

Arley Primary School

Gun Hill, New Arley, Coventry, CV7 8HB

Inspection dates

15–16 October 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Requires improvement 3
Leadership and management	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils	Requires improvement	3
Early years provision	Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- The school has not been able to establish effective leadership in all subjects.
- Many staff changes and the disruption caused by the staggered move to new premises have adversely affected the performance of the school.
- Teaching is too variable, especially in Reception and Key Stage 1. Not enough is good or outstanding to enable pupils to achieve consistently well.
- Pupils' progress has been too slow in reading, writing and mathematics in Years 1 and 2.
- Too few of the most-able pupils reach higher levels of attainment because their work is not consistently challenging.
- Pupils' knowledge and understanding of phonic skills (the sounds letters make) are not as good as they should be in order to help their reading, writing and spelling skills.
- Progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage is too slow in writing and number work, although children progress well in their social development.

The school has the following strengths

- The calm and purposeful leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher has led to improvements in teaching, achievement and the school's performance in the last, difficult, year.
- Governors fully grasp the school's strengths and priorities for improvement. They challenge leaders to further improve teaching and achievement.
- Leaders ensure that disadvantaged pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs also make good progress.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school, behave well and have good attitudes to learning. They have great pride in their new school. Staff keep them safe and look after them well.
- The school has good relationships with parents. Staff work well with them as partners to ensure that their children settle in the new accommodation as quickly and safely as possible.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 15 lessons. Nine of these were seen jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, other staff with leadership responsibilities and two governors. An inspector spoke to a representative of the local authority on the telephone.
- Inspectors discussed teaching and pupils' progress with class teachers and teaching assistants. Pupils' books and records of their progress were examined.
- Inspectors listened to pupils reading and talked with them about their reading experiences.
- There were 22 responses to Parent View, the online questionnaire for parents, which inspectors took account of. Inspectors also spoke to a number of parents in the playground and in school. The inspectors considered 22 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- A range of documentation was examined, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, and analysis of pupils' achievement and progress. Safeguarding arrangements, policies and records of checks made by leaders and external consultants on the quality of teaching were examined.

