

Briar Hill Primary School

Thorn Hill, Briar Hill, Northampton, NN4 8SW

Inspection dates

3–4 June 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- From their individual starting points, not enough pupils make good progress across the school in reading, writing or mathematics. As a result, attainment at the end of each Key Stage is below average.
- Teaching is not consistently good. In some lessons, the work set is not difficult enough for pupils, especially the most able.
- Teachers' questions do not always extend or develop pupils' thinking and time in lessons is not always used effectively to ensure pupils produce good quality work.
- Teacher's marking does not always tell pupils how to improve their work or give them the chance to act on the advice given.
- Pupils are polite in and around school but in some lessons, they do not work as hard as they could because the teaching does not motivate them.
- All Key Stage leaders are new to their posts and they have not had enough opportunities to check how effective teaching is within their phase or how well pupils are doing.
- Senior leaders have not yet secured consistently good achievement and teaching across the school.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupil Premium funding is closely monitored and every penny is accounted for. The attainment gaps between those pupils eligible and others in the school are now closing.
- Attendance has improved and is now average. The number of pupils who are persistently absent is also reducing due to strong systems in place.
- The school provides a supportive and calm environment in which pupils feel safe.
- The Local Advisory Board and members from the Education Trust provide good levels of challenge and support for leaders and have a good knowledge of how well the school is doing and what needs to be improved.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in all classes. They saw 19 part-lessons, eight of which were jointly observed with the headteacher or acting deputy headteacher.
- Discussions were held with pupils, teachers, the headteacher, local advisory board members and a representative from the school's academy sponsor.
- There were not enough responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) to be taken into account, but inspectors considered survey information collected by the school. They also spoke informally to parents as they brought their children to school.
- Questionnaires from 23 staff were received and their views taken into account.
- Inspectors observed the behaviour of pupils at break time, lunchtime and around school.
- The inspection team listened to pupils read, spoke with them about their learning and looked at the work in their books.
- The inspectors looked at a number of documents, including the school's checks on how well it is doing, the school improvement plan, data on pupils' current progress, leaders' reports following lesson observations, and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Heather Simpson, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Keith Putman

Additional Inspector

Lindsay Hall

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school became an academy in November 2012 and no longer comes under the control of the local authority. The academy is sponsored by David Ross Education Trust. There is a local advisory board in place instead of a governing body.
- The predecessor school of the same name was judged to be a school causing concern when it was last inspected in February 2012.
- There has been significant turbulence and disruption to teaching staffing since the school became an academy and three new leaders have been appointed this year to manage each Key Stage.
- An acting deputy headteacher is currently working alongside the headteacher.
- Briar Hill is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage comprises of a Nursery and two Reception classes.
- The proportion of pupils who are White British is below national average. Approximately half of pupils come from a wide range of minority ethnic groups.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or through a statement of special educational needs is average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for pupils in local authority care and those known to be eligible to receive free school meals, is above average.
- The on-site breakfast club is managed by the school and was visited during this inspection.
- 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?

