

Highfields Primary School

Elder Lane, Burntwood, WS7 9BT

Inspection dates 8–9 July 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	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

- Teaching is not consistently good in all classes so pupils do not make good progress.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not always high enough, particularly for the most able. While most pupils reach the standards expected at the end of Key Stage 2, too few do better than this.
- Although the school's leaders have successfully improved teaching and learning in mathematics, the teaching of writing is not consistently good because pupils are not given enough opportunities to check the spelling of words.
- When tasks are too easy or too hard pupils lose concentration and stop working.
- Teachers' judgements of how well pupils are doing are not always accurate.
- The school development plan does not always include clear timescales for school improvement work or state when it should be completed. Consequently, it is difficult for leaders and governors to check progress and measure the effectiveness of their actions to improve pupils' achievement.
- School plans do not always focus well enough on ensuring pupils make faster progress.
- Some parents feel that the school does not always communicate with them well enough and this is reducing their confidence in the school.

The school has the following strengths

- The achievement of children in Reception is good. They enjoy their learning and make good progress.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe is good. Pupils are cared for and supported well and, as a result, they feel safe.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school, shown by their high attendance.
- School leaders have taken rigorous action to improve teaching and know what needs to be done to bring about further changes to make the school good.
- The governing body has received appropriate training and is now holding the school to account for the necessary improvement.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classes. They visited 15 lessons including two shared observations with the headteacher, one with the deputy headteacher and one with the assistant headteacher. Playtimes and lunchtimes were also observed.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, other staff, pupils, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 45 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, six e-mails from parents and the responses to the school's own survey of the views of parents. Inspectors also sought the views of parents through informal discussions at the start of the school day.
- The views expressed in the 13 questionnaires completed by staff were taken into account.
- Inspectors checked pupils' written work in a range of subjects and listened to pupils reading.
- They looked at a wide range of documents including: the school's self-evaluation and plan for improvement; information on pupils' progress and attainment; school policies; records relating to safeguarding, attendance and behaviour; and teachers' planning of learning.

Inspection team

Helen Morrison, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Amarjit Cheema

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Highfields Primary is an average-sized primary school.
- Almost all pupils come from a White British background and very few speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus, or with a statement of special educational needs, is also below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium (extra government funding to support the learning of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and looked after children) is below average.
- There have been several staff changes since the previous inspection. A new senior leader joined the school in January 2014 and a newly qualified teacher took up her post in April 2014. Two further teachers leave at the end of this term.
- The school meets the government's floor standards – the minimum standards set for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- A Nursery and before- and after- school clubs operate on the school site. These are not managed by the governing body and are inspected separately.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, particularly in writing, so that it is consistently good or better by:
 - having consistently high expectations of the quality and quantity of work all pupils can achieve and the speed at which they can progress
 - challenging the most-able pupils with work that moves them on faster in their learning
 - making sure that work is not too easy or too hard so pupils do not lose concentration
 - ensuring that teachers' judgements about how well pupils are doing are accurate
 - teaching pupils in Key Stage 2 how to improve their spelling, especially for those pupils who have not benefited from the improvements made in the teaching of the sounds letters make (phonics) in Key Stage 1.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that plans to improve achievement are tightly focused on increasing the proportion of pupils who make rapid progress, so that all pupils meet national expectations and a greater proportion exceed them
 - ensuring improvement plans contain clear timescales and measurable criteria for success
 - building up confidence in the school among parents by improving communication with them.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils do not make consistently good progress as they move through the school. As a result, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2 is average, but this is not rising and too few pupils reach the higher levels of which they are capable.
- Although average at the end of Year 6, work in pupils' books shows that standards in writing are lower than in reading and mathematics across the school. Weak spelling skills, resulting from poor progress in previous years, lead to lower attainment in writing.
- Standards in mathematics have risen since the previous inspection as a result of better teaching. Pupils tackle problems with enthusiasm. For example, Year 5 enjoyed working out the possible combinations for a football kit using three colours. However, more-able pupils are not always given work that is hard enough and so they do not achieve well.
- Pupils enjoy reading and most do so with confidence, using their knowledge of the sounds letters make to read unfamiliar words. However, more-able pupils are not always able to draw conclusions based on what they have read, and so do not make as much progress as they should.
- Pupils who benefit from support from additional funding (pupil premium) make similar progress to other pupils in school with extra adult help. Funding is used to provide one-to-one and small-group support particularly in mathematics and writing. There were too few eligible pupils at the end of Year 6 in 2013 to compare attainment with that of their classmates without the risk of identifying individual pupils. Almost all of the eligible pupils in the current Year 6 have special educational needs. From their lower starting points they have made similar progress to their class mates. They have, however, reached lower standards, particularly in reading and writing where they are over a year behind. Eligible pupils in other year groups reach standards in line with their peers.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similar progress to other pupils because work is tailored to their particular capabilities. They are supported effectively in class and given well-targeted additional help.
- Children enter the Reception class with skills that are typical of four-year-olds. Teaching is well-focused on increasing the number of words children know, teaching the sounds letters make and developing basic mathematical skills. As a result children make good progress and begin Year 1 with skills expected for their age.
- Leaders have taken action to improve the teaching of phonics and, as a result, standards have risen this year. The proportion of pupils in Year 1 who met the expected standard in the national screening check in phonics has risen from under half in 2013 to almost four-fifths this year. Those pupils who did not meet this standard in 2013 have been well supported and most have now reached the required standard.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is variable across the school. It is not consistently good enough to enable pupils to make good progress in all subjects.

