

Fordbridge Community Primary School

Yorklea Croft, Chelmsley Wood, Birmingham, B37 5EG

Inspection dates 18–19 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Pupils do not make consistently good progress, particularly in writing, and mathematics.
- Although teaching has improved markedly, it is not consistently good in all year groups.
- More-able pupils are not always provided with activities that build on what they already know.
- In some lessons, teachers do not expect pupils to produce enough work.
- Spelling is a common weakness in pupils' writing.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to deepen and extend their mathematical knowledge through other subjects.
- Teachers' marking varies across subjects. Pupils do not always receive the guidance they need to improve their work.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher, in partnership with senior leaders and governors, has taken effective action to improve teaching and raise pupils' achievement since the previous inspection.
- Senior leaders carefully check the quality of teaching and provide staff with helpful guidance and support. This is helping to strengthen teaching and learning.
- The progress made by children in the Nursery and Reception classes is good.
- Effective teaching of reading is helping pupils to read well.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They behave well and are courteous.
- Pupils state that they feel safe in school. They have a good understanding of how to keep safe in different situations.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 27 lessons. Eight of these were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- In addition to lesson observations, inspectors listened to pupils read and reviewed pupils' work with the headteacher. They also observed playtime and lunchtime activities.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, groups of pupils, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors spoke informally with parents and carers at the start and the end of the school day.
- Inspectors considered 53 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View) prior to and during the inspection.
- Questionnaire responses from 33 members of staff were reviewed.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including the school's action plans, information about pupils' achievement, governing body minutes, and information relating to teaching, attendance and behaviour.

Inspection team

Usha Devi, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Glen Goddard

Additional Inspector

Rowena Green

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Information about this school

- This is a larger-than-average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British origin.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium, which in this school provides additional funding for pupils in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals, is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is below the national average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above the national average.
- The school has a breakfast club and an after-school club. Both are managed by the governing body.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The headteacher was appointed in September 2011. At its last inspection in January 2012, the school was placed in special measures. Since this inspection the school has experienced a high turnover of staff and high levels of staff absence. The majority of senior leaders and class teachers who were in post at the time of the last inspection have left.
- Since 2012, the school has received support from local authority advisers, and a consultant headteacher who works for the local authority. Fordbridge Community Primary is part of the North Solihull partnership of schools. As part of this partnership, the school has received support from a number of external consultants.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching by ensuring that:
 - all teachers plan and provide lesson activities that sufficiently challenge pupils of different abilities, and particularly the more-able pupils
 - all teachers show high expectations for the amount of work pupils should complete by the end of a lesson
 - teachers' marking in different subjects provides pupils with helpful guidance.
- Help more pupils to exceed the standards expected for their age, especially in writing and mathematics, by making sure:
 - pupils learn to use a range of strategies to spell accurately when writing
 - pupils have more opportunities to deepen their understanding and extend their learning in mathematics through different subjects.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement is rising strongly in reading, writing and mathematics. It requires improvement because the progress that pupils make is not yet consistently good as they move through the school.
- In 2013, the standards attained by pupils in Year 6 were average in reading and writing. They were well below average in mathematics. Pupils in Year 6, including those eligible for pupil premium funding, made inadequate progress during their time in Key Stage 2. The results of these national tests reflect previous weaknesses in teaching and frequent changes in staffing.
- Senior leaders' actions to raise pupils' achievement in writing and mathematics, and especially reading, have been effective. Consequently, current rates of progress are significantly better than in 2013, as are pupils' attitudes to learning. The school's information and work in pupils' books show that in Key Stages 1 and 2 pupils are reaching the standards expected for their age and are making at least expected progress. Since September 2013, the proportion of pupils exceeding the standards for their age and making good and better progress has markedly increased because of better teaching.
- 'Staff have been with us every step of the way,' was just one of the comments made by parents when describing the support offered to them and their child who has specific learning needs. Senior leaders identify early the needs of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. They use this information well to ensure pupils who need extra help receive appropriately tailored support. This helps them to make the same progress as their classmates.
- More-able pupils do not always make the progress of which they are capable. Pupils told inspectors that sometimes their work is too easy.
- Senior leaders are committed to ensuring all pupils have an equal chance to succeed. The gaps between different groups of pupils in the school are closing. For instance, previously boys made less progress than girls. The school's latest information shows that there are no longer significant difference between the progress of boys and girls.
- The achievement of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding is improving. They benefit from additional targeted support with reading, writing and mathematics and being taught by a teacher in small groups. School information shows that eligible pupils in Year 6 are currently four months behind their classmates in reading and mathematics and eight months in writing. The gap in writing is closing, but is wider because when these pupils were in Year 5 their standards in writing were much lower than in reading and mathematics.
- Children start the Nursery with skills and knowledge that are below those expected for their age. They make good progress during their time in the Early Years Foundation Stage and enter Year 1 with average attainment.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because it is not yet consistently good in all year groups. In part, this is due to the considerable changes in staffing in some classes. School records of teaching, pupils' work and lessons observed during the inspection confirm that teaching is improving rapidly, and in some classes is good or outstanding.

