

Whitehall Junior Community School

Delves Road, Walsall, West Midlands, WS1 3JY

Inspection dates 11–12 December 2013]

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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.

- Teachers and other adults work as 'TEAM Whitehall', as 'Together Everyone Achieves More' is their mission statement and this feature contributes to pupils' good progress. In lessons, staff ask pupils good questions that help them with their learning.
- Pupils make good progress and achieve well because they are taught well.
- Leaders have improved teaching since the previous inspection by rigorous checking and by providing robust support and guidance.
- Leaders are highly ambitious for the school and changes aim to improve the quality of teaching and give pupils every opportunity to achieve as well as they can.
- Those parents who spoke with inspectors were very pleased with the school. They say that their children are happy, safe and make good progress.
- Attainment is improving. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similar, and sometimes better, progress than their classmates.
- Teachers mark books often and make sure pupils know how well they are learning.
- Pupils, staff and governors are proud to be members of this challenging, but thriving, community. Nearly 20 nationalities work and play in a climate of mutual respect and harmony.
- Pupils behave well and feel safe in school. In good lessons they show they are keen to learn and tackle their work enthusiastically.
- Governors work hard to support the school so that it has improved since the previous inspection.
- Pupils say they enjoy school, learn well and are confident that adults will keep them safe.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not enough outstanding teaching because the best teachers do not have enough time to share their skills with other teachers.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to become skilled in using the latest information and communication technology (ICT) to improve their learning.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 21 lessons. These included six that were observed jointly with either the headteacher or deputy headteacher. Inspectors also visited reading workshops, observed two assemblies, play and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors talked with pupils, parents, staff and a representative of the local authority.
- Account was taken of the six returns to the online questionnaire, Parent View, a letter signed by four parents about the difficulties completing Parent View, school parental surveys, and the views expressed by parents in informal discussions at the start and end of the school day.
- Twenty-three questionnaires from leaders, teachers and support staff were considered.
- A wide range of documents was scrutinised, including information about pupils' progress, behaviour and attendance records, the school improvement plan, the school's self-evaluation document, parental award evidence, staff performance management documents and records and policies about safeguarding.
- The inspectors examined the work in a range of pupils' books and listened to pupils read.
- An inspector visited the breakfast club and the Hub, a facility where vulnerable and troubled pupils are supported socially and emotionally.

