

Birchen Coppice Primary School

Woodbury Road, Kidderminster, DY11 7JJ

Inspection dates

30–31 January 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Teaching has not been good enough to ensure that all pupils, including those who need extra help and the most able, make good progress in mathematics.
- At the end of Year 2, standards in reading, writing and mathematics remain low. Standards in mathematics at the end of Year 6 have not improved to the same extent as those in reading and writing since the previous inspection.
- The mathematical skills pupils are taught do not always build on well enough to those they have learned before. Consequently, activities are repeated unnecessarily and pupils do not make progress at a good rate.
- Pupils do not have sufficient time to practise their mathematics skills in lessons and when they are learning about other subjects.
- In some lessons, a few pupils do not have enough to do. As a result, they become restless and show low-level disruptive behaviour. This slows their learning.
- Leaders' evaluation of teaching does not always focus sufficiently well on the quality of pupils' learning.
- Until recently, the governing body has not asked leaders searching questions about the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.
- Although the pupil premium is helping to ensure eligible pupils are making progress at a similar rate to their classmates, the standards they reach are behind in reading, writing and mathematics.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils are happy to come to school. The rate of attendance has improved since the previous inspection to average levels.
- The work of the school to keep pupils safe is good. Pupils say they feel safe and well cared for, and parents agree.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress.
- Senior leaders, managers and governors are taking the right action to improve teaching by providing all staff with training to improve their skills.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 21 lessons or parts of lessons, taught by 15 teachers, and one assembly. Nine lessons were jointly observed with senior leaders. Inspectors also undertook learning walks which comprised a number of short visits to lessons to look at the teaching of reading, including phonics (the links between letters and the sounds they make) and learning across subjects and topics.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, subject leaders, staff and members of the governing body. In addition, an inspector talked with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors met with pupils, listened to them read and observed them at play during break times and at lunchtime.
- The school's safeguarding policies, improvement plans, notes from meetings of the governing body and records of pupils' behaviour were reviewed. Inspectors also looked at pupils' work and records of their progress.
- Inspectors took account of the 38 replies to the staff questionnaire. There were insufficient responses to the online parent questionnaire (Parent View) to show the results. Inspectors looked at the responses to the school's most recent parental questionnaire. They also spoke to parents at the start of the school day as they brought their children to school.

Inspection team

Sarah Warboys, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Steven Goldsmith	Additional Inspector
Nicola Harwood	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Birchen Coppice Primary School is of a similar size to most primary schools.
- Most pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average. Very few speak English as an additional language.
- A well above-average proportion of pupils are eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding to the school. The funding for children in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The percentage of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who are supported by school action is average. The proportion of pupils supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is more than four times the national average.
- The school runs three 'learning support' classes, each supporting pupils of different ages with different needs. In addition, it runs a nurture group for pupils with social, emotional, behavioural or learning difficulties.
- The number of pupils joining and leaving the school at different times of the year is above average.
- The school makes use of Wyre Forest Special School, Foley Park Primary School and the Children's Development Centre, Kidderminster for part of the week to provide specialist provision for supporting pupils' speech, language and communication needs and behaviour difficulties.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- A breakfast club, managed by the governing body, operates on the school site.
- The previous headteacher retired in August 2013. Interim leadership arrangements are in place, which means that the school currently has an acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher. Three teachers have joined the staff since September 2013. Two are at the start of their teaching career.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching to consistently good and help all pupils make at least good progress, thereby raising standards in Key Stage 1 and in mathematics at Key Stage 2, by ensuring that:
 - the skills pupils are taught each year are planned sufficiently well to enable each lesson to build on what pupils have learned before
 - pupils have opportunities to use and practise their mathematical skills in lessons and when they are learning about other subjects
 - pupils have more to do in lessons in order to keep them interested so they make the best progress.
- Strengthen the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels by:
 - focusing lesson observation judgements on how well the teaching promotes good learning and progress for all pupils
 - undertake an external review of governance and the school's use of the pupil premium, in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and governance may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 were low in 2013. They showed little improvement on the standards attained in the 2012 assessments, which means that pupils were more than a year behind pupils nationally.
- Of the Year 6 pupils who took the national tests in 2013, most made good progress to reach broadly average standards in reading and writing from low starting points. Standards in mathematics at the end of Year 6 remain low, however. In this subject, pupils left the school a year behind pupils nationally. Test results in mathematics, showed that too few pupils, including those who need extra help and those most able, made or exceeded the progress expected of them.
- As a result of better teaching, recent assessments of pupils in Key Stage 1 and 2 currently at the school, and work in their books, show that a very large majority are now making progress at a good rate, particularly in reading and writing. In mathematics, the work they do in different classes, and from year to year, does not help pupils enough to build on what they have learnt before.
- The additional funding the school receives to support pupils eligible for the pupil premium is being used effectively. It provides extra staff to support pupils in small groups, which help them to develop their skills in English and mathematics. In addition, it provides extra help in lessons and emotional support for pupils in all classes to help them learn better.
- The funding also pays part of the cost of the breakfast club. It provides access to educational trips and other activities such as 'Book and Cook' where families can enjoy reading and cooking healthy meals. Although pupils supported through pupil premium funding are now making the progress expected of them, they do not reach the same levels as other pupils. Of the Year 6 pupils who left the school in 2013, eligible pupils were, on average, two terms behind their classmates in reading and writing, and a year behind them in mathematics.
- Standards in reading are improving. Although still below average, the proportion of Year 1 pupils who reached the required standard in phonics increased considerably in 2013. Pupils are being taught phonics regularly and systematically. Across the school, they enjoy playing games on computers to practise reading and spelling.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs in the learning support units, in the nurture group and in each class make good progress because of the individual and precisely targeted help they receive. Adults plan activities that address very specific gaps in their knowledge and skills. They use resources and set activities that engage pupils and help to maintain their interest. 'Task management boards' help support pupils to know what they need to do next and this helps to keep them focused on what they must do.
- In most lessons, teachers are providing suitable levels of challenge for more-able pupils. Teachers ask them questions and set tasks to make them think hard. As a result, other than in mathematics, these pupils are now making good progress.
- Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and abilities that are below levels typically expected for their age. They make good progress because teachers organise lots of activities for them to explore and develop their skills. In 2013, an above-average proportion

