

Grace Mary Primary School

Hawfield Road, Tividale, Oldbury, B69 1LD

Inspection dates 2–3 July 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.

- Grace Mary Primary School makes sure that pupils achieve well. Their progress in reading, writing and mathematics is good.
- Pupils who receive support through the additional funding (pupil premium) make good progress.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make a good start to their education and achieve well.
- Teaching across the school is good. Learning is well planned in a positive school environment.
- The teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) has improved considerably. This has resulted in the pupils gaining good skills in reading.
- Behaviour is good and the pupils have a positive attitude to learning.
- Pupils feel safe in school and all pupils spoken to say that the staff take great care of them.
- Parents are positive about the work of the school.
- The subjects the pupils are taught are interesting and they enjoy them. They engage pupils in learning.
- The school provides a wide range of learning opportunities to assist pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Senior leaders and the governing body have improved the quality of teaching and raised achievement across the school.
- The governing body challenges and supports the school. Governors have a good understanding of the work of the school, and the positive effects funding has on the various groups in the school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The most-able pupils are not always set work which is hard enough for them.
- Pupils' writing skills are not as well developed as their other skills.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 16 lessons, six of which were seen jointly with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Members of the inspection team observed pupils during lunch and break times.
- Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body, members of the senior leadership team and with a group of pupils.
- The inspection team took account of the 125 responses to a recent school parental survey, as the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) were too few to be reviewed. The inspectors also took account of the 45 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- The inspection team scrutinised a range of documentation relating to the safeguarding of pupils, school improvement planning and self-evaluation, and the progress pupils are making. They reviewed records of governors' meetings, and records of how the primary sports funding and the pupil premium grant are used. The team reviewed evidence regarding the quality of teaching, and information relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors also heard pupils read, both formally and informally, during lessons.

Inspection team

Ronald Hall, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Lynne Bennett

Additional Inspector

Wendy Davies

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Grace Mary Primary School is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage is made up of a Nursery class and a Reception class. The school has two Year 1 classes and one class in each of the other year groups.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium, which is additional funding to support pupils who are eligible for free school meals or who are in care, is above average.
- Most pupils are from a White British background.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average and many are at an early stage of learning English.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is below average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or through a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- There is specially resourced provision for eight pupils with special educational needs who have autistic spectrum disorders.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6.
- The headteacher was appointed in April 2013, and the deputy headteacher and several members of the senior leadership team took up their posts during the current academic year. The governing body has many new members and has reorganised its activities.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to outstanding by consistently challenging the most-able pupils to accelerate their progress, so that they can better reach the higher National Curriculum levels.
- Raise achievement by providing more opportunities for pupils to use their writing skills in all subject areas and improve their attainment in writing.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils across the school – regardless of their social and ethnic backgrounds – make good progress from very low starting points. The good progress is due to improved teaching, which has better engaged pupils in their learning. Consequently, pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6 is in line with and, for many pupils, above the national average. School information and inspection findings show further rapid improvement.
- Pupils supported by the designated resource base for those with autistic spectrum disorders make good progress. The pupils are taught within the mainstream classes and make progress in line with that of their classmates. By the end of Year 6, their attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is in line with that of others. Their success is due to the careful checking the resource-base leader carries out to ensure that pupils are taught effectively and their progress is kept on track. All staff help the pupils overcome their learning difficulties through careful use of signs and symbols, well established routines and carefully planned work which suits the way in which they learn.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are well supported by both teachers and the other adults who support learning. This support results in these pupils making good progress. Well-directed learning opportunities make sure that any underachievement is quickly picked up and progress rates increased.
- Pupils supported through additional funding (pupil premium) make progress in line with that of others in school. The funding is partly used to ensure they have full access to all the school has to offer, such as residential visits, school trips and clubs. School information shows pupils currently in Year 6 are reaching attainment levels in line with those of other pupils. Eligible Year 6 pupils in 2013 made good progress in reading, writing and mathematics and their attainment was close to that of others.
- Recent initiatives to improve reading have resulted in better teaching, enabling pupils to make good progress in this skill. Weakness in this area in the past has been rapidly reversed and the school's current information shows that pupils are on track to achieve well in the 2014 Year 1 phonics screening check. The pupils heard reading by the inspectors demonstrated good skills and stated that they really enjoyed reading. Across the school, pupils read widely both for information and pleasure.
- Although standards in writing are rising and pupils' books in all years clearly support this evaluation, attainment in writing by the end of Year 6 is, currently, lower than that seen in reading and mathematics. This is because, although pupils are taught written skills, they do not always have opportunities to practise and develop these skills across all subjects.
- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and understanding considerably below the levels expected for their ages. Due to the positive learning opportunities the staff provide and the highly positive relationships they create, the children make good and, for many, outstanding progress. School information shows that by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, children leave with skills and understanding close to those expected for their ages.
- The pupils' skills in sporting activities and their understanding of healthy lifestyles are well developed. This development of skills is due to the positive manner in which the primary sports funding is used to provide specialist teaching. This action has also improved teachers' skills and so created a wide and in-depth range of expertise.

- Pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. They rapidly gain good spoken English skills due to the helpful teaching and support they receive.
- The 2013 Year 6 test results showed that some of the most-able pupils did not reach the higher National Curriculum levels of which they were capable, due to poor teaching in the past. Current information on the attainment of the most able in Key Stage 2 shows improvement in the standards reached. However, these pupils are not well challenged in every lesson to reach the high standards of which they are capable.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching has improved considerably since the new leadership and management team have taken up post. Teaching across the school is generally good, and some is outstanding. Better teaching has resulted in pupils making good and, at times, outstanding progress. Work in pupils' books across the school confirms that rapid improvements have taken place. Pupils themselves recognise that teaching has improved. For example, one pupil stated, 'A year ago teaching was not good – now it is great.'
- Teaching helps pupils to be fully engaged in their work and highly motivated to learn. Consequently, pupils work well together, share resources and challenge each other's thinking. Pupils question each other about their work and join in discussions with the staff, leading to their good progress and clear enjoyment in learning.
- Teachers generally use the information they have on pupils' progress to plan learning. During lessons, all staff carefully check the progress the pupils are making and many adapt and change what pupils are doing, when necessary, to make sure that they continue to make good progress.
- Teaching in English and mathematics is good. Teachers provide pupils with a wide range of skills and knowledge to develop their writing. However, they do not consistently provide opportunities for them to practise their written skills across a range of subjects so that learning is fully reinforced.
- A few teachers do not consistently challenge the most-able pupils in their classes. These pupils make good progress but, due to limited challenge, some do not make the very rapid progress of which they are capable. Therefore, by the end of Year 6, the proportion of pupils reaching the higher National Curriculum levels is not as high as it could be.
- Pupils' work in books in all years shows much improvement from better teaching. Pupils clearly take a pride in their work and the quality of their learning has improved – and is continuing to do so rapidly. Marking of the pupils' work is constructive and helps them to improve. Teachers make sure that pupils know how to raise their standards.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. All staff carefully check the children's work and use this information to make sure that all make good progress.
- In the resource base, pupils' language and communication skills are developed well through the use of signs, symbols, sign language and spoken English to develop their communication skills. Resources are used well to make sure that all pupils' learning needs are met.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. The senior leadership team have made rapid improvements in the way in which all staff deal with behavioural issues in the school. This action has resulted in the number of incidents and exclusions falling rapidly. Pupils say that behaviour is good and they enjoy school. Their attitudes to learning are positive due to improved teaching across the school.
- Pupils are polite and support each other across the whole school. On the playground and in the dining room, pupils socialise together and act sensibly. They take a pride in their work and their books are generally neat and tidy. In lessons, pupils listen carefully to the teacher and to each other.
- Pupils were eager to tell the inspectors how much they enjoyed learning and school in general. Their enthusiasm for school can be seen in their rapidly rising rate of attendance. This improvement is a reversal of the previous weak rate of attendance.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Leaders make sure the school is secure and staff are rigorously checked prior to appointment. All pupils spoken to said they felt safe. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay healthy and safe. They understand various forms of bullying. However, they were adamant that little bullying took place, and if it did it would be dealt with rapidly. Records in school are well kept and support this positive view. Pupils also have a good understanding of how to stay safe on the internet.
- Parents think that behaviour is good and the school provides a safe place in which their children can learn successfully.
- Pupils with autistic spectrum disorders in the resource base are supported very well to overcome behavioural difficulties. In lessons, all staff use a wide range of strategies to help these pupils cope with different situations. Records in school clearly show a significant fall in the number of behavioural incidents involving these pupils.
- The promotion of the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is effective. The school provides many opportunities for pupils to learn about a wide range of cultures and religions. Pupils have a strong sense of right and wrong and are well prepared to live in their local and wider communities.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has worked very hard to improve the school. She and the governing body have restructured the senior leadership team and, together, they have ensured rapid improvements across the whole school. For example, teaching has improved to be consistently good. Progress rates and attainment have risen rapidly. This impressive track record of improvement indicates strong capacity to improve further.
- Monitoring, tracking and recording systems are accurate and well moderated by the local authority and other external support. The senior leadership team and subject leaders all check pupils' work effectively. Subject leaders are effective. They carefully check the quality of teaching in their subjects, and provide mentoring, training and support to ensure that all teachers adopt the best possible practice.
- All leaders, managers and teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve, and their expectations are contributing to rapidly improving standards. In the Early Years Foundation