- Some teachers do not accurately assess pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics. As a result their expectations are either too low and the work given to pupils is too easy, or pupils are given tasks which are too difficult. Where this happens pupils often become distracted and some misbehave.
- Progress in writing, particularly for the more-able pupils, is not as rapid as in reading and mathematics because pupils lack spelling skills. These skills have been less well taught in the past and pupils have had insufficient opportunities to practise them.
- The quality of teaching in mathematics has improved because, following staff training, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve have risen. As a result pupils make better progress although too few reach the higher levels at the end of Key Stage 2.
- The teaching of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs mirrors that of other pupils. Teaching assistants have received well-targeted training since the previous inspection and provide careful, sensitive support to individual pupils and small groups so that they make similar progress to other pupils.
- Where teaching is most effective pupils achieve well. For example, in Year 2, pupils were keen to create 'silly sentences' to show their good understanding of nouns, verbs and adjectives. The respectful relationships established by the teacher ensured pupils listened carefully to one another and were prepared to try more difficult work using adverbs.
- Teaching in the Reception class is good. Adults provide interesting learning activities and join in children's play, asking well-focused questions. Consequently, children make good progress. They enjoy choosing their own activities as well as joining in more structured times when they are taught in groups or as a whole class.
- Work in pupils' books is marked effectively with useful comments to pupils on how to improve their work. Pupils are given time to do their corrections and enjoy using their 'purple polishing pens of power' to do so.
- Where teaching is good pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. Pupils are given opportunities to reflect on their own work and decide how it could be improved. They work well together and show respect for the opinions and ideas of others.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Although most pupils concentrate well in lessons, when the work is too hard or too easy pupils sometimes stop working and talk about other things.
- Pupils are usually well-behaved when moving around the school building or playing in the school grounds. They show respect and good manners towards adults and each other. At playtime and lunchtime pupils use play equipment safely and sensibly.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Leaders make sure the school building and grounds are secure and staff are only appointed following rigorous checks on their suitability.
- All parents who responded to the online survey 'Parent View' said their child was safe in school and pupils agreed. Pupils have a good understanding of what constitutes an unsafe situation

including the importance of being safe on the internet. They are aware of the different forms of bullying and why they are wrong. They said that bullying is rare and any instances are dealt with well by staff.

- The school ensures all pupils are included in its activities and has very effective policies and procedures for tackling discrimination should it arise. The school's records of the very few instances of racist name-calling show it takes firm action to deal with it.
- Pupils with social and emotional difficulties are carefully supported, for example in a nurture group, so they are able to learn alongside other pupils.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because actions identified in the previous inspection, for example, to eliminate the uneven quality of teaching, have yet to be achieved.
- Senior leaders have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and know what needs to be done to secure improvement. The school development plan addresses the main priorities and some aspects have already been improved. For example, phonics and mathematics are taught better and teaching assistants are now making a good contribution to learning. However, the plan does not always state when tasks should be completed and so leaders are not always able to check the school's progress and assess the impact on pupils' achievement.
- Relationships with parents are positive. Parents are encouraged to support their children's education through curriculum information on the school's web site and regular newsletters. However, some parents feel information is too often provided at short notice and that they are not well-enough informed to recommend the school to others.
- The use of the pupil premium funding to fund additional teaching support has closed differences in attainment between eligible pupils and their class mates in all year groups except the current Year 6.
- Leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. There are good links with the on-site nursery and systems for checking children's progress and recording their learning are good. Because of the recent high turnover of staff other leadership roles are currently all undertaken by senior staff, although the school has plans to provide leadership opportunities for experienced staff who join the school.
- Targets for teachers' performance are now linked to pupils' progress. The headteacher and governors have ensured that there is a clear link between teachers' pay and their performance in the classroom. Senior leaders provide training and support to help teachers improve their skills. Newly qualified teachers say that they are well supported by school leaders and are given opportunities to learn from effective teachers.
- The subjects pupils learn are organised around themes. These provide interesting learning experiences which promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and prepare them for their futures well. Singing is a strong feature of school life.
- The primary sports funding has been used effectively to provide staff training, particularly in gymnastics, sports coaching for pupils and to purchase new resources. As a result, improved teaching has raised pupils' attainment, although pupils say they would like to enter more sporting events and competitions with other schools.

- Arrangements for safeguarding meet requirements. The school responds quickly to any concerns about children’s well-being and works well with other agencies to support pupils and families whose circumstances may make them vulnerable.
- The local authority has an accurate understanding of the school’s strengths and weaknesses and has worked successfully with the school to make some improvements. For example, an adviser has worked with staff to improve the quality of teaching in Reception.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Since the last inspection governors have undertaken training to help them fulfil their roles successfully.
 - As well as supporting school leaders the governors question and challenge them at meetings to ensure an effective partnership in improving the school.
 - Governors monitor performance data on pupils’ progress and attainment carefully. They are informed about the quality of teaching, the strengths and weaknesses in individuals’ work and know how teaching effectiveness relates to pay and promotions.
 - Governors monitor the school’s budget carefully and are aware of the impact of the pupil premium money.
 - They make sure that the school meets all legal requirements, including ensuring that safeguarding policies and procedures are reviewed 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	124211
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	442564

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	207
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Geoff Elton
Headteacher	Mark Wilkes
Date of previous school inspection	07 November 2012
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