

Palmers Cross Primary School

Windermere Road, Tettenhall, Wolverhampton, WV6 9DF

Inspection dates 18–19 June 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
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

- Pupils' attainment is currently broadly in line with expected standards at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2. However, progress is inconsistent across year groups and different groups of pupils.
- Teaching requires improvement as it is currently not consistently good or better.
- Teachers' questioning does not sufficiently help pupils, especially the most-able, to extend their thinking.
- Teachers' feedback does not always help pupils to improve their work.
- The restructuring of staff responsibilities for different areas of the curriculum is at an early stage of development. The new leaders have not yet established effective systems to monitor pupils' progress and raise their achievement.
- Teachers do not always set work that is closely matched to the needs of different groups, particularly the most able pupils.
- While the governing body is increasing its involvement in the school, governors have not fully developed their roles in monitoring the performance of the school and its staff.

The school has the following strengths

- The leadership of the new headteacher, together with a dedicated senior team, has raised expectations and aspirations in the school.
- The school provides good support for pupils who have speech, language and communication difficulties.
- Pupils are proud of their school and feel very safe there.
- Pupils' behaviour is good and their attitudes to learning are positive.

Information about this inspection

- During the inspection, 10 lessons were observed. Year 2 pupils were on a two-day residential visit during inspection.
- One joint observation of teaching and learning was conducted with the deputy headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority, staff and groups of pupils.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read.
- Inspectors took account of 36 responses to the Parent View survey.
- Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised pupils' work books and looked at school policies, including those relating to safeguarding and equality, minutes of meetings of the governing body and planning documents.
- Inspectors took account of the 19 questionnaires returned by staff.
- During this inspection, inspectors asked additional questions designed to ascertain the school's view of the impact and effectiveness of local authority services to support school improvement. This information will contribute to work being carried out by Ofsted to assess the use, quality and impact of those services.

Inspection team

Robert Bourdon-Pierre, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Rowena Green

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Palmers Cross Primary School is a smaller-than-average-sized primary school.
- Just over half of the pupils come from White British backgrounds with the remainder coming from a range of different minority ethnic groups.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs who are supported through school action is well below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for extra funding through the pupil premium, because they are in receipt of free school meals or looked after by the local authority, is above the national average.
- Following a turbulent period in the school's leadership, an acting headteacher was in post from September to December 2013. The new headteacher has been in post since January 2014.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that pupils make better progress by:
 - ensuring that teachers plan work and activities that match the needs of pupils more closely, particularly for the most-able pupils
 - improving the quality of written and verbal feedback teachers give, so that pupils have a better understanding of what they need to do to improve their work
 - developing the quality of teachers' questioning in lessons in order to deepen pupils' understanding.
- Improve the impact of leadership and management by:
 - creating a more clearly defined process for assessing learning and progress, to ensure that teachers and leaders can more closely monitor pupils' performance
 - ensuring that subject leaders play a greater role in monitoring and improving pupils' progress.
- Further develop the role of the governing body by reviewing its work and providing additional training so that governors can increase their knowledge and understanding of monitoring the school's performance.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Although some groups of pupils make good progress, this is not consistent in all year groups and subjects. In 2013 the standards pupils attained in reading, writing and mathematics were broadly in line with the national averages at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. However, potentially higher attaining pupils do not always make the good progress of which they are capable.
- During the period of instability in the school's leadership in 2013, pupils' progress by the end of Key Stage 2 dipped below previous levels. This is being addressed by the new headteacher and progress is now rapidly improving, especially in Years 4, 5 and 6.
- A love of reading is developed at an early stage and this continues throughout the school. Pupils are systematically taught phonics (the relationship between letters and the sounds they make). In the Year 1 national phonic screening check last year, results were broadly average. Progress in reading is broadly in line with national expectations.
- The majority of pupils make steady progress in mathematics, with some exceeding expectations. The school has focused on raising the standard of pupils' writing further, and progress is improving.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics in all year groups. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs generally progress well. Pupils who the school has identified as needing extra help to develop their speech, language and communication skills receive good support and make particularly good progress.
- Children enter Reception with below average levels of development. They make good progress because they receive additional support from well-deployed support staff who help them in their learning. They are well prepared for Year 1.
- The gap in achievement between pupils eligible for pupil premium funding and their peers is closing and in some instances, they are out-performing some other groups by the end of Year 6.
- The school is using its primary school sport funding effectively. This is providing training that is leading to a direct improvement in pupils' performance in physical education, as well as increasing participation in a range of extra-curricular activities.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching is not good enough to promote consistently good achievement. Some teaching lacks challenge for different ability levels, but particularly so for the most-able pupils. Pupils' work indicates that while some progress over time is evident, most-able pupils are capable of more.
- At times, questioning of pupils by teachers does not challenge most-able pupils to extend their thinking. As a result, pupils' answers are basic because the range of questions does not allow them to investigate topics to a deeper level.
- Teachers' marking and feedback do not always inform pupils how well they have done and what they need to do to improve their work. However, a new marking policy has been recently