Inspection team

Jean Whalley, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
David King	Additional Inspector
Ruth Hill	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are of from minority ethnic heritages and speak English as an additional language. The largest groups are Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils. Very few are pupils are at the early stages of learning English.
- The school is receiving pupil premium funding for around half of its pupils, which is above average. The pupil premium is additional funding provided for looked after children, pupils eligible for free school meals and children of service families.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average, but the proportion of pupils supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of pupils who join the school part way through the academic year is above average. Many pupils who leave part way through the year return several months later, sometimes into the next academic year.
- There are 12 classes, with three for each year group, and four additional 'target groups' (one for each year group) for pupils who are given additional support in the mornings.
- The school met the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school holds the Leading Parent Partnerships Award.
- Three teachers and three teaching assistants have left the school since the last inspection. Three new teachers and three teaching assistants have been recruited.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the quality of teaching and learning so more is outstanding, to raise attainment to higher levels, by:
 - sharing the outstanding expertise in teaching across the whole school
 - ensuring that the tasks set in lessons are always challenging enough for the most able pupils, especially in writing
 - making the target levels for reading and writing easier for pupils to understand so they can talk more confidently about how well they are learning
 - giving pupils greater access to ICT to further improve their communication and numeracy skills.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils achieve well. From starting points that are slightly below those expected for their age, the majority of pupils who attend the school throughout Years 5 and 6 make good progress to reach broadly average standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the time they leave at the end of Year 6.
- Each pupil's progress is tracked meticulously because the school's priority is meeting all pupils' very diverse needs. The attainment of different groups of pupils is rigorously analysed, trends identified and support is provided quickly to address any emerging issues.
- The school provided strong evidence that the slight dip in performance in 2013 was the direct result of a staffing issue in one Year 6 class, an issue which has been quickly, and fully, resolved by the senior leaders' and governors' prompt and robust actions. Achievement is now back on track and the expectation, supported by strong evidence, is that floor standards will be exceeded in 2014.
- Provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is managed well so they make similar and sometimes better progress than their peers.
- Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language learn and achieve well because they are well supported.
- The same is true for other smaller groups of pupils and the significant number who joins the school part way through the year. Pupils' attainment and needs are assessed quickly on entry and support is provided to ensure pupils make good progress from their starting points.
- The most able pupils are not always challenged to attain the highest levels, especially when they are working in sets where pupils of similar ability learn together. Pupils who leave and then re-join the school after an extended absence are given additional support to help them re-settle and make good progress.
- Pupils entitled to additional funding through the pupil premium funding make good progress compared to their peers. In 2013, there was weaker performance by one class, as a result of weaker teaching, and the fact that some taking the Year 6 tests had not been at the school throughout Years 5 and 6. These factors affected overall results, but the issues were very rapidly tackled by senior leaders. Data show that eligible pupils' attainment was half a term behind in mathematics, two-and-a-half terms behind in reading, and almost half a term ahead in writing by the end of Year 6. The data for the current Year 6 are very closely monitored and already show that this group of pupils are all now making good progress.
- In lessons where teaching is strongest, pupils make at least good progress because lessons are well matched to meet their needs and effective support is given to those who need it.
- Pupils know how well they are learning. They are able to talk about their work in mathematics lessons confidently because the criteria for success are written in a way that is easy for pupils to understand. In one lesson a pupil explained that being able to 'work to 2dp' meant numbers with two decimal places and the work in his book that showed he could do it. However, the target levels for reading and writing are less easy for pupils to understand.
- Pupils' books show that, over time, pupils make good progress in their learning. Work is marked frequently. Literacy assessment books show examples of tasks that are externally moderated and which confirm the levels awarded by the school.

The quality of teaching is good

- Most teaching observed was good, with some that was outstanding, and a little that required improvement. In all lessons pupils know what they are expected to learn because all teachers use the same vocabulary to set clear expectations.
- The practice of pupils working with a partner is used well in most lessons. Pupils use the time

well to organise their thoughts before responding to the teacher's questions.

- Teachers know their pupils well and most use that knowledge to plan lessons that are well matched to the pupils' needs. Support staff are included in lesson planning so that they contribute well to pupils' progress.
- Teaching literacy and numeracy skills in sets means that pupils of similar ability learn together. However, where teaching is less than good there is not always enough challenge for the most able pupils within the set.
- Literacy skills are well promoted in other subjects, numeracy less so, but pupils are sometimes encouraged to 'reverse operations'; for example if $120 - 80 = 40$, pupils then check their accuracy by adding 80 and 40 to make 120. They use a range of vocabulary to describe mathematical processes and techniques; for example, in a good mathematics lesson pupils used 'up and down', 'across', mirror lines, and the terms vertical and horizontal to describe lines of symmetry. Teachers miss the opportunity to make more effective use of the latest ICT to enhance pupils' learning and to develop skills in this aspect.
- Where teaching is stronger teachers and teaching assistants use questions well to check pupils' understanding, assess their progress and to provide opportunities for pupils to think more deeply about what they are learning. Pupils also have opportunities to work independently and with peers before feeding back their findings to the whole class.
- Pupils who qualify for pupil premium funding, who are spread across the ability range, are given effective support to ensure they make good progress. Pupils who speak English as an additional language receive good support from specialists, bi-lingual staff and other pupils, so make at least expected progress and often better progress from their starting points.
- The school has a consistent approach to marking and ensures that pupils can take their learning further. Teachers write comments in pupils' books to tell pupils how well they are learning. They ask pupils questions to check their understanding and pupils' answers demonstrate their understanding of the work and what to do to improve it.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' attitudes to learning are good and pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They are keen to learn and tackle their work enthusiastically. Pupils work well in groups, listen carefully to others and do not interrupt speakers.
- Relationships between staff and pupils and amongst pupils are a strength of the school. Mutual trust means pupils will 'have a go' when given a task to complete, confident that if they need help they will receive it.
- Pupils show respect to staff, visitors, their peers and towards the environment. They are welcoming, friendly and willingly share their pride in their school. They say they 'really enjoy' their time at this school.
- Pupils help each other at playtime and 'playground pals', who pupils say 'are really good at being friends for anyone who needs one', give new and shy pupils support to mix more with others.
- Pupils say that there is no bullying at the school. They understand what constitutes bullying including cyber bullying and staying safe online. They have confidence in staff to help them resolve any problems if they use the 'worry' boxes. Bullying was not a concern for parents who spoke with inspectors at the school.
- Pupils are keen to attend school and are usually punctual. The school's overall attendance data are adversely affected by pupils who leave the school for a period of months and then return. Robust systems are in place to monitor attendance. Data for the school's stable population show steady improvement.