- Improve the quality of teaching in order to raise attainment in Key Stage 1 and increase the rate of progress across the school by making sure that all teachers:
 - plan tasks which are difficult enough for all pupils, especially the most able
 - keep the pace of lessons brisk to make sure all pupils remain interested and have enough time to complete their work
 - ask probing and challenging questions to make pupils think hard and then give them an opportunity to explain their answers
 - provide clear guidance through marking which tells pupils how to improve their work and then check to see that they have acted upon this.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - developing the roles of middle leaders, especially those new to their post, to enable them to regularly and rigorously check the quality of teaching in their key stages or subjects and its impact on pupils' progress.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- From their starting points, pupils make expected progress as they move through the school but not enough make good progress in reading, writing or mathematics and as a result, standards are below average in some year groups.
- Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and knowledge that are below those typical for their age. By the time they enter Year 1, the proportion reaching the good level of development expected is still below national average and this represents progress which requires improvement. A new scheme for teaching reading has been introduced across the school and is taught well in nursery. This is helping children get off to a good start and have a firm grasp of their early letters and sounds.
- Progress of pupils in Key Stage 1 also requires improvement as standards in the Year 1 reading check and standards in all subjects at the end of Year 2 in 2013 were below average. The schools' own assessment information shows that this will also be the case for the pupils in 2014. However, attainment is rising and pupils are now making accelerated progress in reading and mathematics in both Year 1 and 2. Progress in writing still requires improvement as not all pupils have the skills needed, such as spelling, grammar and punctuation to produce the level of work required. As a result, very few higher ability pupils reach the levels they are capable of.
- Progress in Key Stage 2 is stronger than Key Stage 1 but is inconsistent in different year groups. The school's own assessments show that pupils' attainment in Year 6 is getting closer to the national average and work in pupils' books shows that virtually all pupils are now making at least the progress they should. In 2013, the proportion of pupils making expected or better than expected progress in Year 6 was close to the national average in all subjects. However, pupils in current Year 5 have only made expected progress since Year 2 and higher ability pupils are not doing as well as they could in most year groups.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are making the same progress as their classmates and their progress is in line with other similar pupils' nationally. They receive additional support both inside and outside lessons and this demonstrates the school's commitment to providing equality of opportunity. The progress of pupils from other ethnic minority groups and those who do not speak English as their home language also requires improvement along with others in the school as too few make good progress.
- Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after, make similar rates of progress as others in their class. A sharper focus on how the Pupil Premium funding is used is now leading to the in-school gaps in achievement closing. For example, in 2013, Year 6 pupils were approximately seven terms behind their peers in English and six terms behind in mathematics. The school's own assessments show that this gap has reduced significantly with current Year 6 pupils being approximately two terms behind in English and three terms behind in mathematics. The gaps are narrowing more rapidly in other year groups.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- The quality of teaching across the school is too variable which leads to inconsistent progress for pupils.
- Progress is restricted when teachers do not set work which at a suitable level for pupils, particularly the most able and does not build sufficiently on what they already know. Some

children in the nursery are able to count beyond 100 but a recent example of their work showed they were only expected to count out six objects. Similarly, children in Reception were practising take away sums but not all those present were confident with knowing how to write their numbers securely and correctly.

- Progress is also restricted when teachers do not move the pace of the lesson on briskly enough and spend too long introducing the lesson. As a result, pupils complete less work in the time given and get restless and lose interest. Where teaching is less effective, questioning is often too limited and pupils are not made to think hard enough or provide explanations as to how they reached their answer.
- Work in pupils' books is marked regularly. Some teachers add helpful and positive comments to tell pupils how they can improve but this is not consistent across the school. Where guidance is given, work looked at in pupils' books shows that this is not always learnt from. In some classes, pupils assess how well they have done in a lesson, but this is at an early stage.
- In the Nursery and Reception classes, teachers provide a wide range of opportunities for children to build on their early development both indoor and outdoor. Classrooms are bright and colourful and well equipped to promote basic skills. There is strong emphasis on developing children's language skills. All adults regularly ask questions to check and extend children's levels of understanding and provide good quality care and nurture.
- Where expectations are high and work is set at the right level, pupils are engrossed in their work and keen to do well. For example, Year 4 pupils were completely engaged in their mathematics lesson because the teacher made the calculations progressively harder and kept re-enforcing that the pupils could do it. As a result, pupils worked with high levels of concentration and confidence and rose to the challenge set.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and check on pupils' learning throughout the lesson. Relationships are good in all classes and pupils work well in pairs and small groups. Teachers use resources well to support learning and routines are well established. Most pupils know what level they are working at as they have targets in the front of their books and know what they need to do to reach the next level.
- Teaching assistants make an effective contribution to pupils' learning and work well alongside class teachers. They provide valuable support for individuals or small groups within lessons and run purposeful sessions outside the classroom for pupils who are struggling. This extra well-targeted support ensures they make the same progress as other pupils in school.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Most pupils have positive attitudes to learning but where teaching fails to excite or interest them, they do not put as much effort in and lose interest.
- Around school, pupils are polite, helpful and respectful. They play well together at break times and behave sensibly in the dinner hall. Pupils have a very clear understanding of the school behaviour policy and the sanctions and rewards in place. Parents, staff and pupils who expressed their views feel that behaviour is good and where incidents do occur, they are dealt with effectively.
- Teachers manage behaviour well in lessons and incidents of disruption are uncommon. Leaders have taken determined action to deal with unacceptable behaviour and while the number of

fixed term exclusions in the school is above national average, records checked show that incidents are reducing and pupils themselves say behaviour has improved.

