

Blakesley Hall Primary School

Yardley Green Road, Birmingham, B33 8TH

Inspection dates

5–6 February 2014

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		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Although attainment is below average, pupils make good progress from standards well below those expected for their age on entry to the school. Good progress through Reception and Key Stage 1 accelerates further through Key Stage 2.
- The school's focus on speaking and listening skills provides pupils, many of whom are at an early stage of learning English, with a firm basis for their education.
- Pupils have excellent attitudes towards learning and their behaviour is at least good in and around the school.
- Almost all of the teaching is good or better because it helps pupils to learn successfully.
- The headteacher provides outstanding leadership for the school and this has had an excellent impact on ensuring good and rapidly improving teaching and pupils' better achievement.
- Staff have had access to very effective professional development over time. This has had a major impact on their growing leadership skills.
- All staff in the school share a clear commitment to raising standards and improving teaching and learning.
- The governing body's work is very well focused on school improvement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The progress made by pupils in reading, writing and mathematics is not as strong in other year groups as it is in Year 6.
- The most-able pupils do not make the excellent progress of which they are capable.
- Attendance rates are below average.
- Teachers do not always clearly explain exactly what is expected when pupils are given tasks, especially in written work.
- Some of the feedback teachers provide for pupils does not help them understand exactly what they need to do to reach the next level.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 29 lessons or parts of lessons. A number of these were observed jointly with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Meetings and discussions took place with the headteacher, staff, governors, pupils, and parents.
- Samples of pupils' work were examined. Some pupils read books with inspectors.
- The inspectors took account of the survey of parents and carers carried out for the school by a research organisation as too few parents responded to the online survey, Parent View.
- The inspectors looked at key documents, including: performance data on pupils' progress and attainment produced by the school, procedures for safeguarding, the school's own evaluations of its work, reports to the governing body and the plans for raising attainment.

Inspection team

Geof Timms, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Tony Green

Additional Inspector

Jen Southall

Additional Inspector

Liz Macfarlane

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Blakesley Hall Primary School is a much larger than average-sized primary school.
- The school has a diverse population with pupils from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. The largest groups within the school are Pakistani, White British and Bangladeshi. Over half of the school population speaks English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also above average.
- A well above-average proportion of pupils – more than half – are supported by the pupil premium which, in this school, provides additional funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school provides a breakfast and after-school club for pupils.
- A much higher-than-average proportion of pupils join or leave the school partway through their primary education.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in reading, writing and mathematics by:
 - ensuring that the progress made in other year groups is as rapid as that in Year 6
 - setting appropriately challenging work for the most-able pupils
 - reminding parents of the importance of regular attendance and ensuring that they understand the impact that absence has on their child's attainment.
- Make more of the teaching consistently outstanding by:
 - checking that teachers explain clearly exactly what pupils are expected to do when they are given tasks to complete, especially when writing is involved
 - ensuring that the feedback provided to pupils and the marking of their work in books helps them to understand exactly what they need to do to reach the next level.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- When they start school, children have levels of knowledge and understanding which are often well below those expected for their age, including their communication, reading, writing, numeracy and problem-solving skills. They make good progress in the Reception classes but their achievement is still considerably below average when they join Year 1.
- Standards in the 2013 national tests were below average in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 and at the end of Year 6. This is due to children's low levels of knowledge and skills when they start school. Also many pupils join the school at times other than usual, with limited skills in using English. Although they rapidly make good progress, many do not have enough time in the school to raise their attainment to higher levels. In addition, some pupils' poor attendance has a negative impact on their achievement. Even so, the data on pupils' performance show a picture of rising standards and progress markedly above that seen nationally in Key Stage 2.
- The results of the Year 1 check on pupils' skills in linking letters and sounds (phonics) show standards in 2013 were above the national average. These results improved even further on the above-average standards achieved in 2012. Children make rapid progress in early reading skills from when they start school. In Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils develop good reading skills which help them read and understand words that are new to them, as was shown when they read to inspectors. They read widely and younger pupils talk with pleasure about traditional stories they enjoy, such as *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*.
- Pupils' standards in mathematics, reading and writing by the end of Year 2, although they dipped slightly in 2013, have risen significantly in two of the last three years. Identified individuals are given support and there is a clear focus on improving the teaching of basic skills.
- Standards at the end of Year 6 rose significantly in 2013 and were the best for five years. There is a clear trajectory of rising standards. Progress was significantly above the rate of progress expected nationally for the second time in two years in mathematics and writing. However, progress is particularly strong in Year 6, and although the progress of younger year groups is good, those pupils do not yet make progress at the same rapid rate as in Year 6.
- Currently in the school, progress in Year 6 is good and pupils are on track to again achieve better standards, reflecting the on-going picture of improvement. A larger proportion of the pupils are now working at the higher National Curriculum levels than in the past, especially in mathematics. However, although their progress in Year 6 is particularly good, the progress made by the most-able pupils in other year groups is not as consistently good. At times, teachers do not challenge these pupils sufficiently or explain clearly enough exactly what is expected of them.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs receive effective extra help, and this is evident in the current, impressive progress made by these pupils in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The many pupils eligible for pupil premium funding in 2013 achieved levels closer to those of their classmates than in previous years but were about two terms behind them in reading, writing and mathematics. Additional funding is used effectively to support their learning. Progress is good and is narrowing the gap in attainment between those eligible for the additional funding and other pupils.

