

Great Barr Primary School

Aldridge Road, Birmingham, B44 8NT

Inspection dates 8–9 July 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	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 helps all pupils, including those who need extra help and those who are the most able, to make good progress.
- In all year groups, pupils' standards in reading, writing and mathematics are improving rapidly.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress.
- Pupils of all ages say they feel safe and that the staff take good care of them.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. They do what they are asked by staff and their positive attitudes to learning help them achieve well.
- The school has worked well with parents to improve pupils' attendance.
- Leaders make sure teachers get the training they need to improve their skills. Teachers welcome feedback and do all they can to improve. Consequently, both teaching and achievement are good.
- Systems to check on how well pupils are doing are rigorous. Leaders and staff make sure those who need extra help get the support they need.
- Senior leaders have been effective in developing the expertise of all staff to enable them to take responsibility for leading different aspects of the school's work.
- Governors are regular visitors to the school. They check that actions taken by leaders and managers are working well to improve pupils' achievement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not enough outstanding teaching to take pupils' achievement to the next level.
- Not all teachers have high enough expectations of the quality of pupils' handwriting or help them to take pride in the presentation of the work in their English books.
- In a few lessons, pupils do not have enough to do to keep them busy. As a result, they lose concentration, their attention wavers and their learning slows.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 21 lessons, taught by 15 teachers, and two assemblies. Senior leaders joined inspectors in observing learning in 14 lessons. Inspectors talked with pupils, and looked at their work and records of their progress.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' work on display. They also undertook learning walks, which comprised a number of short visits to lessons to look at the teaching of reading, including phonics (the links between letters and the sounds they make) and learning across subjects and themed projects. They made brief visits to various activities taking place at lunchtime and to the before- and after-school clubs.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, subject leaders, staff and members of the governing body. In addition, an inspector talked with an adviser to the school on the telephone.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and observed them at play during breaktimes and at lunchtime.
- The school's safeguarding policies, improvement plans, notes from meetings of the governing body and records of pupils' behaviour were reviewed, as well as the 49 replies to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors took account of parental communications with inspectors, the 21 responses to the online parent questionnaire (Parent View) and results of the school's own consultations with parents. Parental views were also sought at the start of the school day as they brought their children to school.

Inspection team

Sarah Warboys, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
David Westall	Additional Inspector
Hilary Green	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Great Barr Primary School converted to become an academy school on 1 September 2012. When its predecessor school, also known as Great Barr Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good.
- It is much larger than most primary schools.
- A well-above-average percentage of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds and one in every five pupils speaks English as an additional language.
- An above-average proportion of pupils are eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding to the school. The funding is based on the number of children at the school in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The percentage of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who are supported by school action is average. The proportion of pupils supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- An above-average number of pupils join and leave the school at different times of the year.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- A before- and after-school club, both managed by the governing body, operate on the school site.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and help pupils make even faster progress by:
 - raising all teachers' expectations of pupils' handwriting and encourage all pupils to take a greater pride in the presentation of their written work in their English books
 - making certain all pupils have more to do in lessons to keep them interested so that they make the best possible progress at all times
 - building on existing systems which identify those aspects of really outstanding teaching that already exist in the school, and extending these across all classes and subjects.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with knowledge and abilities that are below those typically seen at their age. They make good progress because teachers provide lots of activities for them to do in the Nursery and Reception classes to develop their skills across all areas of learning. Above-average proportions reach a good level of development by the time they enter Year 1.
- Pupils achieve well in reading. Young children are taught phonics very effectively. Adults encourage pupils to use and practise reading and spelling regularly and systematically during their time in school and for homework. In 2013, the proportion of Year 1 pupils reaching the required standard in phonics was above average. Recent results show the proportions reaching the required level this year are similar.
- Older pupils are taught more complex reading skills as they move through the school. For example, pupils in Year 5 were encouraged to read 'between the lines' to discuss the deeper meaning of a particular text. Standards in reading at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 in 2013, though average, represented very good progress for these pupils from their below average starting points. Recent assessments of pupils currently in the school indicate that reading standards are continuing to improve and that increasing numbers of pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 are now working at levels above those expected for their age.
- Pupils' standards in writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 were above average in 2013. The work in current pupils' books shows a similar picture. Most are working at or above expected levels. Most pupils in all other year groups are working above the levels that are expected for their age. This is because all pupils, regardless of their background or ability make good progress.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, including those who have social and emotional difficulties, make good progress from below average starting points. They are supported well by teachers and other adults in lessons, in small group work and through individual support programmes which are tailored very precisely to address specific gaps in their knowledge and abilities. Adults are very sensitive to the needs of pupils with physical difficulties and adapt tasks very carefully to ensure they are accessible. They provide additional explanations, pictures and interesting resources which help all pupils to improve what they are able to do and to understand new ideas.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress. Adults provide good role models in terms of spoken and written English. They take care to pronounce words and form sentences in ways that are grammatically correct. Those pupils at an early stage of learning English benefit from extra help, often through good use of pictures, to learn new words and phrases.
- The standard of work in pupils' books confirms that more-able pupils are given work that is set at the right level of difficulty to make them think and work hard. This enables them to make good progress. Higher attaining pupils in Year 5, for example, were expected to solve puzzles involving 'algebra' and were required to explain how they arrived at their answers.
- Pupils who join the school partway through the year make good progress, similar to their peers. Partnerships with parents are established quickly and early assessments are made of what they already know and can do. Pupils are paired with 'a buddy' to show them the school's routines. Adults make sure pupils get the extra help they need and make regular checks to ensure they