reached a good level of development by the time they entered Year 1.

- Pupils who join the school partway through the school year are assessed quickly so that they can get the extra help they need. A 'buddy' helps them to learn their way around the school and to learn the school's routines. These pupils make progress similar to their classmates. Similarly, pupils who join the school who speak English as an additional language are supported effectively. Pictures and diagrams help them to learn English words and phrases well.
- A very small number of pupils have very recently attended specialist off-site provision so that their needs can be precisely assessed. Early indications are that these pupils are improving their communication skills and growing in self-confidence.
- The school is using the primary sports funding to provide a specialist sports coach to teach alongside colleagues to improve the quality of sports teaching. It is enabling pupils to take part in a wider variety of sporting activity in lunchtime and after-school clubs, and to compete with other pupils, particularly those most able, in other schools. Alongside 'Book and Cook' events, it is ensuring that more pupils are active and therefore developing healthier lifestyles.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Pupils do not have sufficient time to practise their skills in lessons, limiting their progress. Teachers plan plenty of opportunities for pupils to use their reading and writing skills when they are learning about other subjects. Chances for pupils to use their mathematical skills are more limited.
- In some lessons, when pupils do not have enough to keep them busy, a few pupils lose interest, drift off task and show low-level disruptive behaviour. As a result, their learning and that of others slows.
- Most lessons observed during the inspection were good. Good relationships were commonplace between adults and pupils, and this supports their learning well. Pupils are regularly praised and encouraged to try hard and do their best.
- Teachers are not afraid to adapt their teaching and pupils' tasks in response to pupils' understanding in lessons. Teachers and teaching assistants regularly ask pupils questions to find out what they already know and they use assessment information to plan activities to move pupils' learning to the next stage. This is much better established in English than in mathematics.
- Teachers have a good knowledge of what they teach. They show good examples of writing and introduce new vocabulary so pupils are clear about what is expected of them. For example, in Year 5, the teacher wrote the first sentence of a letter from an evacuee in the Second World War. As a result, pupils knew exactly what to do and got on with their work, writing their own letters from different points of view, quickly and without fuss.
- Children in the Nursery and Reception classes are taught well. Children choose from a range of interesting activities that enable them to explore the world around them. Children painted a huge 'snow' picture outdoors after seeing a few snowflakes fall that morning. As they work with children, staff take every opportunity to check on children's learning. In the Reception class, for example, children enthusiastically made 'bear caves'. Their explanations to staff of each part of their cave, helped them to develop their speaking and listening skills.

