

Mill Lodge Primary School

Aqueduct Road, Shirley, Solihull, B90 1BT

Inspection dates 8–9 April 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		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils make good progress because they are well taught. Over the past year, progress has been strengthened in reading, writing and mathematics but remains strongest in reading and mathematics.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, together with those who are eligible for pupil premium funding, make good progress and achieve well.
- Pupils' learning is effective because planned activities for different groups are usually well matched to their needs.
- The school checks on pupils' progress closely and uses well-targeted support to ensure that any pupils who are underachieving quickly get back on track.
- Pupils' behaviour is good in lessons and in the playground. They concentrate on their work and respond very positively to teachers' high expectations.
- Pupils are courteous and show respect to adults and to each other. Pupils say that they feel very safe in school.
- The clear and purposeful leadership of the headteacher, together with the commitment and hard work of all the staff, have helped to maintain and further improve good teaching and achievement since the previous inspection.
- Governors are fully supportive of the school; they know it well and the next steps it has to take to improve.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils sometimes spend too long on tasks that do not challenge them. This impedes their progress, especially for the more-able pupils.
- Achievement in writing is not as strong as in reading and mathematics. This is because pupils do not frequently enough use their writing skills in different subjects or write extended pieces of work.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 16 lessons or parts of lessons, five of which were jointly observed with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, and looked at pupils’ written work in their books and on display.
- Meetings were held with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, the headteacher and other school leaders, and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke formally to one group of pupils and informally with other pupils in lessons and around the school, and listened to other pupils reading.
- A number of the school’s documents were examined. These included the school’s information about pupils’ progress, the support given to disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, the school’s own checks on its performance and its improvement plan, minutes of governing body meetings, evidence about monitoring and evaluating teaching, and records relating to behaviour, safeguarding and attendance.
- Inspectors took account of 53 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), together with the views expressed by parents as they arrived at school to pick up their children, and analysed 18 questionnaires returned by staff.

Inspection team

Richard Blackmore, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Ahmed Marikar

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is slightly smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is broadly average. In this school, the pupil premium supports pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- There is a before- and after-school club, but it is not managed by the governing body and was not included in the inspection.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching by ensuring that all tasks challenge pupils, particularly for the more able, so that they make the best possible progress.

- Improve progress in writing by giving pupils more time to:
 - practise writing across different subjects
 - write extended pieces of work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children start in the Reception class with skills and knowledge that are slightly below those expected for their age. Children in the Reception class make good progress because staff provide a wide range of interesting, imaginative activities both inside and outside the classroom. These help them to develop their early reading, writing and number skills well.
- Pupils' attainment in English and mathematics is a term ahead of pupils nationally by the end of Year 6. The progress made by pupils accelerates rapidly because of effective teaching, high expectations and detailed marking of pupils' work.
- The school's records show that pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. This is reflected in the way the pupils learn in lessons and work in pupils' books also indicates a strong picture of progress. Over the last year, the quality of pupils' writing across the school has improved but progress is stronger in reading and mathematics than in writing. This is because there are not enough writing tasks in other subjects, for example in science, that focus sufficiently on writing skills such as accurate sentence construction.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress because they are well taught in classrooms and in the 'fishbowl', a room where pupils receive good quality additional academic and personal support and guidance. In lessons, teaching assistants typically provide additional support and explanations, which promotes effective learning.
- The relatively small number of pupils in each year group eligible for the pupil premium grant are well supported through a variety of support sessions, individually tailored programmes and class teaching. Previously, pupils eligible for the pupil premium have been behind other pupils in reading, writing and mathematics. As a result of the additional teaching and new resources, this group of pupils are making good progress and reaching standards that are similar to or above other pupils.
- Reading is promoted effectively by the school. Reading logs, high quality book corners in classrooms, a well-resourced library and a workshop to support parents listening to reading at home encourage pupils to read regularly. As a result, pupils make good progress overall in developing reading skills. Younger pupils in Key Stage 1 are eager to read, and use their knowledge of letters and the sounds that they make to read unfamiliar words. Older pupils are developing in their fluency and understanding of what they are reading.
- The school is using the primary school sport funding to employ sports coaches and develop in-school coaching expertise. This provides good opportunities for pupils to experience a wider range of sporting activities including karate and aerobics, and real desire to play a range of team sports. As a result, there is an increased proportion of pupils now participating in activities out of school hours. Their skill levels and enthusiasm for the improved provision is very evident.

The quality of teaching is good

- The good quality teaching seen in lessons and in the scrutiny of teachers' planning and pupils' work during this inspection is reflected in the school's own monitoring of teaching and in progress information.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children are eager to start learning because teachers plan

interesting activities that motivate pupils and build well on their enthusiasm. Relationships throughout the school between teachers and pupils are very positive. Pupils spoken to during the inspection commented on how much they liked their teachers and lessons.