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Leaders make sure that pupils are safe in school and even the school's own motto makes reference to this: 'be successful, safe and shine'. Entry to the premises is well managed and all staff recruited to the school are rigorously checked. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe and have a good knowledge about potential dangers, including when using the internet and talking to strangers.
- Pupils are very clear that there are no bullies at Briar Hill and they have a good understanding of what bullying is and some of the different forms it can take. They are aware of who to talk to if they have a concern or problem and are very pleased with the appointment of the senior child protection officer who they see as being there to help them with any problems they have.
- Leaders strongly promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Key values are displayed and promoted across the school including being 'welcoming, respectful, helpful, honest, determined and caring'. Regular assemblies reinforce respect for each other and the difference between right and wrong. Pupils benefit from a wide range of sporting, artistic and musical opportunities which promote their cultural development, including composing and performing their own opera. Leaders make sure that pupils have a good understanding and appreciation of other cultures and practices through learning about other countries.
- Pupils enjoy school and this is shown in their improving attendance which is now average. Systems in place are effective in checking on and following up any pupils who are persistently absent. As a result, the numbers of pupils who do not attend regularly is reducing year-on-year.
- The breakfast club provides a valuable resource for parents and is calm and well organised. Pupils who attend enjoy a healthy breakfast and are encouraged to wash up their own plates. Good levels of social and independent skills are promoted together with ensuring pupils are in school on time and ready to learn.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Senior leaders have not yet secured consistently good teaching and achievement across the school. Achievement is variable and previous poor quality teaching or staffing absences have led to some disruption and underachievement for different classes. Improvements in English and mathematics have also not been swift enough due to changes within the leadership team. However, since September, leaders have taken decisive action and addressed weaknesses in teaching, appointed new members of staff and created a new leadership team. The stability of the school has therefore been regained but has yet to have an impact on pupils' achievement.
- Regular checks on teaching and pupil progress are carried out by leaders at all levels using a wide range of activities. However, three of these are new to their post and as such have not yet had time to make an impact. Senior leaders and external support is being provided to make sure these leaders have the skills and knowledge needed to hold their colleagues to account, and provide coaching and support to raise the quality of teaching further.
- Senior leaders know their school well and their evaluations are mainly accurate. Areas for development are identified and actions taken are leading to measureable improvement for example, attainment at the end of each Key Stage is rising, progress rates are accelerating and attendance has improved dramatically and is now average. Good support is also provided for those who are newly qualified teachers together with training for all staff to help raise the

quality of teaching.

- Annual performance management targets are set for all staff, both teaching and non teaching. These are linked to pay, whole-school priorities and the standards set for teachers. They are also reviewed mid year and adjusted as needed to make sure that they are challenging but achievable.
- Visits, visitors, and clubs also add to pupils' enjoyment of school and provide memorable experiences. A wide range of subjects are taught and these help promote pupils' basic skills. Leaders are using the new primary school sport funding to employ specialist sports coaches to teach Physical Education and offer sports clubs. As a result, there is increased participation in competitions and staff members are more confident as they observe or teach these sessions.
- The representative from the Education Trust has an accurate overview of the school. The Trust provides excellent levels of challenge and support for the headteacher and is currently providing an acting deputy headteacher to help strengthen leadership. Training is also provided for all staff and links made with other schools in order to help secure further improvement.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The Local Advisory Board consists of five members who have a broad and helpful range of experience which they maximise fully. They are wholly committed to school improvement. They have an excellent knowledge of the school as they meet monthly and the Chair of the Board is also in weekly contact with the headteacher. High levels of challenge and support are always provided. They know how well the school is doing compared to other schools nationally as they meticulously analyse data to check on the progress made by pupils.
 - Board members have an accurate view of teaching as they meet with staff and regularly visit the school. Pay progression is only authorised where teachers meet the targets set for them and show that pupils are making good progress. The Chief Education Officer of the Education Trust carries out the appraisal of the headteacher in conjunction with the Chair of the Local Advisory Board. Again, challenging targets are set, reviewed and used to hold the headteacher to account.
 - Board members have a very good understanding of how the pupil premium funding and sports grant are used and the difference this is making to pupils. Board members effectively fulfil their statutory duties and make sure they keep their skills and knowledge up to date. Safeguarding requirements are fully 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	138917
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	440071

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

Type of school	Academy sponsor led
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	357
Appropriate authority	David Ross Education Trust
Chair	Daniele Hill
Select	Tania Watts
Date of previous school inspection	Not applicable
Telephone number	01604 768392
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