

Riverside Community Primary School Birstall

Wanlip Lane, Birstall, Leicester, LE4 4JU

Inspection dates 26–27 February 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Pupils' progress in English and mathematics varies too much throughout the school, reflecting inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. Standards are average.
- Work is not always set at the right levels, particularly for pupils of average ability. Teachers do not always adjust it when it is not helping pupils to achieve their best.
- Teachers do not always check pupils' understanding closely enough in lessons. They do not comment precisely enough on pupils' work, orally or through marking, to help them improve it.
- Pupils' behaviour requires improvement in some lessons and teachers do not manage it consistently. Attendance is average.
- Despite recent improvement, efforts made by senior leaders and governors have not led to enough gains in the quality of teaching for pupils' achievement to be good.
- Not enough attention is paid to the use of correct grammar and a wider choice of vocabulary or to pupils' understanding of mathematics.
- A few parents are concerned that they are not fully informed about their children's progress and that their concerns are not listened to.
- Checks made by leaders and governors do not focus sharply on the impact of teaching on pupils' learning, particularly of different groups of pupils.

The school has the following strengths

- Good or better teaching in Year 6 is helping pupils to learn at a faster rate and make up some of the ground lost in the previous years.
- Reading is a relative strength. The teaching of phonics is strengthening pupils' skills throughout the school.
- Pupils enjoy practical work in science.
- Pupils supported through additional funding do as well as other pupils.
- Under its new leadership, the governing body is taking its responsibilities in holding the senior leaders to account seriously.
- Pupils say that they feel safe at school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in 26 lessons, including three observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with a randomly selected group of pupils, and with senior and middle leaders. The lead inspector met the Chair of the Governing Body for a discussion. He also spoke to a representative of the local authority by telephone.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of documents, including the school’s records of current pupils’ progress, a summary of the school’s self-evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses, records of leaders’ checks on teaching, the school’s most recent improvement plan, and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding arrangements.
- Inspector took into account 43 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire and the findings of a recent survey organised by the school.
- Inspectors also considered 39 responses to the Ofsted inspection questionnaire returned by staff.

Inspection team

Krishan Sharma, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Helen Booth

Additional Inspector

Mike Williams

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. A very small minority come from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds and a very few speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils supported by pupil premium funding is below average. This is extra funding provided by the government to support certain groups of pupils. In this school, it applies to the pupils known to be 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 below average, as is the proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- 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 teaching consistently good or better so that all pupils achieve well in lessons, particularly those of average ability, by ensuring that teachers:
 - set tasks that are at the right level to increase the proportion of pupils making better than expected progress in each class
 - adapt their teaching when some pupils find the work planned for them too easy or difficult
 - check pupils' progress during the middle part of lessons more closely
 - give clear guidance through their oral comments and marking on how pupils can improve their work.
- Improve pupils' achievement in English and mathematics by:
 - ensuring that pupils write with greater grammatical accuracy and use a wider range of vocabulary in their writing
 - increasing opportunities for pupils to show how much mathematics they have understood.
- Strengthen leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - senior and subject leaders check the progress of different groups during their observation of teaching and reviews of pupils' written work
 - rules relating to pupils' behaviour are consistently applied in and around the school
 - governors effectively challenge the senior leaders to tackle the weaknesses in teaching and achievement
 - communication with parents is better so that they feel fully informed about their children's progress at school and that their concerns are listened to.
- An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Although achievement is improving, particularly at the end of Year 6, the progress pupils make throughout the school varies too much for their achievement to be good.
- Children usually enter the Reception year at levels typical for their age. Most of them make at least the expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics. As pupils move through the school, most of them continue to make the expected progress overall but it varies between classes. As a result, standards in English and mathematics have remained broadly average at the end of Years 2 and 6 since the last inspection.
- In 2013, attainment rose in Year 6, particularly in mathematics and reading. Pupils in the current Year 6 are on track to achieve results that are higher than average in reading, writing and mathematics. An increasing proportion of pupils are now making better than expected progress.
- Progress in writing is accelerating, but unevenly, and not in all aspects. Pupils can develop ideas through their writing and most can construct sentences that make sense. Their written work shows that some pupils do not have a good grasp of the correct use of grammar and their choice of vocabulary is limited.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics is also accelerating, but it varies too much as pupils move through the school. Most pupils are able to make routine calculations correctly and are increasingly able to use them in solving mathematical problems. Some pupils, however, have a limited understanding of the mathematics they are using.
- Many of the disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make the progress they should, but some of them do not. Senior leaders have already given priority to ensuring that the extra staff help and the interventions planned for them meet their individual needs more accurately.
- Throughout the school, some pupils of average ability make slower progress. Work given to them is not always challenging enough to engage them or to speed up their progress. However, an increasing proportion of the most-able pupils now make more than expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics. In the current Year 6, the number of pupils working at or on track to achieve the higher grades (Levels 5 and 6) is growing.
- Most of the small number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, including the very few who speak English as an additional language, achieve well.
- Pupils make faster progress in reading than in writing. Regular teaching of phonics (linking letters and the sounds they make), starting from the Reception year, is helping pupils to tackle unfamiliar words with confidence. Pupils enjoy reading in a range of subjects and most are competent readers by the time they leave Year 6.
- At the end of Key Stage 2 in 2013, the attainment of pupils supported by the pupil premium in reading, writing and mathematics was very close to that of other pupils in the school. The school's own analysis shows that the currently eligible pupils are making similar progress to others in the school.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching does not result in pupils making consistently good progress throughout the school. It has improved since the last inspection but not yet good enough to raise pupils' achievement.
- Work set is often not set at the right level for all groups. As a result, some pupils, especially those of average ability, do not make the expected progress. Teachers do not always adjust their teaching to take account of what pupils have learnt. Consequently, some pupils do not make the good progress of which they are capable.
- Teachers check pupils' progress during all lessons, but their checking in many is not always sharp enough, particularly during the middle part. As a result, teachers' oral guidance on how pupils could improve their work is not always precise. This weakness is also evident in some marking, which is supportive but not always helpful in moving pupils' learning on.
- The teaching assistants' extra help adds considerably to the learning of the individual and groups of pupils they work with in most lessons.
- Examples of good or better teaching are found throughout the school. Teachers take into account what pupils already know and can do and, as a result, pupils are fully engaged in challenging activities. Teachers probe pupils' understanding through searching questions and their oral comments during lessons and their marking are precise and guide pupils clearly on how to improve their work.
- In the Reception year, adults are adept in observing children closely and using this information to plan the next steps for their learning. Teaching in these lessons promotes positive attitudes to and instils a love of learning.
- The teaching of writing and mathematics is getting stronger, although it is not yet consistently effective across the school. The teaching of phonics and reading is systematic and effectively helps pupils to become competent readers.