introduced and this is starting to improve the quality of teachers' marking and consequently the quality of pupils' written work.

- Well-informed teaching assistants are effectively deployed and the support they offer is making improvements in the progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Carefully chosen help and guidance for individuals and small groups of pupils are also having a positive effect on those pupils' learning.
- Teachers show good subject knowledge. Their vibrant, colourful, classrooms create a stimulating learning environment of which pupils are proud.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

The behaviour of pupils is good. This contributes to a warm, welcoming atmosphere in the school. Pupils' conduct in lessons and around the premises in general is calm with little evidence of disruptive behaviour. Relationships are positive and pupils show respect for each other and with all adults they encounter.

- Pupils take great pride in their school, with one Year 4 pupil commenting, 'I love my school.' They are focused on their work in the classroom and display an eagerness to learn.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say that they feel safe and are well informed in how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet.
- Pupils have a suitable knowledge of bullying and the different forms it can take but are quick to state that it rarely happens in school. They say that if it does occur, it is swiftly dealt with and resolved. Consequently very few incidents are recorded in behaviour logs.
- Responses to the Parent View questionnaire indicate that the vast majority of parents are happy with the school and feel their children are safe and well looked after.
- The school's attendance rate is currently above average and this is the result of concentrated efforts to promote good attendance over time. The school works hard with the families of children who are regularly absent from school.
- The newly introduced reward system is appreciated by the pupils and acts as a motivator towards good behaviour. A weekly celebration assembly is well attended by parents and this also encourages pupils to do their best.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The leadership and management of the school require improvement because the new headteacher and newly restructured senior leadership team have not yet established fully effective systems to monitor performance in each subject following a period of staffing turbulence.
- The performance of pupils is not yet evaluated effectively enough for remedial action to be taken swiftly when pupils start to slip behind. This adds to the inconsistency of progress throughout the school.
- The headteacher provides clear vision and direction for the school, which are shared by all staff.

She shows great determination to improve standards of teaching to a level that will have a direct impact on raising pupils' achievement.

- The restructuring of subject leaders' roles is beginning to show an impact in raising achievement. However, the new leaders are not yet fully involved in checking and improving pupils' progress.
- Performance management systems have been reviewed, linking targets in the school improvement plan to teachers' individual targets. This is having an impact on improving the quality and consistency of teaching.
- The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. The curriculum provides good opportunities to learn about the world and social issues. This is enhanced by a range of visitors who come into school to deepen pupils' understanding of different cultures and religions. A number of different educational visits, for example to the local temple and mosque, enrich pupils' experiences.
- The local authority provides good support and challenge and this has helped the new headteacher to establish basic strategies and systems that will move the school forwards. The linked representative knows the school well and has a strong awareness of the achievement of pupils. He has also provided invaluable support to the emerging governing body and has helped them to start to effectively develop their skills and expertise.

The governance of the school:

- The governors are fully supportive of the school and display an eagerness to see improvements in achievement. They are becoming more involved in the running of the school since the appointment of the new headteacher and with the additional guidance provided by the local authority. They are aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses and now have a better understanding of their role in the performance management of staff. Governors are beginning to hold the headteacher to account, but are not yet fully confident in asking challenging questions related to the school's performance data. They closely monitor the school's finances and have a good understanding of the expenditure of pupil premium and primary school sport funding. They ensure all statutory duties related to safeguarding are met. A review of governance through the National College of School Leadership is planned to further develop their understanding of their roles.

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	104309
Local authority	Wolverhampton
Inspection number	431164

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	185
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Mayhew
Headteacher	Shona Ferguson
Date of previous school inspection	14 March 2012
Telephone number	01902 558322
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