- Across the school, good use is made of computers for pupils to practise their reading, writing and communications skills. For example, in Year 4, pupils were focused on building up and sounding out new words. In Year 6, a film clip inspired pupils to write a diary entry. Activities such as these, engage pupils and help to maintain their interest.
- Homework usually includes reading and spelling practice as well as finding out about something new, related to topic work. Some classes have been trialling a different style of homework, recording their research in 'learning logs'. Staff have found most pupils are very keen to do this new homework and it is to be introduced in all year groups.
- Teachers' marking of pupils' work tells them clearly what they have done well and what they need to do to improve. Pupils are regularly given time to respond to teachers' comments so they can learn to do better. Marking currently varies in different classes because teachers are working on finding a system for marking which works best and which helps pupils to make the best progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Although a very large majority of pupils show positive attitudes to learning, a few do not. On the whole, adults manage pupils' behaviour effectively. In a few lessons, a small minority are not keen to learn, not responsive to adult guidance and disrupt others, adversely affecting their learning.
- Pupils are very proud of their school and are enthusiastic in their praise for the staff who help make learning interesting. The vast majority of pupils are ready and eager to learn.
- All pupils look neat and tidy in uniforms. Classrooms and cloakrooms are orderly places. Most pupils are respectful to adults as they move around the school, in lessons and in individual and small group work.
- The learning support unit and nurture group supports pupils with specific behaviour difficulties well. There are many instances of pupils who have transferred to the mainstream classes because they learned to manage their own behaviour and are ready to learn. As one pupil, talking about the learning support unit put it, 'It helped me to behave better and learn more.'
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say they feel safe in all parts of the school and are confident that incidents of bullying, such as name-calling, are quickly dealt with by staff. Pupils have a particularly thorough knowledge and understanding of how to keep safe when using the internet. The school's most recent parental questionnaire indicates that the vast majority of parents agree that their children are cared for well.
- The breakfast club enables pupils to socialise with adults and friends and to eat breakfast together. Adults join in activities, such as juggling, to make them fun and to challenge pupils to improve. Consequently, they are ready to start school promptly, prepared to learn. The breakfast club, together with rigorous systems for promoting good attendance, has helped attendance to rise to average levels.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- In the main, leaders' judgements of the quality of teaching were accurate during the inspection. However, the school's records show that their evaluations are not sharply focused sufficiently

well on the impact teaching has on the quality of learning and rates of progress for all pupils.

- The acting headteacher, supported well by the acting deputy headteacher and governors are taking the right actions to improve the school, particularly on improving teaching. Some programmes and initiatives are relatively new. It is too early to gauge the impact of their actions in raising pupils' achievement.
- Good progress has been made in tackling the issues identified at the previous inspection only four terms ago.
- Senior leaders are ambitious for the school. Under the guidance of the acting headteacher, the staff have a clear understanding of what needs to improve and are working well together with the aim of driving up standards and improving pupils' rates of progress. Typical of the comments made by staff are, 'I am so proud to be part of this team who deeply care about every individual', and 'I love teaching here.'
- The school takes appropriate action to tackle any form of discrimination and to make sure that all pupils are treated equally. Leaders and teachers meet regularly to check on pupils' progress. Those who are in danger of falling behind are provided with the extra help they need in one-to-one tuition and small group work.
- Systems to ensure that teachers are held to account for the progress their pupils make are in place. Coaching and training help teachers to develop their skills. Those new to teaching and those new to leadership roles are supported well by more experienced colleagues.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed to make sure that children get off to a good start. Those in charge of subjects and other key aspects of the school's work have a good knowledge and understanding of the challenges to improving pupils' achievement in different parts of the school. They make regular checks on teaching and look at pupils' work to see how well pupils are doing.
- Leaders and teachers think carefully about the way they organise the teaching of different subjects to ensure that they help to foster pupils' curiosity and stimulate their interests. Trips and visitors enhance what is on offer. Pupils are given plenty of opportunities to appreciate and create art and music, and to participate in sporting events, such as cross-country running.
- Staff organise a variety of additional clubs and activities that improve pupils' emotional well-being and help them to develop a healthy lifestyle. Pupils are encouraged to make decisions about school events and to run activities themselves. They decide what is to be sold at the weekly tuck shop and how to spend the proceeds. For example, pupils chose to buy a table tennis table, which in turn helps to keep them more active.
- The local authority has provided good support for the school in regularly reviewing its performance and for governance. It has helped leaders in improving the quality of teaching.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Until recently, governors had not challenged leaders sufficiently well in holding them to account for pupils' achievement. They did not come into school much to see for themselves what happens. This is changing. Governors are in the process of reorganising themselves to ensure that they fulfil their duties more effectively. They are making the most of training so that they are better informed in making decisions about key aspects of the school's work. They have rightly focused initially on teaching and checking how well pupils are doing by

looking at published data. Governors manage the school's finances well, including the primary sports funding. They have turned a deficit budget into a positive balance. They know that the spending of the pupil premium is having a positive impact, but although governors have checked that eligible pupils are reaching standards closer to similar pupils nationally, they have not measured the difference in standards between these pupils and others in the school. Governors are taking robust steps to appoint a permanent headteacher. In the meantime, they are managing the performance of the acting headteacher. Governors ensure that good teachers are rewarded and that only those who meet the targets set for them progress along the pay scales. They ensure that safeguarding arrangements meet 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	135045
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	431695

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	262
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Clare Cassidy
Headteacher	Rachel Higgins (Acting)
Date of previous school inspection	12 September 2012
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