

Highters Heath Community School

Highters Heath Lane, Kings Heath, Birmingham, B14 4LY

Inspection dates 16–17 January 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	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.

- From typically low starting points, all groups of pupils achieve well.
- Standards rose in writing and mathematics in the national tests at Year 6 in 2013.
- Pupils who have been at Highters Heath for all of their education reach nationally expected standards by Year 6. The many pupils who join in later year groups quickly settle and make good progress.
- The vast majority of pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teaching is at least good, and an increasing proportion is outstanding.
- Pupils are happy and proud of their school. They behave well and have positive attitudes to their learning. Pupils feel safe in school.
- Disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and the high numbers known to be eligible for the pupil premium all do well because the school takes exceptionally good care of individuals, particularly those whose circumstances make them more vulnerable.
- The headteacher is an effective leader. She has managed the school successfully during a period of transition, ensuring that standards and teaching have continued to improve. She is strongly supported by other leaders and a knowledgeable and highly involved governing body which has challenged leaders rigorously.
- Pupils have many memorable and vibrant learning opportunities, including a wide variety of visits and visitors to the school, which contribute very well to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not yet enough outstanding teaching to ensure all pupils' progress is rapid and sustained across all year groups.
- There are small variations between subjects and groups of pupils across the school.
- Standards in reading fell in 2013.
- Until recently opportunities to develop higher order reading skills of inference and deduction and to use basic mathematics skills in other subjects have been limited.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 16 lessons involving 11 teachers; three lessons were observed jointly with school leaders.
- The inspectors held discussions with school leaders, staff, governors and the school improvement partner and had telephone conversations with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at documentation including improvement plans, the systems for tracking pupils’ progress, the arrangements for safeguarding pupils and samples of pupils’ work. They heard groups of pupils reading and spoke with others about behaviour and safety arrangements at the school.
- There were insufficient responses to the online questionnaire Parent View for analysis. However, account was taken of the school’s own parental survey and the views expressed by those parents and carers who spoke with inspectors at the start of the school day or wrote letters. Consideration was also given to the 21 responses from staff questionnaires.

Inspection team

Michael Bartleman, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Henry Weir

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The majority of pupils come from a White British background. An increasing proportion of pupils come from minority ethnic groups, the largest of which are of Pakistani heritage.
- Around one pupil in eight is disabled or has special educational needs supported through school action. This is above average. A similar proportion of pupils are supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, which is also above average.
- Around two in three pupils are supported by the pupil premium (additional government funding for specific groups of pupils, including those known to be eligible for free school meals), which is well above average.
- An above average proportion of pupils join the school part-way through their primary school education. A large proportion of these pupils have special educational needs. More than a third of the Year 6 pupils in 2013 did not start their education at the school.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage is made up of one full-time Reception class.
- There have been many staff changes since the previous inspection. The headteacher was appointed in April 2013; she was previously the deputy headteacher at the school. The deputy headteacher was appointed in April 2013. The acting assistant headteacher, who is also the special educational needs coordinator, was appointed in September 2013.
- 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?

- Make more teaching outstanding so all pupils make rapid and sustained progress in reading, writing and mathematics throughout the school by ensuring that:
 - gaps between the attainment of groups of pupils in reading, writing and mathematics close rapidly
 - activities develop pupils' inference and deduction skills so that they are able to complete the more challenging reading tasks successfully
 - mathematical skills are used regularly in other subjects
 - teachers always insist on the highest standards of presentation.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children join the Reception class with skills below those typical for their age, particularly in communication and language. They are well taught and make good progress. The 2013 school data show that the vast majority of children are at expected levels for their age when they start Year 1.
- Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 has risen steadily since the previous inspection. By the time the pupils leave at the end of Year 6, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected Level 4 in English and mathematics is above average.
- This good academic progress is not reflected in whole-school data for 2013 because of the minority of pupils who had recently joined the school and were working below expected levels for their age.
- More-able pupils make particularly good progress in writing because teachers extend them well. Evidence from pupils' books, lesson observations and the school's own data show that an increasing number of pupils in all year groups, including those from minority ethnic groups, are making good progress to reach and exceed the levels expected for their age. However there are small variations between groups of pupils and between subjects in a few year groups.
- The school has worked effectively to improve the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) by using teachers and teaching assistants to run daily small-group sessions. Results in the national phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 in 2013 were above average.
- Attainment in reading in Year 6 fell in 2013. The school's data show that this was a one-off, and not repeated in other year groups where standards in reading are above expected levels. Older pupils lack confidence with inference and deduction skills which limits their ability to complete more challenging reading tasks successfully. Pupils have good opportunities to read for a variety of purposes in lessons and enjoy reading a wide range of books. The additional support pupils have from the specialist reading teacher and volunteers from the local community enables them to read regularly to adults.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress due to highly focused one-to-one and group sessions.
- Pupil-premium funding is used effectively to provide additional teachers and teaching assistants, and to fund visits and additional after-school clubs. The attainment of pupils supported by the pupil premium in English and mathematics in 2013 was above that of similar pupils nationally but below their classmates by five terms in writing and mathematics, and one term in reading. Most eligible pupils currently in the school are making better progress than their classmates.

The quality of teaching is good

- Lesson observations, examination of pupils' work and the school's own data confirm that the overall quality of teaching is good. An increasing proportion of teaching is outstanding.
- The focus on individual needs means that disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and those supported by the pupil premium are supported effectively. Small-group work

has been used well to accelerate pupils' progress.