The leadership and management are good

- Since the previous inspection, leaders and governors have worked hard to improve the school. Their focus has been to continually improve teaching and achievement by working with a range of partners including a local university and an outstanding school. Leaders' actions since the previous inspection demonstrate the school's good capacity to improve further
 - The school's self-evaluation is accurate and improvement planning is designed to continue to raise standards. Staff training is clearly focusing on the school's emerging needs.
 - Teamwork is a strong feature of the school. Middle leaders of different subjects and areas fulfil their roles well because they are well supported by senior leaders and have appropriate training, observe lessons and make checks on pupils' progress by looking at work in their books. The monitoring of teaching and learning is robust. Areas for improvement are identified and further training opportunities are provided. Most staff speak positively about support they get from leaders to develop professionally. However, the approach to sharing the best practice in teaching across the school is not as effective as it should be.
 - The school promotes equality of opportunity for all by meeting pupils' very diverse needs and ensuring their well-being. It is an inclusive, reflective and caring community. Pupils understand, accept and celebrate each other's similarities and differences, avoiding discrimination of any sort.
 - The school is very keen to work closely with parents. Attendance at parents' evenings is high. Leaders are keen to explore as many ways as possible to include parents directly in their children's education. A good example is the Inspire programme, where parents join their children in some lessons. Parents' responses in questionnaires are collated and used to plan future events.
 - Subjects other than literacy and numeracy are linked in topics that meet pupils' needs well. Literacy skills are promoted well. The school organises a wide range of visits and visitors, for example to the Houses of Parliament to see the local Member of Parliament. A local artist motivated pupils to produce stunning displays linked to their topic work. Extra-curricular activities provide opportunities for pupils to add enjoyment to their learning.
 - The school also provides opportunities to develop physical skills and well-being, and pupils enjoy the after-school activities. The school sport funding is giving pupils greater access to sporting facilities, activities and after-school clubs. The school has plans to sustain the increased participation after funding ceases and to work with a local university to measure its impact.
 - Safeguarding pupils is a high priority. Current safeguarding requirements are fully met.
 - The local authority provides a good level of support for the school and is confident that the school will continue to improve. An officer from the authority makes regular visits to evaluate the school's work through data analysis and discussions with the headteacher.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has a full complement of governors and two new parent governors joined recently. Link governors are trained in safeguarding, safer recruiting and child protection. Governors are notified of additional training and share their new learning. They know about the quality of teaching and how any salary progression is linked to their performance, and set challenging targets for the headteacher. Checks on the school's performance data ensure they know how well pupils are learning. They are ambitious for the school and provide support and challenge in equal measure. Regular visits allow parents raise any concerns with them personally. They ensure pupil premium funding is used well to raise standards by providing good support for eligible pupils in small groups, extra support from teaching assistants and the use of motivating extracurricular activities. They have supported the school's plans for using the additional funding for sports so that increased participation in sports continues. Governors ensure the school continues to supply a range of healthy meals for pupils and staff.
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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	104162
Local authority	Walsall
Inspection number	427128

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

Type of school	All-through
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	325
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Colleen Jones
Headteacher	Mrs Elizabeth Attwood
Date of previous school inspection	17–18 May 2011
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