- The school works hard and largely successfully to ensure the good progress of pupils of different ethnic heritages, including those who arrive at the school partway through their primary education, or are newly arrived from abroad with little competence in speaking English. The pupils of Bangladeshi and Pakistani heritages, in particular, achieve well and make good progress. The school successfully promotes equality of opportunity and good relationships, and ensures that all pupils are effectively supported to achieve well.

The quality of teaching is good

- The good quality of teaching has a positive impact on pupils' learning and progress. This is particularly the case for those at an early stage of learning English. Teachers and other adults work very well together to overcome any barriers to learning to ensure that all pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education.
- Leaders are continually seeking to improve practice in teaching and learning and are not afraid to be innovative. For example, the use of video to help teachers become more aware of the strengths and weaknesses in their own practice is proving a powerful tool for improvement. A particularly positive feature is the focus on improving pupils' learning skills. Consequently, pupils are showing growing competence with the English language and excellent attitudes to learning in some lessons.
- Teachers create a positive and purposeful climate for learning in classrooms. Because of this, pupils talk about how they enjoy lessons and how the teachers help them learn new things. Staff expertise is having a very positive impact on pupils' physical development and their attitudes towards taking part in sporting activities in lessons and through teams or clubs.
- Relationships between adults and pupils are very strong. They support learning and have a very positive impact on pupils' attitudes and behaviour. Teachers ask some well-targeted and appropriate questions to extend pupils' understanding and to get them to explain their reasoning.
- At times, teachers provide pupils with activities that they do not adequately explain so that pupils are unsure exactly what is expected. For example, in a few lessons, pupils do not understand exactly what is expected of them when they are given writing tasks. This slows their progress. However, in a good Reception lesson effective demonstration by adults resulted in children using a varied vocabulary which they then used to talk in complete sentences rather than in one or two words.
- In those lessons where pupils made good progress, teachers use time and the support staff well to ensure that all pupils stay attentive and on task, and that they get a lot done. For example, in a particularly well-taught lesson in Year 6, the knowledgeable teacher used imaginative resources involving bubbles to illustrate how to measure diameters. In cases like this, very clear and high expectations are shared with pupils so that they know and understand exactly what is expected during a lesson. In a few lessons, however, the tasks are too easy for the most-able pupils, and this means that they do not make the excellent progress of which they are capable.
- Pupils' work is marked regularly. However, the feedback from teachers and their written comments do not always make clear exactly what pupils need to do, or what their next steps should be, to reach the next level.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Many pupils have excellent attitudes towards their learning in lessons. In all lessons observed, pupils were well behaved and were very positive about their work. This has a major impact on their learning and progress, and they thoroughly enjoy the activities they are given. One group even talked seriously about wanting longer lessons.
- The quality of presentation of pupils' work is high throughout the school and shows the pride pupils take in their efforts.
- Pupils from the many cultures and faiths in the school talk positively about how well they all get on.
- The school provides a helpful range of opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and to learn more about the world around them. The school council, anti-racism council and sports councils ensure that pupils have a clear voice in many aspects of school life. More innovative are the 'lead learners' whose role is to support other learners across the school in, for example, using computers. These pupils are able to talk knowledgeably and maturely about their responsibilities and the impact on other pupils.
- Pupils are polite, friendly and, during the inspection, were happy to talk to inspectors about their work and school life. They spoke about particular things they enjoy, such as making circuits in science, and many pupils are very positive about the sporting provision.
- Pupils say examples of misbehaviour or bullying are rare but dealt with well if they occur. They are aware of the different types of bullying, such as through the use of computers or mobile phones. Appropriate records are kept. Even so, there are some pupils who find conforming to the school's high expectations difficult at times. Because of this, exclusions are above average but, when they occur, they are recorded and carried out appropriately. Pupils are supported well to help them settle back into school when they return.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say they feel safe in school and their views are supported by parents. Pupils from all backgrounds benefit from the work of a team of learning mentors and nurture staff. This particularly helps those newly arrived in the country to settle quickly into school life and make good progress.
- Parents are positive about how happy and safe their children are at school.
- The school provides good care and support for pupils. The breakfast- and after-school club provides good support through a range of activities, as well as food and drink so that pupils attending have a good start or a purposeful end to the day.
- Attendance is below average. Too many pupils struggle to attend regularly, and some fall behind because they miss valuable schooling. The recent appointment of a full-time attendance officer is already having a positive impact and the latest data show a clear improvement.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The leadership and management are outstanding because the headteacher, senior leaders and the governing body all have a clear vision and firm commitment to do the best they possibly can for the pupils at the school. The impact of their resolution is evident in pupils' good and improving progress and teaching that is at least good across the school.

