

Exhall Cedars Infant School

Trenance Road, Exhall, Coventry, CV7 9FJ

Inspection dates 5–6 June 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.

- Good teaching is having a positive impact on pupils' increasingly successful learning.
- Pupils achieve well. They make good progress from their low starting points when they join the Early Years Foundation Stage to reach average standards at the end of Year 2.
- Children in the Nursery and Reception classes receive a good start to their school life in a vibrant and creative environment, making very good progress so that their skills are well developed by the time they start in Year 1.
- Pupils are proud of their school. They are respectful of others. They feel safe in school because they know they are well cared for. Their behaviour is good around the school and in lessons, where they demonstrate positive attitudes towards their learning.
- Teaching assistants skilfully support pupils' learning in lessons, ensuring that they do well.
- The headteacher provides the school with effective leadership. Together with her team, she has successfully improved the teaching and learning while maintaining a culture where everyone is expected to do their best.
- Governors challenge leaders well. They successfully support the headteacher in her quest to continually improve the quality of education pupils receive and improve the future life chances for all of the pupils.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The school does not draw enough on the best teaching in order to learn from this and increase the amount of outstanding teaching.
- At times, boys make slower progress than girls in writing and communication.
- Occasionally, teachers do not amend or adjust their teaching when pupils, particularly those who are most able, are finding the work too easy. As a result, a few lose interest and therefore do not make the progress of which they are capable.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 12 lessons and four parts of lessons, including two which were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at break time and at lunchtime, both inside the school and in the playground. They listened to a sample of pupils from Year 2 reading.
- Inspectors observed the school at work, visited assemblies and looked at a wide range of documentation, including: the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan; pupils' workbooks; attendance records; plans for supporting disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, and minutes of the meetings of the governing body.
- Discussions were held with a group of pupils, members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority, the headteacher, other school leaders and other members of staff.
- The inspectors took account of the 39 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View); two letters from parents; the 25 staff questionnaire responses and spoke to some parents as they brought children to school.

Inspection team

Terrance Mortimer, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Sarah Davey

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average sized primary school.
- While the majority of the pupils are White British, about forty percent of the pupils are from minority ethnic groups, the largest group being Indian.
- Approximately one third of pupils speak English as an additional language, and this is high when compared to schools nationally.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special needs supported through school action is well below the national average. The proportion supported at school action plus or through a statement of special needs is about the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is around the national average. This is extra government funding for particular groups, including pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and looked after children.
- The school has a breakfast club on site which is privately run, and was not part of this inspection.
- The school is a member of a consortium of fourteen schools who offer professional support to each other.
- Pupils leave the school at the end of Year 2 so the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress, do not apply.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the proportion of outstanding teaching so that more pupils reach the highest standards by making sure that teachers:
 - share, and learn from, the outstanding practice that already exists in the school and in their consortium schools.
- Raise the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement, particularly that of boys in reading and writing, and that of more-able pupils, by:
 - improving boys' communication and language skills as they move through the school
 - adjusting the level of difficulty if work is too easy, especially for more able pupils, to help maintain high levels of concentration.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills below those typically expected for their age, especially in language and social development. As a result of good teaching, a stimulating learning environment and well-targeted support, children make good and often outstanding progress in Nursery and Reception.
- In 2013, the proportion of children leaving Reception with a good level of development and being well prepared for Year 1 was below that found nationally especially in language and reading. Nonetheless, children's levels of development had improved well from their starting points. Data shows that current levels of development have improved from those of 2013 indicating strong progress across the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Good progress continues in Key Stage 1. Well-structured teaching of phonics (the sounds letters represent in words), and good, regular reading at school and at home sustain the effective step-by-step development of pupils' literacy skills throughout the school. Phonics begins in the Early Years Foundation Stage unit, where phonics is promoted at every opportunity and children are keen to show off their early writing skills.
- Rates of progress across Key Stage 1 improved last year and were good. Inspection evidence confirms that, as a result of better teaching, improvements in pupils' current rates of progress are continuing. The outcomes of the Year 1 phonics (letters and sounds) screening check rose significantly from below average in 2012 to being close to the national average in 2013. Inspection evidence shows that, this year, the pupils are on track to achieve even higher results in the screening check.
- In 2013 attainment was average at the end of Year 2, as it has been in most previous years. Current school assessment data show that pupils in Year 2 are on track to go beyond the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of the year. Their progress is continuing to accelerate but it is not yet as rapid in English, especially boys' writing and reading, as it is in mathematics. This is because boys' language and communication skills sometimes lag behind those of girls.
- The raising of standards has been brought about by the determined efforts of the senior leadership team to improve teaching and learning, including a whole school focus on reading and writing. While this has been successful overall, there are occasions when pupils are not challenged enough to maintain good, or better, progress.
- In the school there is evidence of the most-able pupils making good progress and producing work at the higher levels, though occasionally teaching does not challenge them enough.
- Disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and pupils with English as an additional language all make good progress throughout the school from their individual starting points. The progress of these pupils is checked regularly and additional support is expertly targeted to ensure all are making good progress. High quality teaching assistants complement the work done in lessons when teaching small groups in and out of the class.
- Progress made by pupils who benefit from the pupil premium funding is similar to, and often better than, other pupils, resulting in the attainment gap between these pupils and others closing. Data for 2013 indicated the attainment gap at the end of Year 2 was further reduced in