- Activities do not always provide pupils of different abilities with a sufficient level of challenge. This is especially the case for more-able pupils, whose work at times is too easy. Work in pupils' books shows that some teachers' expectations of the amount of work pupils should produce by the end of a lesson vary and are not always high enough. Consequently, pupils do not always make rapid gains in their learning. This leads to pupils making expected rather than good progress over time in some classes.
- Teachers and teaching assistants have benefited from effective training in reading. They are using a consistent approach to teach reading across the school. During the inspection, teachers and teaching assistants were observed successfully teaching pupils to use their knowledge of the sounds that letters make (phonics) to read difficult words. Pupils were also effectively helped to read with expression, use a range of strategies to work out the meanings of unfamiliar words, and explain the techniques used by different authors to make their text more interesting.
- Pupils are making faster progress in writing because of the emphasis teachers place on the correct use of grammar and punctuation. Pupils are encouraged to check carefully that their sentences make sense and use a range of vocabulary in their writing. Pupils' spelling remains a common weakness across the school. Pupils do not always know how to correct their spelling errors.
- Teachers plan a suitable range of mathematical activities. Consequently, pupils' basic skills are developing well. Pupils are becoming increasingly confident at using their knowledge of number to accurately solve problems. Opportunities for pupils to deepen their mathematical understanding by practising their skills in different subjects are limited.
- Teachers' marking varies across classes and subjects. In the most effective cases, marking provides pupils with helpful advice on how to improve their work, and teachers check that pupils respond to the teacher's comments.
- Where learning is good or better, activities build effectively on what pupils already understand and can do. Teachers and teaching assistants ask searching questions to extend pupils' thinking. They also encourage pupils to explain how they arrived at their answers. This enables the adults to check pupils' understanding, and if necessary to clarify any misunderstandings.
- Opportunities for pupils' spiritual development are carefully planned. In one effective example, pupils in Year 6, as part of their work on the Second World War, were encouraged to reflect on the Holocaust from the viewpoint of a child. Pupils sensitively explored the child's feelings and responded thoughtfully to the teacher's questions.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is effective. With valuable support from the assistant headteacher, staff in the Nursery and Reception typically use the information they have about children's previous learning to plan activities that help the children to make good gains in their knowledge and skills over time. Occasionally, the activities that children choose for themselves are too easy.
- Teachers and teaching assistants in the Early Years Foundation Stage plan interesting activities for the children. For example, Nursery staff planned an activity based on the story *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*. The children went for a walk in the local area in search of a footbridge. They found the footbridge and were pleased to find that there were no trolls! This activity encouraged the children to use their imagination and extended their language skills.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are courteous and welcoming. They treat each other and staff with respect. Pupils like the range of rewards used by staff to encourage good behaviour. 'I really like the "privilege cards" because I can choose my reward,' commented one pupil.
- Pupils' positive attitudes to learning make a strong contribution to their progress. In lessons pupils listen carefully and talk about their learning with enthusiasm. When asked to work together, pupils are considerate and willingly help each other. On a number of occasions, inspectors observed pupils providing each other with helpful advice.
- Pupils who have specific behavioural needs are well supported. Pupils who occasionally find it difficult to behave well spoke highly about the work of the school's mentors, and how the mentors effectively help them to resolve any problems they may have.
- School records and discussions with pupils confirm that behaviour during school breaks has markedly improved and the number of incidents of poor behaviour is now small. The wide range of games organised by the lunchtime supervisors and the school's sport coaches make a strong contribution to pupils' social and moral development. Pupils of all ages are effectively encouraged to cooperate, play together and calmly resolve any minor disputes. The school is in the process of reorganising morning break times so that pupils can take part in a wider range of activities.
- Pupils have a good understanding about different types of bullying. They told inspectors that sometimes a few pupils use unkind names, and that when this happens staff take appropriate action. School records confirm this to be the case.
- A few parents who spoke with inspectors raised concerns about bullying and the information that parents and carers receive once issues have been brought to the attention of staff. Inspectors investigated these concerns and found that staff act promptly and take appropriate actions. They also make sure that the parents and carers of the pupils involved in any incidents are kept well informed.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe in a range of situation, for instance when crossing the road and when using the internet, and particularly social networking sites. One pupil, representing the views of many, said, 'It is really important not to post personal details on the internet.'
- Attendance has improved dramatically since the previous inspection and is now similar to the national average for primary schools.
- Pupils who attend the breakfast and after-school clubs are well supervised. There are a suitable range of activities. For instance, pupils can choose to play games, bake and draw. Pupils who attend the breakfast club spoke enthusiastically about the healthy food on offer.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher provides strong and effective leadership. Since the previous inspection in 2012 there have been significant changes in staffing at senior and class teacher level. The school has also experienced high levels of staffing absence. Despite this, the headteacher has maintained a relentless focus on raising pupils' achievement and improving the quality of teaching. With the support of governors, he has successfully eradicated inadequate teaching by tackling