Stage, good leadership and management have led to the children making good and, sometimes, outstanding progress.

- The leadership and management of the resource base are good. Thorough systems to track the progress of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders make sure that all these pupils make, at least, good progress.
- The senior leadership team and governing body manage staff performance well to raise the quality of teaching. Procedures are carefully linked to further training, pay and professional development. In making decisions regarding teachers' performance, the senior leadership team carefully check the progress pupils make. For example, they review the quality of work in pupils' books, hold discussions with the pupils about their learning, observe lessons and build a complete picture of the impact of teaching.
- School information regarding pupils' progress shows that the senior leadership team have successfully raised pupils' performance and ensured that gaps in achievement between different groups have closed. The school uses part of the additional funding (pupil premium) to make sure that all pupils have access to everything the school has to offer. Consequently, equal access to all learning opportunities is ensured across all school activities.
- All staff are trained regularly in safeguarding and child protection procedures. Senior staff are trained to a higher level and, as a result, safeguarding currently meets requirements.
- The links between the school and local authority are good. Senior leaders and managers use the local authority to help support the drive for rapid improvement. Staff training and mentoring have helped to raise the quality of teaching. The local authority monitors the school's work termly and, as part of this process, confirms the school's findings on pupils' progress. It has assisted the senior leadership team in developing their skills in observing teaching.
- The school has developed the range of subjects taught across the school to make sure pupils are engaged in work relevant to their lives and learning. Pupils spoken to said that learning had become much more interesting. The primary sports funding is used particularly well to provide a wide range of physical and sporting opportunities for all pupils.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has changed considerably since the previous inspection. Governors currently have a wide range of personal skills and expertise that they bring to their role. They have undergone training, which has helped them become both challenging and supportive of the school and leaders. Governors are fully involved in checking the work of the school. They have a good understanding of the progress the pupils are making. They check the effect the additional funding for the pupil premium and sports funding has on pupils' progress and well-being. Governors have a good knowledge of the quality of teaching. They know how targets are set for teachers and link performance to pay and professional development. They understand the data on pupils' attainment and progress and how the performance of the school compares to that of schools nationally. The governing body takes safeguarding procedures seriously; governors frequently check the school grounds and buildings and review all policies and procedures regularly.

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	103945
Local authority	Sandwell
Inspection number	444134

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	270
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrew Knight
Headteacher	Clare Sturmey
Date of previous school inspection	27 January 2010
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