both English and mathematics on the gap in 2012 so that eligible pupils were about two terms behind non pupil premium pupils nationally. Current data shows that the gap in attainment has closed.

The quality of teaching is good

- Almost all teaching is consistently good and often outstanding. This results in the pupils' good achievement across the school. In all classes, the vast majority of pupils are keen to do well and enjoy their learning. Discussions with pupils and an examination of their books show that teaching has been typically good over time, including for the last year. Parents agree that their children are taught well.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children benefit from good and often outstanding teaching. Activities are often exciting and stimulating. Work is planned extremely carefully to ensure the rapid development of children's skills, knowledge and understanding and they are given good opportunities to extend their learning by exploring practical activities on their own. In the Nursery class children extended their understanding of length by putting together a 'long train' using building bricks and 'filling it with people'. They were encouraged to discuss with each other what the train looked like, and this helped to extend their vocabulary as well as numeracy skills.
- Teachers explain the tasks clearly and offer helpful suggestions to enable pupils to complete the activity. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well and encourage them to share their ideas with each other and with the adults.
- Teachers and teaching assistants have high expectations. Most lessons are planned and designed to enthuse and engage all pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. However, occasionally, pupils do not find the work interesting and it does not grab their attention, especially when work is not challenging them to think hard enough or is unnecessarily repeated to reinforce learning. Most pupils have positive attitudes, work together well and are keen to succeed.
- Teaching assistants are deployed effectively. They offer good support to the pupils they work with and help them grow in confidence. They ensure that all pupils, including those who speak English as an additional language, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are fully included in all the activities offered.
- Teachers generally use questioning effectively to check how well pupils are learning. Most teachers amend or adjust their teaching if pupils are finding the work too easy or too hard. Where this happens pupils, especially those of higher ability, are able to make accelerated progress. However, sometimes, teachers do not intervene to change the work if pupils are finding it too easy.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and provide comments to both praise pupils for good work and indicate the next steps they need to take in order to improve. Marking in the English books offers pupils particularly clear guidance on what they have to do next.
- The teaching of reading and phonics is usually good. Phonics' sessions make sure that pupils learn early reading skills well. Positive features of these sessions are teachers' good subject knowledge, their clear instructions and working briskly to ensure pupils are engaged well.
- In the occasional lesson, the quality of teaching slips. The expectations of what pupils, especially the more able, can achieve in the phonics and mathematics lessons are not always high enough.