have settled in well.

- The additional funding the school receives in the form of the pupil premium is used effectively to provide support for pupils' social, emotional and behavioural needs. The school arranges for extra staff to teach eligible pupils in small groups and provide one-to-one tuition and ensures all can benefit from educational visits and trips. The Year 6 eligible pupils who left the school in 2013 were, on average, about two terms behind their classmates in reading and writing. They were about a term behind other pupils in mathematics. Eligible pupils currently in the school are making the same good progress as their peers.
- Pupils, including those who are most able, make good progress in physical education. The sports funding has enabled a 'sport and health mentor' to be appointed to run events which encourage pupils to be more physically active at lunchtimes and after school. In addition, he has provided training and coaching to teachers. More pupils are now participating in and enjoying sports, promoting their healthy lifestyles and sense of well-being.
- The before- and after-school clubs provide good care for pupils. Pupils socialise with friends and eat a healthy breakfast in readiness for the day ahead.

The quality of teaching is good

- Adults in the Early Years Foundation Stage ensure activities are consistently interesting so that children learn new things and are able to practise their skills. The children are encouraged to work together, take turns and to use their imagination. For example, in the Reception classes, children were being introduced to capital letters, starting with their names and the beginning of sentences. Children made good progress in understanding this new idea and enjoyed working together to match lower-case letters with their capital 'partners'.
- Teaching is enhanced by the warm relationships that exist in the classroom. Pupils throughout the school are encouraged to 'have a go' and this creates a positive climate for learning. Teachers, teaching assistants and volunteers work well together and have a good understanding of what pupils are learning and what they have to do.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs in particular are taught well. This ensures these pupils receive regular boosts to their self-confidence and self-esteem. Adults are quick to respond to the very specific needs of these pupils so that they are fully engaged and focused on learning.
- Teachers have a good knowledge of the subjects they teach. They provide clear explanations and show pupils good examples so that they are clear about what they are learning and what they are expected to do. As a direct result, pupils start work confidently, with little or no learning time wasted.
- Effective use is made of information and communication technology to engage pupils and this helps to maintain their interest. In Year 6, pupils listened to the sounds of the 'Blitz' in the Second World War. The teacher skilfully drew out from pupils words associated with the sounds and emotions from the clip to support their understanding of 'pathetic fallacy'. Pupils were asked to explore ambitious vocabulary that would attribute human emotions to objects of nature, such as 'sombre clouds' or 'angry storm'.
- Work in pupils' books shows that they are taught specific skills in reading, writing and mathematics well. They are given regular opportunities to apply these skills in longer projects,

such as extended pieces of writing, or to solve mathematical problems while learning about other subjects, and this helps them to progress.