- Learning is typically fast because the tasks provided for different groups of pupils are usually well matched to their individual needs. For example, in a literacy lesson in Year 2, pupils tackled challenging tasks where they used their reading and deduction skills well.
- Teachers' marking is good and has improved since the last inspection. There is clear evidence of consistency of practice across year groups with 'green for great' and 'pink for think' that informs the pupils of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Time is given for pupils to strengthen their work and to move on.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge because training for staff is regular and identified at a whole-school and individual level. Teachers work well with their teaching assistants to make sure that they are deployed appropriately and they understand the focus of the lesson.
- Teachers and teaching assistants give timely and constructive individual advice during lessons to disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Consequently, they enjoy learning, are fully involved and the vast majority make good progress.
- The teaching of reading is strong throughout the school and pupils enjoy reading. The regular guided reading sessions, along with the enjoyment of exploring books as part of their writing lessons, all aid this progress. However, there are limited times when pupils write longer pieces of work that make full use of their writing skills.
- Lesson planning is good. Teachers use their subject expertise well. This ensures that tasks are neither too easy nor too hard for pupils. However in a minority of lessons, teachers do not always ensure that tasks are at the right level of difficulty for different groups. In particular, more-able pupils sometimes find that their work is too easy and does not make them think hard enough.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' behaviour is good. In and around the school, and at playtimes, pupils are friendly and behave sensibly. They confirm that they feel safe and secure in school. They say that there is an absence of bullying and that adults are quick to sort out any problems that do arise. Pupils understand what bullying is and the different forms it can take. Records show that minor incidents of poor behaviour and any bullying are dealt with swiftly and effectively.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils have a good grounding in recognising potential dangers such as when using the internet. They have developed an appropriate range of strategies to keep themselves safe, such as when using the roads around school and when on the internet.
- Pupils' enthusiasm for learning in and out of lessons, together with their politeness and ability to reflect on their learning, are key strengths. Pupils' comments confirm that it is uncommon for their learning to be interrupted. Pupils show much consideration of each other's needs and demonstrate respect for different points of view.
- Governors, staff and nearly all parents agree that pupils behave well at school.

- Attendance is broadly average. The school has a range of strategies to ensure that pupils attend regularly and are on time.

The leadership and management are good

- Good leadership and management have ensured that teaching enables pupils to achieve well. The headteacher's accurate self-evaluation and school's meticulous records show that strengths and weaknesses in teaching are analysed in great detail and fed back to individual staff. Joint observations of lessons with the headteacher and senior staff, together with scrutiny of pupils' work and other evidence, confirm the accuracy of these judgements.
- There are important strengths in the leadership of mathematics, English and the Early Years Foundation Stage. Leaders ensure that effective strategies are being successfully used in lessons which are raising achievement and improving teachers' skills.
- Sensitive and thoughtful leadership ensures that high quality care and safeguarding of pupils' welfare sustain and build the good behaviour and strong relationships throughout the school. The tracking system is highly effective in keeping a close check on pupils' progress. As a result, teachers set realistic targets to meet pupils' academic needs and address their personal development. Those who need extra help are quickly identified and supported.
- Performance management has maintained high expectations for pupils' progress and each teacher's part in promoting good achievement. There are secure links between teachers' performance and pay awards.
- Pupils experience a broad and balanced range of subjects to develop their skills well. English and mathematics are planned systematically and other topics are brought to life by stimulating and memorable activities. Pupils talk animatedly about their trips that are closely related to lessons. Classroom displays and 'working walls' showing current learning underpin pupils' success and progress.
- Partnerships with parents are good. There are effective opportunities to help parents understand how the school implements its policies and teaching, for example the teaching of early reading skills. The views shared with inspectors during the inspection and on Parent View are very positive.
- Safeguarding policies and procedures fully meet requirements. Record keeping and staff training is thorough and up to date.
- The local authority is knowledgeable about the school's strengths and weaknesses. The support provided is valued by the headteacher and other staff. It has helped the school to strengthen subject leadership and the quality of teaching.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have a good knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and are very supportive. They have a good understanding of school data and challenge the headteacher about pupils' achievement. They use a variety of data to help them evaluate the school's performance compared to other schools nationally. Governors know about the quality of teaching and its link with pupils' progress. They are involved in drawing up the school's improvement plan and in setting robust targets for the headteacher. Governors make sound financial decisions, such as allocating the pupil premium to promote better achievement and ensuring that the rewards teachers receive are warranted and based on meeting performance

targets. The governing body is committed to helping the school improve still further. It is well informed and makes sure that its members are trained and up-to-date with information so that they can ask senior leaders searching questions about the school's further development.

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	104057
Local authority	Solihull
Inspection number	444289

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	233
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Keith Trilloe
Headteacher	David Shakeshaft
Date of previous school inspection	8 March 2010
Telephone number	0121 430 3010
Fax number	0121 430 8815
Email address	office@mill-lodge.solihull.sch.uk

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