- At the start of lessons teachers make sure that all pupils know the focus of learning so that they can check how successful they have been. Pupils are given many opportunities to 'check-in', which is the school's way of developing speaking and listening skills and ensuring that all pupils fully understand what they are learning. Questioning is used well by teachers and teaching assistants to deepen pupils' understanding and to encourage them to reflect on their learning.
- Vibrant displays of pupils' work and subject information in classrooms and throughout the school make sure that pupils are able to get on with their learning; for example, when they are stuck on a task or wish to extend their writing further.
- The teaching of mathematics and writing has improved since the previous inspection, although there have been few opportunities for pupils to use their mathematical skills in other subjects. Staff training, including coaching, has generated greater consistency in teaching standards.
- Reading is taught effectively. Teachers and teaching assistants successfully promote the pupils' knowledge and use of phonics. Tasks in guided-reading sessions are well structured but, until very recently, have not been used to develop pupils' higher order skills.
- Teachers create opportunities to write in many different contexts, which develop pupils' interests and stamina for writing well. This was seen in the Year 6 class where pupils were writing action stories. The use of a video motivated pupils well. The teacher showed pupils what they should achieve with her own writing and gave opportunities for pupils to discuss and to practise appropriate vocabulary, before writing. However, presentation is not always of the highest quality.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. The team of adults work together well. The children are encouraged to become independent in the vibrant, well organised classroom. Language and communication skills are promoted well.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' behaviour is good. They behave well in lessons and around the school. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and show clear values of respect and tolerance towards one another. The good relationships between all groups of pupils and adults contribute well to the sense of belonging in the school.
- The school's culture of 'caught being good' promotes a positive learning environment. School records confirm that pupils' behaviour is good on a daily basis. Pupils like the rewards they get for good behaviour and work. Pupils readily take on responsibilities as peer buddies, councillors, monitors and recyclers.
- Pupils say that the school is an 'I can' school not an 'I can't' school which shows how positive attitudes have been developed successfully over time.
- The way in which the school manages behaviour helps pupils to think about the choices they make. A lot of time is given to discussing feelings, known in school as 'check-in', which helps pupils to empathise and reflect on the consequences of their actions.
- Behaviour and safety are not outstanding because a few pupils need adult support to succeed

with their learning and behaviour is not yet exemplary.

- Concern for pupils' welfare is a strength of the school. Staff use their good links with other professionals to support pupils and their families whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable.
- Attendance is above average and continuing to improve, which reflects the effective work of the learning mentors and the programme of support for individuals and their families. The recent 'cool cats' initiative has improved attendance rapidly.
- Pupils have to apply for jobs within the school, which promotes life skills well. During the inspection the chair of the school council had advertised for a secretary which showed how well established the application process was.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good and fully meets requirements. Parents and carers say their children are safe and well cared for. This view is reflected in the confidence expressed by pupils that they are safe at school and that any bullying is dealt with effectively. Pupils have a good knowledge of most forms of bullying, for example cyber-bullying.
- Pupils are helped to develop a range of strategies so they are able to manage everyday risks for themselves, such as those associated with the internet, harmful drugs and road safety.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and senior leaders form an effective team. With helpful support from governors and other staff, the headteacher has successfully raised expectations and ensured that standards are continuing to rise during a period of transition.
- The accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses by the headteacher and governing body, combined with the record of improvement, shows that leaders have a strong capacity to improve the school further. The headteacher has managed developments and staff changes well so there is a common sense of purpose and staff morale is high.
- Regular lesson observations, followed by detailed feedback to teachers and a successful programme of training and coaching, have ensured that teaching is good, with an increasing proportion that is outstanding. Leaders use pupil-progress data to support their discussions with staff and to set teachers specific targets for improvement. The performance of teachers is managed effectively. Decisions about the salary that each teacher receives are securely based on the progress made by the pupils in their care.
- The school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination well. There are no recorded incidents of harassment.
- Teachers in charge of subjects are keen and enthusiastic and are playing an increasingly full part in checking pupil progress and the quality of teaching. Where leaders are new to their role, they are being given the right sort of support and training to develop their skills. Newly qualified teachers are well supported.
- The curriculum develops pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Visits, including sessions with the Royal Ballet and Young Shakespeare Company, opportunities to develop music, to perform and to take part in sporting activities, add further enrichment. Much learning is linked to real-life experiences, for example, 'forest schools', cooking and when the

Year 6 pupils were 'evacuated' as part of their Second World War topic, which develops highly positive attitudes to learning.

- The school has used the new funding for physical education to arrange for specialist teaching, training and to increase participation in after-school sports which the headteacher has plans to check regularly.
- 'Light touch' support from the local authority provides assistance for school leaders and training for governors. The school works effectively with a range of other schools in the local area to share teachers' training and to check the accuracy of assessments.
- The headteacher understands the needs of the local community and has established a school environment which parents, pupils and staff welcome and value. Partnerships with parents are developed effectively and start with well-managed transition arrangements, home visits and the many workshops that introduce them to the school's teaching methods and ways of working.
- Leadership and management are not outstanding because initiatives to improve pupils' achievements have not yet been translated into higher attainment across all year groups.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has a clear knowledge of the school's strengths and what it needs to do to keep improving. It provides effective support and challenge. Governors are very clear on the targets for the school and how these can be met. They visit the school regularly so that they are well informed about the quality of teaching and pupils' standards. They have a good understanding of the management of teachers' performance and the implementation of Teachers' Standards and how they affect salary progression. Governors monitor spending carefully and are aware of how the school is using the pupil premium to improve pupils' achievement. The range of expertise within the governing body enables close monitoring of, for example, the financial position of the school and the school improvement plan. Governors make sure they are kept up to date with training to improve their effectiveness, especially when holding the headteacher to account. The governing body fulfils statutory duties, such as ensuring the school meets safeguarding requirements.

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	103365
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	440365

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	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	210
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Susan Richards
Headteacher	Hazel Colgan
Date of previous school inspection	14 February 2011
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