- Teachers' marking of pupils' work helps them to develop their understanding of key ideas and this makes a significant contribution to their progress. Across the school, their comments let pupils know how well they have done and what they need to do next. Teachers routinely encourage pupils to learn from their mistakes and improve their work.
- Homework is set regularly. Pupils say that it gives them the chance to share their 'learning logs' with their families. They particularly enjoy the practical projects when parents are able to help. Most pupils say that homework is a good thing and helps them to understand what they have learned in school.
- Not all teachers have consistently high expectations of pupils' handwriting, particularly in their English books. Some do not encourage pupils sufficiently well to take pride in the presentation of the written work in these books. Greater care and attention is paid to writing which is on display and in the 'creative curriculum' books in which pupils keep their learning of different subjects.
- There is not enough outstanding teaching to ensure all pupils make excellent progress so that their achievement can move to the next level. At its very best, teaching makes excellent use of teachers' ability to question pupils carefully to check their understanding and to help them develop their ideas further. They set work for pupils that is at just the right level of difficulty to help them move forward in their learning. However, these excellent moments are not always the norm in all classes and in all subjects. Just occasionally, pupils do not have enough to do in lessons to keep them fully occupied. Their attention wanes and their learning slows as a result.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They show good manners and are considerate of others as they move around the school. Pupils are proud of their achievements and eager to share them with visitors. Cloakrooms and corridors are orderly places. Pupils are neat and tidy in their uniforms.
- The vast majority of pupils show a great deal of respect for adults and for each other. In classes, small groups and in one-to-one situations, there is an atmosphere of mutual respect for staff, volunteers and visitors alike. Pupils respond well to adult guidance. They enjoy working hard and being challenged. They understand how important it is to learn to work together. One pupil asked the teacher, 'Give me a hard one to do!' and another commented, 'This work was quite difficult. We had to cooperate to get the right answer.'
- Almost all parents, staff and pupils' views are positive about pupils' behaviour. Staff manage pupils' behaviour consistently well across the school. Pupils have a well developed understanding of the school's systems for managing good behaviour and say that they work well. Consequently, there is hardly any disruption in lessons.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say they feel safe in school and know how to seek help. They understand that bullying takes a variety of forms but that it is not a serious issue in school. They report rare incidents of name-calling and minor disagreements but are assured that staff will deal swiftly with any concerns they may have.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to protect themselves when using the internet. They learn how to keep safe in other situations and are encouraged to consider the dangers posed by strangers, roads and risks in the home. The pupils in the 'nurture group' are given additional

advice about how to keep themselves safe..

- The school, supported by governors and an attendance development officer has worked well with parents to improve pupils' attendance. Its policies and procedures have been applied with rigour. As a direct consequence, attendance levels are now average and levels of punctuality are good.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, supported well by senior leaders, has created a climate in which teachers can teach and pupils can learn and behave well. She has successfully empowered those with leadership responsibilities to lead key subjects and different aspects of the school's work. Staff morale is high. As one member of staff put it, 'This is a great place to work'.
- Leaders, staff and governors know what they want to achieve for pupils. They know what the school does well and what it needs to do to improve. Plans for improvement are driven by a thorough knowledge of how well different groups of pupils are doing. Those pupils who are not making sufficient progress, or who are in danger of falling behind, are given extra help to catch up.
- Systems for improving teaching are robust. Leaders observe teaching, look at pupils' work in their books and keep a careful track of their progress. They give staff clear guidance about which aspects of their teaching need developing and provide them with appropriate training. Teachers are set targets for improvement and checks are made to ensure staff professional development has been effective.
- The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good and enable children to make a good start to their school career. The before- and after-school clubs are well-organised. The work to support disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is also led and managed well. Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated, but is tackled decisively. Careful attention is paid to making sure all pupils have an equal chance to succeed, whatever their ability or background.
- An overwhelming majority of parents who responded to the online questionnaire and who spoke to inspectors were happy with the work of the school and the care their children receive. The school's own consultation with parents was similarly highly positive.
- Pupils study different themes and topics that have been combined together to take advantage for the natural links between subjects to form what is known as the 'creative curriculum'. Pupils are therefore able to use and extend their English and mathematics skills when they are studying other subjects. The curriculum is enriched by trips and visits. Pupils are given the chance to appreciate and create art and music, including learning to play musical instruments. They learn about different cultures and religious traditions. The effective use of the sports funding has enabled greater proportions of pupils to participate in sport, particularly competitive sport. Year 5 pupils celebrated their success in achieving second place in a local school's swimming gala during the inspection.
- The school make good use of its site to enhance pupils' opportunities for learning. Inviting learning spaces have been created around the school which promote pupils' involvement and achievement. One such example is the refurbished library where attractive decorations and comfortable seating have encouraged pupils to read for pleasure. Year 6 pupils regularly read with younger pupils with obvious enthusiasm and enjoyment.

- The school makes good use of an external adviser who conducts regular reviews of the school's performance.

- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors know that pupils at Great Barr are doing well. They are aware of how pupils' achievement compares to those nationally because they make good use of published data alongside that which is shared by senior leaders. Governors take advantage of training and make regular visits to school to check on the quality of teaching and to see for themselves what is going on. As a result, they are able to make well-informed decisions. They manage the school's finances effectively to ensure that funds are available to improve the fabric of the buildings and to provide additional resources, such as the artificial turf, so that it can enhance what it offers to pupils. Governors keep a close check on the spending of the pupil premium and of the sports funding and know that it is making a positive difference to pupils. Governors manage the performance of the headteacher and make sure it is tightly focused on improving pupils' achievement. They support the headteacher in making sure that only teachers who are successful in meeting their targets move onto higher pay scales. Governors ensure safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.

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	138694
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	440170

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	450
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Judy Griffiths
Headteacher	Susan Courbet
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	0121 4642251
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