The behaviour and safety of pupils requires improvement

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. In some lessons, pupils lose concentration and show a lack of commitment to their work. This slows their learning and progress and leads occasionally to disruption of other pupils' learning. A few parents and pupils were also concerned with this.
- Most pupils conduct themselves responsibly in lessons and around the school. However, in some classes, the rules of behaviour are not consistently applied. Inspectors did not find convincing evidence to indicate that unacceptable behaviour is a persistent feature in the life of the school.
- Children in the Reception classes and most other pupils relate well with their peers and adults. Their attitudes to learning are positive, although not consistently so across the school. The standards expected in pupils' presentation of their work are not consistent from class to class.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils feel safe at school and their parents are happy with the standards of care shown by adults at school. Pupils say bullying is rare and it is dealt with promptly, if it occurs. They understand the forms bullying may take, such as name calling, cyber bullying or that which is based on prejudice.

- Attendance is average and is improving. Leaders are working hard to improve it further.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The school's leaders have not been effective enough in moving the school forward since its last inspection. Modest gains have been made in pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching, demonstrating the school's emerging capacity to improve. However, the gains made so far have not been enough to iron out inconsistencies in teaching and pupils' progress which still remain.
- Checks on teaching by senior and subject leaders during lessons and the review of pupils' written work do not focus sharply enough on the impact teaching has on pupils' progress. Not enough emphasis is given to how well different groups of pupils are learning. This lack of rigour in the school's monitoring of teaching means that leaders get only a partial picture of the quality of teaching in the school.
- Regular checks on and reviews of pupils' progress enable the school to maintain an overview of how different groups are performing. Senior leaders recognise that, despite the extra help given to them, the progress made by some pupils and groups is not yet fast enough.
- Pupil premium funding is used to provide one-to-one support and small-group activities for eligible pupils. Senior leaders acknowledge that, although the support has been substantially effective in narrowing the gap in attainment of Year 6 pupils in 2013, there is still more work to be done. The school now maintains a clear overview of this group of pupils across the school.
- The use of the new primary sports funding is successfully increasing pupils' participation in a wider range of physical activities. The use of external sports coaches through local partnerships is improving the quality of teaching in physical education. The funding has given a further boost to the school's tradition of participating in competitive events.
- Arrangements for the management of teachers' performance are currently being finalised and are rightly designed to link teachers' pay increases to their performance in the classroom. Recent staff training has increased teachers' subject knowledge in the teaching of mathematics and writing, particularly in Key Stage 2. Subject leaders in English and mathematics are now much more active in leading developments in their subjects and recognise they still have more to do.
- The range of subjects taught and other activities are sufficiently focused on developing pupils' basic skills as well as their personal development. Science has a high profile in the school's curriculum and its good provision has won a national award. Pupils enjoy conducting scientific investigations. The school's basic curriculum and numerous enrichment activities promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development appropriately.
- Most parents are well satisfied with the way the school cares for their children. A small minority are not satisfied with the information they receive about their children's progress and the lack of response to their concerns.
- The local authority has maintained worthwhile links with the school. It has provided challenge through a joint review of the school's performance and has promoted the school's links with local partnerships to improve its quality of teaching.

■ The governance of the school:

- The governing body has been aware, in general, of the school's performance. It has been less clear about the detail of the school's weaknesses in teaching and its consequences for pupils' achievement, which has remained static over the years. Under its new leadership, the governing body takes its responsibilities seriously. It is currently finalising arrangements for linking teachers' pay increases to their performance in the classroom in order to recognise good and tackle less than good teaching. No pay increases have been awarded recently. Governors' checks on the school's work are becoming increasingly rigorous, including their critical examination of the school's performance compared with national data and using the school's own data. Governors are now in a much stronger position to hold senior and middle leaders to account for the decisions they make, including how the pupil premium and primary schools sport funding, are being spent, and to what effect. The governing body ensures that the school's safeguarding arrangements meet current 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	120092
Local authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	430702

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	429
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Donna Anastasiades
Headteacher	Andrew Hayman
Date of previous school inspection	26 April 2012
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