- A major strength of the school has been the development of leadership at all levels. This has enabled the headteacher to share leadership responsibilities and duties among staff. The way teachers have shouldered this responsibility reflects their own comments that they feel extremely valued and trusted by the senior leaders. There is a clear awareness that the improvements made so far, while good, are not enough, and there is a shared ambition among all to make Blakesley Hall an outstanding school. As one staff member wrote, 'It's a pleasure and a privilege to be part of a great team.'
- The school makes very effective use of good practice seen in other schools. Leaders have actively sought out and built links with similar schools that are seen to be outstanding, to learn from them. This has resulted in the school itself being used locally as an exemplar in several ways, such as aspects of practice in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in the building of strong leadership teams.
- The school's incisive self-evaluation leads to detailed development planning. This impressive practice provides the school with a clear set of targets and aims for the future. Leaders at all levels monitor and evaluate the school's work in depth and, therefore, have an accurate picture of its strengths and weaknesses. The school's impressive track record of ensuring better progress and effective teaching, supported by the work of senior and subject leaders and others with leadership responsibilities, shows that the school has very strong capacity to continue improving.
- Teachers' performance is checked carefully to identify strengths and weaknesses. The challenging targets set for teachers are based appropriately on improving pupils' progress, the whole-school priorities and teachers' individual training needs. Extra support or challenge is provided as needed. The school's records show that if any further action is needed it is carried out swiftly and robustly for the benefit of the pupils.
- The local authority rightly recognises the strength of school leadership in the limited support and challenge it needs to provide for the school. Expertise within the school, such as that used to check the accuracy of assessment of written work across the local authority, is used well to support other schools. The school makes effective use of training and other support provided by the local authority.
- Funding available through the pupil premium is used to help eligible pupils to take a full part in school life, and receive, where appropriate, specific resources such as reading books, and additional help from adults. The progress made by these pupils is monitored closely and leaders and governors are aware of the remaining gaps in attainment and are addressing them.
- The use of money available to promote physical education and sporting opportunities is used extremely effectively. Pupils' participation levels are closely monitored so that, for example, the school can show that 91% of Year 3 pupils have attended a club during the last year.
- The curriculum is clearly directed at ensuring the good learning and progress of the pupils. Topics, such as a full day on the evacuation of children from cities during the Second World War, bring learning to life. Such activities, together with the excellent range of sporting and other clubs and extra-curricular activities, contribute well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school is well placed to introduce the new curriculum in 2014 and is leading other schools in its implementation.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body provides the school with powerful support for its continuing improvement

and its place in the local and wider community. Governors provide outstanding levels of support and challenge to leaders and have a very positive impact on the school's performance.

- Governors check on the school's work very closely through visits, meetings with staff, presentations made by staff to governors, and through a thorough analysis of data on pupils' progress and attainment. The sharing of expertise within the governing body has increased its understanding of the available range of data. Governors use this information very effectively to question school leaders and hold them to account for the school's performance.
- Members of the governing body have a good understanding of what targets are set for teachers and of the appraisal systems used to determine teachers' effectiveness in enabling pupils to make progress. Governors check rigorously how effective these systems are applied to improve the quality of teaching. Decisions about teachers' pay are closely and appropriately linked to their performance and responsibilities.
- Governors track finances well and assist the school in deciding how to spend additional money to support pupils eligible for the pupil premium and to extend sports and physical education opportunities.
- The governing body makes sure that arrangements for pupils' safeguarding meet the current national 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	103300
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	440491

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	626
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anita Brock
Headteacher	Heather Phillips
Date of previous school inspection	7 March 2011
Telephone number	0121 783 2148
Fax number	0121 785 0479
Email address	enquiry@blakesley.bham.sch.uk

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