

Balsall Common Primary School

Balsall Street East, Balsall Common, Coventry, CV7 7FS

Inspection dates 26–27 February 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils	Outstanding		1
Quality of teaching	Outstanding		1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Outstanding		1
Leadership and management	Outstanding		1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Children get an excellent start to their education in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They make outstanding progress in all areas of their early development.
- Standards in reading, writing and mathematics are high. Pupils make rapid and sustained progress across all year groups.
- Teaching is typically outstanding and pupils respond well to their teachers' very high expectations.
- Teachers' marking is often of a high quality, although they do not always ensure that pupils benefit by correcting their mistakes.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary, both in lessons and around the school. They have very positive attitudes to learning and love coming to school. Pupils feel extremely safe.
- The subjects taught are especially well designed to promote high achievement, and to interest and engage pupils. Practical and exciting activities make learning very meaningful to the pupils.
- Governors are skilled, knowledgeable and know the school extremely well. They provide high levels of support and challenge to ensure pupils get the highest quality of education.
- Leadership at all levels is outstanding. Leaders use very good systems to check on pupils' attainment and progress. As a result, their achievement and the quality of teaching continue to improve.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 29 lessons, eight of which were seen with the senior leadership team. In addition, inspectors listened to pupils read.
- Inspectors took account of the 97 responses to Parent View, the online questionnaire.
- Meetings were held with a group of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body, the academy's improvement partner and school leaders.
- Inspectors looked at many documents, including: the school's own information on pupils' current and recent progress; planning of work in different subjects; leaders' monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning; and records relating to behaviour, attendance and the safeguarding of pupils.

Inspection team

Steve Nelson, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Roisin Chambers	Additional Inspector
Linda Rowley	Additional Inspector
Martin Bertulis	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger-than-average primary school. The school converted to academy status in August 2012. When Ofsted last inspected its predecessor school, of the same name, in February 2009, it was judged to be good.
- The very large majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below average. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is below average. The proportion who are supported at school action plus, or with a statement of special educational needs, is above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium (additional government funding to assist certain groups, which in this school applies to pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals) is well below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum national expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make sure that pupils benefit from marking by correcting their work, so they learn from their mistakes.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- The majority of children join the Nursery with skills and knowledge below those expected for their age. The exciting and well-resourced surroundings and stimulating activities in the Nursery and Reception help them make outstanding progress. They enter Year 1 as well-equipped and confident learners.
- Pupils make very good progress and achieve high standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2. In 2013, most Year 6 pupils reached standards well above the levels expected nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. The work seen in lessons and pupils' books shows they are on track to achieve even higher standards at the end of this year.
- The school's accurate data show that most pupils make rapid and sustained progress as they move through the school in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion of pupils attaining the nationally expected levels for their age is high, and a higher proportion of more-able pupils are exceeding expected levels this year.
- Standards in mathematics and writing are high. Every chance is taken to make sure that pupils can, for example, count and calculate accurately. Pupils are very skilled in solving mathematical problems. Writing is often imaginative and exciting to read. Work is neat and spelling, punctuation and grammar are accurate.
- Pupils make outstanding progress in phonics (the sounds that letters make) and Year 1 pupils performed well above the national average in the 2013 phonics check. Pupils enjoy reading for learning and pleasure. Older pupils are enthusiastic about their favourite books and authors.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are supported and taught very well. Their individual needs are identified early, and extra help is given quickly. As a result, these pupils make rapid progress in line with other pupils in the school, including those from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language.
- Most of the small number pupils of Year 6 who were eligible for the pupil premium achieved or exceeded expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics last year. Their attainment was above that of other eligible pupils nationally. They were on average three terms behind their classmates in reading, writing and mathematics. However, current progress data show that the gaps have closed this year and eligible pupils are doing as well as other pupils.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Teaching is outstanding because the senior leaders and teachers have high expectations of all pupils whatever their age, ability or background. As a result pupils make rapid gains in their learning.
- As a result of teachers' encouragement, pupils are eager to learn, highly attentive, and think deeply about the ideas they are being taught. In a Year 6 lesson pupils made excellent progress in multiplying whole numbers and decimals when given the opportunity to choose the level of difficulty.
- Teachers ask challenging questions in lessons and pupils usually give well-reasoned answers, showing that they are developing high-level thinking skills. Working with partners helps pupils to

challenge one another and share their ideas, such as how to use language effectively or which calculation method would be the best to use in a mathematical task.

