 2013, there was no difference between the attainment of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding in English and mathematics and other pupils in the school.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is much improved since the previous inspection. Nearly all the teaching observed during the inspection was at least good, with some that was outstanding.
- Children in the Reception class make good progress because activities are exciting and their classroom is a fun place. All staff are highly skilled at adapting to the needs of pupils newly arrived from overseas. Their attention to developing children's language and social skills greatly aids children's learning.
- Teachers present activities in a lively and interesting way. In the best lessons, teachers and other adults provide exactly the right level of support to move learning along at a crisp pace. In a Reception class lesson, some White British boys achieved particularly well because the teacher and other adults targeted them regularly. As a result, they remained attentive and interested. The good ratio of adults to children moved learning on at a good pace. The lesson was successful because children were highly motivated to do their best.
- Skilled adults who support teachers in the classroom make sure that disabled pupils and those with special educational needs receive exactly the right level of support they need to succeed. Pupils who are learning English make good progress because they receive high quality individual support when they are working in small groups.
- Teachers plan work well across a range of subjects. They skilfully adapt activities to meet the needs of an ever changing class of pupils. In group activities teachers and other adults take every opportunity to develop pupils' language skills through good quality questioning.
- Occasionally, a few teachers do not have high enough expectations of pupils and do not provide enough challenge, particularly for the most able. They sometimes stifle independence by being too keen to help pupils who are capable of sorting things out for themselves. There are occasions when pupils who find work easy do not spend enough time on more demanding work.
- Most work is carefully marked but not all marking lets pupils know what they need to do to reach the next level because it focuses solely on how well pupils have done in a particular piece of work. In addition, not all pupils know their individual targets for improvement.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Nearly all pupils behave well in lessons and around school. They enjoy school very much and produce work of a good standard. Their positive attitudes towards learning make a strong contribution towards their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage quickly develop good social skills. Staff recognise the importance of developing this aspect of children's learning right from the start.
- Pupils are courteous and polite in conversation with visiting adults. They are keen to chat about their work and they get along well together. They particularly enjoy talking with a partner and they work and play together harmoniously. They were seen socialising well on several occasions during the inspection, including during the early morning breakfast club.
- Pupils value their own cultural background and are keen to celebrate and learn about the wide

range of other cultures that exist within the school. They appreciate each other's successes.

- Inspectors spoke at length to pupils about their views on behaviour and bullying. Pupils are clear that incidents of bullying are rare and are dealt with effectively. Pupils show a good understanding of how to stay safe, including when using the internet and computers.
- A small number of pupils with very challenging behaviour attend the school. These pupils receive good quality support and this helps them to participate fully in school life. Although most parents have positive views about behaviour, some would appreciate more information about the systems teachers use to manage the behaviour of pupils and would like to know whether their own children are behaving well enough.
- Attendance is improving and is currently average. Efforts to reduce the number of pupils who are regularly absent have been effective. The school works successfully with a small minority of families to improve their children's attendance.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, highly supportive deputy headteacher and other senior leaders provide strong leadership. They have successfully moved the school forward at a good pace since the previous inspection. They have been instrumental in reversing a downward trend in attainment by improving the quality of teaching.
- Senior leaders have an honest, accurate view of the school's performance. They reflect carefully on the school's strengths and weaknesses and act quickly to eradicate potential underachievement. Staff say they are supported well in their roles. Subject leadership is good. Effective training has resulted in subject leaders having a far more accurate view of whether pupils make enough progress in their subjects. Teachers who oversee the work of pupils in different key stages, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage, lead and manage well.
- Systems for measuring the progress of pupils have improved a great deal and are now good. Teachers are more accountable than in the past for the standards achieved. The checks carried out by senior leaders are used effectively to improve the performance of adults working in the school. They have contributed to, for example, greater consistency in the quality of teaching since the previous inspection.
- The school development plan is a good working document. It identifies the right areas for development. Success is measured precisely by the rise in pupils' attainment.
- Pupils' workbooks celebrate a rich and diverse range of topics taught. Creative arts and multi-cultural links, such as mosaics and Diwali artwork, are important aspects of the school's work. Good opportunities for residential visits to places such as Stansfeld Outdoor Centre, contribute well to pupils' good personal development. The school uses visits and visitors effectively to support class work and these add greatly to pupils' enjoyment. Music and sport are an important part of school life. Sports funding has been allocated appropriately to provide specialist teaching both in school and during extracurricular sporting clubs. Although increasing, there are not always enough planned opportunities for pupils to use their reading skills or extend their writing skills further in different subjects.
- The leadership and management of special educational needs are good. The school keeps a careful check on the progress of its disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and those who are new to learning English to make sure none of them falls behind. It successfully

removes barriers to learning so that all pupils have an equal opportunity to succeed. For example, pupil premium funding is set aside to make sure all pupils can gain the experience of going on residential visits and other school trips.

- Strong links with partner institutions within the Kings Norton consortium are very important to this school. Collaboration on, for example, sharing training opportunities enables the school to access expertise not otherwise available to a school of this size.
- Links with parents are developing. Parents have opportunities, such as participating in workshops and speaking with teachers during 'drop in' sessions on Wednesday mornings, to become more involved in their children's learning. However, a few parents would welcome even more understanding of how well their children are doing academically.
- Safeguarding procedures meet current government guidelines.
- The local authority knows the school well, reviews its work regularly and provides training opportunities for staff and governors when requested. This work, combined with additional support from a local leader in education, has helped the school to move forward at a good pace since the previous inspection.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body supports the school well. It is knowledgeable and has a good range of appropriate expertise. It is currently going through a period of transition with several new appointments. As a relatively new team, it has shown its determination to make sure pupils are doing their best. It has a regular programme of monitoring visits to look at priority areas. Governors make sure they keep up to date with training on important matters such as safeguarding and child protection. The governing body keeps a careful check on whether pupil premium funding is used wisely. This year it has provided additional help tailored to the needs of individual pupils. It has a tight structure in place to check on teachers' performance and to make sure any underperformance is tackled robustly.

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	103326
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	426931

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	189
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rotimi Benjamin
Headteacher	Debbie Miles
Date of previous school inspection	3 October 2011
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