For example, in a phonics lesson all the pupils in the class were working on the same task. Several already knew the sound and their learning was not extended enough.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils are proud of their school. All pupils, including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage, say they feel safe and very secure. The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. The school meets the latest requirements for safeguarding. A member of the governing body checks to make certain that procedures are followed and the site is safe. Parents who were spoken to agree that behaviour and safety are good.
- Pupils, of all ages, are well behaved and eager to learn. In lessons pupils focus effectively on the activities they are given. Off-task behaviour, such as chatting to each other, is rare and is quickly managed by the teachers and teaching assistants. Pupils' attitudes towards their work are good.
- When pupils play outside, move around the school or interact with each other, behaviour is consistently good. They clearly know how to behave and are respectful and polite towards each other and the adults who work with them.
- Pupils understand all about the different forms of bullying and say that there is very little of it, including physical, emotional and cyber-bullying. They are quick to say that teachers and other adults at the school quickly resolve any problems. Neither parents nor pupils raised any concerns about bullying, and records show that the school successfully resolves the very small number of incidences quickly.
- Pupils have a strong understanding of right and wrong. This ensures that they all keep each other safe.
- Attendance has improved over the year and is broadly average. The number of children who are persistently absent from school is falling. Better attendance and improvements in the quality of teaching are helping pupils to make accelerated progress. The school has good procedures to raise attendance including the Family Learning Mentor who works closely with the families.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has a clear vision for the school and shares with leaders at all levels and with governors a determination to continue to improve the school. There is strong teamwork among staff and morale is high.
- Pupils' progress is regularly monitored and challenging targets are set. Teachers and teaching assistants are all aware of the progress pupils make and they can identify who needs additional support. Subject leaders effectively monitor the impact on pupils' learning and progress of any additional support. Any method of support that is found to be ineffective is stopped or not used again.
- Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good. The highly effective use of the creative and exciting displays and resources in the Nursery and Reception classes helps to enhance children's learning, allowing them to make at least good progress.
- The school's self-evaluation is accurate and improvement planning is sharply focused on continuing to raise pupils' achievement. Detailed improvement plans make clear the intended

outcomes for improving the quality of teaching, pupils' progress, behaviour and leadership.

- Senior leaders meet with each teacher half termly to discuss the progress of every pupil, to hold the teachers to account for addressing any underperformance and identifying and arranging training to support the teachers' further professional development. Teacher performance, including that of the subject leaders and the assistant headteacher, pupil outcomes and the system for rewarding teachers are clearly linked.
- The curriculum is well planned to make learning engaging and fun and encourages pupils especially boys to develop good attitudes to learning, behaviour and safety. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well through additional opportunities, such as visits to local places of interest, visitors and theme days, which include an array of activities such as music, art, drama and cultural themes.
- The school works well with the partner schools and external advisors to help teachers and leaders develop their expertise, as well as learn from best practice. However, not enough opportunities are taken to improve all teachers' skills and expertise by sharing more widely the outstanding teaching demonstrated by the best teachers in the school and its partner schools in the consortium.
- The local authority takes an appropriate, light touch approach to its support of the school.
- Funding for pupil premium is spent effectively, such as one-to-one support, to help eligible pupils achieve as well as others. Consequently, the achievement gap between different groups of pupils is being eliminated. This demonstrates the school's commitment to equal opportunities.
- Leaders have put plans in place to make good use of the primary school sports funding with activities to develop sport as an integral part of the school's curriculum. This has resulted in improvements in gymnastics and participation in small team games.
- Parents and school staff are highly positive about the way that the headteacher and her team lead the school.
- The governance of the school:
 - Governors are committed and passionate about the future life chances of the pupils and demand that achievement at the school is at least good. They know how well the pupils are doing in relation to all pupils nationally and how effective their school is. Performance management is well understood and teachers' performance is monitored well. Governors visit the school regularly and are fully involved in making checks on all aspects of the school, including whether funding, including the pupil premium, is being spent wisely and having the desired effect on pupils' achievement. They undertake all relevant training. Governors use information about the school well and hold the school rigorously to account, understanding the school's strengths and areas needing to improve. This helps to ensure that all pupils have the best opportunity to succeed and has resulted in good achievement for all. Governors ensure statutory requirements relating to safeguarding are implemented rigorously.

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	130898
Local authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	443786

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	218
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Muriel Ganley
Headteacher	Sharon Hillyard
Date of previous school inspection	17 May 2011
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