- Teachers engage pupils very well in learning through interesting activities. As a result, pupils are enthusiastic about their work and learning. For example, in a Year 2 lesson pupils worked hard in writing creative and imaginative letters home as war evacuees.
- The skilled team of support staff makes a significant contribution to pupils' learning. Excellent liaison with the class teachers gives assistants a clear understanding of what is expected of them. As a consequence less-able pupils make excellent progress.
- Pupils know their targets well and the marking of pupils' work in writing is thorough. Comments by teaching staff are supportive and helpful. Pupils take them seriously and apply them to their next pieces of work. Occasionally pupils do not correct their mistakes when their work is marked, so they do not benefit from the advice given.
- Children in Early Years Foundation Stage are encouraged to make the right choices and to think for themselves early on. They quickly gain high levels of confidence as their communication skills improve. Stimulating resources such as vegetables grab their interest, prompting a series of conversations about what the vegetables need in order to grow. Early reading and writing skills develop particularly well, providing an excellent foundation for their next steps in learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Their excellent attitudes to learning have a significant impact on the high standards achieved across the school. Pupils at all ages take great care to present their work neatly and tidily.
- Pupils behave extremely well in and outside of classrooms. For example, at lunchtime the hall is full of children eating with impeccable manners. There is an acceptable level of conversation and nobody needs to raise their voice.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils feel very safe and have an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves safe inside and outside school. They have a very good awareness of e-safety and the dangers of misusing the internet. Records show that bullying or unkind behaviour in any form is rare and always speedily dealt with.
- Pupils' relationships with adults and each other are excellent. Consequently pupils are very happy in school. Attendance levels are high.
- Pupils are very proud of their school. The school buildings and grounds are impressively litter free, bright and filled with stimulating resources. Pupils speak positively about how much they enjoy being a part of the school and this is evident in their smart appearance and very good manners.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Staff are exceptionally well led by the headteacher and work as a highly effective team. Every child is known as an individual and provided with the very best care and understanding to support their learning. As a result, pupils make outstanding progress and reach high levels of attainment.

- Leaders at all levels have clearly defined roles and responsibilities and carry out their duties rigorously. Their evaluation of how things stand is used exceptionally well to provide an accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for development across the whole school. Highly effective leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage ensures that children make outstanding progress across all areas for learning.
- Leaders have been coached very well in how to use data to improve pupils' progress and attainment in each year group. They use this information effectively to identify any underachievement and provide support so that pupils quickly catch up with their classmates. This ensures that all individuals and groups of pupils make as much progress as possible, and have an equal opportunity to succeed.
- The headteacher and senior leadership team make excellent use of information from the checks on teaching and learning to develop teachers' skills and improve teaching. Teachers' pay levels are determined by how successful they are in helping pupils to achieve well.
- The subjects taught are particularly well planned and develop a love of learning in pupils. For example, pupils use their literacy and numeracy skills when studying interesting and exciting topics such as 'Terrific Toys' and the 'Myths and Legends of ancient Greece'. Educational visits and after-school clubs like running their own radio station to broadcast weekly, drama and craft clubs help promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceptionally well.
- The primary school sport funding is used very well to increase the range and pupils' take-up of after-school sports clubs and activities. Competitive sport is promoted with other schools and additional training for staff is improving the quality of physical education lessons. The on-site indoor swimming pool is used extensively to increase pupils' physical well-being.
- The school has made effective use of the academy's school improvement adviser to help strengthen teaching and raise pupils' achievement.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The quality of governance is high. Governors work exceptionally well with leaders at all levels. They are trained well and have a clear understanding of pupils' progress and how it compares to that of other pupils nationally. As a result they ask challenging questions and hold leaders fully to account. Governors' regular visits to the school give them a very good understanding of how well teachers are doing through first-hand observations and discussions with staff. They ensure the pupil premium is spent well on extra support so that eligible pupils achieve as well as other pupils. The budget is well managed and spending decisions are based firmly on improving outcomes for pupils. Governors ensure that leaders take action in the event that any teaching is weak, and make sure pay and promotion are linked to the achievement of pupils. Governors keep their own skills up to date by attending regular training. They make sure that national safeguarding requirements are met.

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	138536
Local authority	Solihull
Inspection number	431510

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	686
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gary Sawyer
Headteacher	Graeme Burgess
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01676 532254
Fax number	01676 533314
Email address	office@balsall-common.solihull.sch.uk

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