weaknesses in teaching rigorously.

- The headteacher is well supported by the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteacher who is responsible for the Early Years Foundation Stage, and the teachers with responsibility for English, mathematics, the curriculum and pupils who need extra help. They all have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and the actions that need to be taken to help all pupils make accelerated progress and reach even higher standards. Senior leaders have correctly identified the need to help more-able pupils make even faster progress.
- Procedures for checking the work of staff are thorough and helping teachers and teaching assistants to improve their practice. Senior leaders work well alongside staff to model effective practice and provide staff with personalised support. They observe teaching frequently and provide teachers with helpful and precise advice. They also meet regularly with staff to discuss the progress of different groups of pupils and agree on how to continue raising pupils' achievement.
- The curriculum is organised into themes, which successfully capture pupils' interest and add to the enjoyment of learning. Pupils described these themes as 'fun' and 'interesting'. Pupils are encouraged to extend their learning at home by doing their own research and choosing how to present what they have learnt. In Year 3 for instance, pupils were learning about the Egyptians. As part of their homework, some pupils made Tutankhamen masks while others designed and made pyramids. One pupil made a sarcophagus that contained a 'mummy' and a canopic jar. Pupils' cultural development is adequately promoted through assemblies and different subjects.
- Each half term, Key Stage 2 pupils 'enrol' on a 'Fordbridge University course'. These courses are led by staff, governors and people from the local community and help pupils to learn skills such as baking, computing and engineering. The 'Green Fingers University,' for instance, is led by a lunchtime supervisor. As part of this course, pupils have renovated a garden area in the school grounds. They have planted a range of herbs and created a 'bug hotel' so that pupils from across the school can learn about different types of mini-beasts.
- The sports funding allocated to the school has been used to acquire the services of sports coaches. They are having a beneficial impact on pupils' health and well-being. One pupil, when describing the impact of the coaches, said, 'Fitness levels have increased, and warm-up exercises get us ready to work.' The coaches organise a good range of lunchtime and after-school clubs activities, and teach physical education lessons. Their work has increased pupils' enjoyment of physical education and encouraged more pupils to enter local sporting competitions.
- Most of the parents who responded to Parent View are positive about all aspects of the school's work. A number of parents and carers who spoke with inspectors were complimentary about the changes that have taken place. One commented, 'The headteacher and staff have worked hard to improve the school.'
- The leadership of some subjects is in the early stages of development. Senior leaders are planning to work with groups of teachers in order to help them develop the skills required to lead improvements in the school.
- Teachers, teaching assistants and senior leaders have benefited from the wide range of support offered by local authority advisers, a consultant headteacher and external consultants from the local partnership of schools. This combined support has made a strong contribution to the improvements in the school.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing body have played a key role in transforming the work of the governing body. Consequently, it is now able to provide senior leaders with a good level of support and challenge. Governors have an accurate understanding of strengths and relative weaknesses in teaching. They know how well pupils at Fordbridge achieve in comparison to pupils nationally. Members of the 'standards committee' meet regularly to check the work of the school for themselves. They ask senior leaders searching questions about the actions being taken to raise pupils' achievement. This process enables them to ensure that additional funding such as the pupil premium is well used. Governors make sure that pay awards for staff are closely linked to the impact senior leaders and teachers make on pupils' learning. They ensure that requirements for safeguarding are fully met. Governors have established a 'safeguarding panel'. This panel meets regularly and makes sure that appropriate action is taken to keep pupils safe.

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	104121
Local authority	Solihull
Inspection number	430573

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	447
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Steve Taylor
Headteacher	Rob Fletcher
Date of previous school inspection	18 January 2012
Telephone number	0121 779 8040
Fax number	0121 770 7518
Email address	office@fordbridge.solihull.sch.uk

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