Inspection team

Rodney Braithwaite, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Mary Boole	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The school was opened in September 2013. This followed the amalgamation of Gun Hill Nursery and Infants school with the Herbert Fowler Junior School, two schools about two miles apart. For the first six months, pupils remained in their old school buildings until the new purpose-built school was opened in March 2014. The Nursery building was completed for the admission of children at the beginning of the current term.
- Most of the staff of the amalgamated schools transferred to this school. In the last year there have been a number of changes of staff. At present, two teachers are on long-term leave, one has responsibility for early years provision and the deputy headteacher has temporary responsibility for this area. An unexpectedly high intake of pupils in September 2014 resulted in the employment of several temporary teachers.
- The headteacher took up her post in April 2013 and the deputy headteacher in September 2013.
- The school has a Nursery which is open in the mornings and two full-time Reception classes. There is one mixed-year class in Years 1 and 2, and six other single-aged classes.
- The great majority of pupils are White British. A very small proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic heritages.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is below that found in most schools. The proportion of pupils at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is similar to that found in most schools.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is below the national average. The pupil premium is additional government funding provided for pupils who are looked after or known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and achievement, especially in Reception and Key Stage 1, by ensuring that:
 - teaching is at least good across the school, so that all learning motivates and challenges pupils
 - the most-able pupils are better challenged to reach higher levels of attainment
 - pupils' phonic skills are raised across the school in order to enhance their reading, writing and spelling
 - teachers improve their ability to evaluate their own practice, by having opportunities to observe the most effective practice in this and other schools.
- Enable new subject leaders and managers to develop their skills as quickly as possible, in order to drive improvement in their areas of responsibility and raise the achievement of pupils.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher have led the school calmly and determinedly through a difficult first year and successfully established expectations for good behaviour as a priority. The amalgamation of the two provider schools was disruptive initially for pupils' learning and for staff when for six months the school remained on the original school sites. Even after the move to the new building, the new Nursery premises were not ready, but the problem was managed successfully.
- Subject leadership is still developing and is not yet having full impact on teaching and achievement. However, new leaders are already showing promise in their impact on teaching and achievement under the guidance of senior leaders.
- A further major initial challenge was to combine two separate groups of staff quickly. Not all staff transferred to the new school, and since its opening there have been more changes, especially to teaching staff. These difficulties are being overcome by effective planning and strong leadership.
- The school's intake of pupils has been difficult to plan for. Twenty-five new pupils, who were not originally expected, were admitted to the school in September 2014, but leaders have managed to accommodate these pupils successfully.
- Senior leaders have overcome initial difficulties to create a more stable staff, and enabled pupils to settle rapidly. The one disappointment expressed forcibly by pupils is that they are unable to use the spacious new school field for a year, until it is deemed ready and safe.
- Notable improvements led by senior leaders include improving the attainment and progress of pupils, especially in Years 3 to 6 – particularly that of disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Pupils' progress is closely tracked and teaching is effectively monitored and improved when necessary. Further improvements include provision of regular staff training and robust performance management of staff related to their rates of pay.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the school's performance. They have acted quickly in dealing with initial priorities and are driving improvements, such as for phonics and spelling, raising the achievement of the most-able pupils and developing consistently good teaching.
- The school has used the additional government funding for disadvantaged pupils to good effect, and these pupils' achievement compares well with that of other pupils in the school.
- The additional sports funding is helping pupils to enjoy developing their skills in sport, working in teams and improving their fitness and well-being. Helpful resources have been bought, and teachers are gaining confidence to teach sport under the guidance of the school's physical education leader.
- The school promotes equal opportunities effectively. This results in no discrimination, and helps pupils to show respect for others and take pride in their work and school.
- The new curriculum is contributing increasingly effectively to pupils' enjoyment of learning and their achievement. Teachers are providing interesting activities in nearly all subjects. These activities are helping the promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education, including their understanding of the responsibilities of citizens in modern British democratic society.
- The local authority has provided regular support to the school during and since its amalgamation. It is now working with it on future priorities for improvement. It recognises the school is improving through effective leadership.
- The school has a good partnership with parents. Although doubtful about the changes at first, nearly all parents are happy with the school and the way it is developing. They have been sympathetic to the teething problems, and are pleased with the education their children are receiving.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors are playing an effective role in the leadership of the school. They have a good working knowledge of the school's strengths and areas for development. They helped overcome the difficulties of amalgamation, and have proper ambition for the school as the centre of the local community.
- Governors have taken part in regular training and are improving their analysis of teachers' performance in relation to the progress of pupils, so pay decisions are always fully justified.
- The governing body confidently analyses the data on pupils' progress and attainment. It monitors the spending of the pupil premium very carefully, comparing disadvantaged pupils' progress and attainment to that of others in the school and nationally. They know how the sports funding is used and measure its contribution to the health and well-being of pupils.
- Governors make sure that safeguarding arrangements meet national requirements, that pupils are kept safe and that school policies are regularly reviewed.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They behave well throughout the school, including in the early years provision. Their attitudes to learning are enthusiastic and are enhanced by the excellent environment of their new school. They behave well in lessons and around the school and are polite and helpful to others. Older pupils join younger pupils in the playground at lunchtimes to help and support them.
- One pupil is so impressed with the behaviour of all pupils that he awarded the school: '9.9, recurring, out of 10' for behaviour.
- Almost all pupils enjoy coming to school and talk about their memorable learning experiences in the last year. These include their opportunities for special work on speaking, listening and writing, and learning how to read music. They are pleased with the school's ever-increasing provision of after-school clubs.
- Pupils take pride in their school, and have helped contribute to the many colourful displays seen everywhere in their splendid building. Pride in the school feeds through into their own work, where most take considerable care to ensure it is presented as well as they can make it.
- A small number of pupils occasionally become over excited and boisterous in their learning, which can cause minor irritation for other pupils. This is normally dealt with swiftly by teachers.
- Attendance has steadily risen over the year and is similar to the national average. The school has robust procedures to deal with excessive absenteeism and the small number of pupils who arrive late for school. There have been no exclusions of pupils since the school was opened.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils are confident in the support of staff and in how any problems are dealt with. Access to the building is secure and staff are all checked prior to appointment.
- Pupils claim that there is almost no bullying in school, with only a little name-calling being mentioned. The older pupils understand the dangers of bullying through the internet or mobile phones, and explain this to younger ones. The school has had no incidents of racism reported since it opened.
- The school works well with external agencies in supporting families and children who may be at risk of not doing so well.
- Parents' responses indicate that they feel that their children are safe in school and that they are well

behaved. Staff agree with these views and inspectors were able to endorse them as accurate.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching has not been good enough to ensure pupils consistently reach the levels of which they are capable. This applies in most subjects, and especially to reading, writing and spelling in Key Stage 1.
- Teachers have not consistently provided work that is sufficiently challenging, particularly for the most-able pupils. This has led to variation in the rates of pupils' progress. For example, in Year 6 in the last year, most pupils made good progress, but this was not the case in all years. Consequently, the most-able pupils, especially, have not reached their full potential.
- The teaching of phonics has not been effective and so pupils struggle with this skill. The school has recently introduced a new programme for teaching phonics which is helping to improve pupils' learning of spelling and reading, which have formerly been weak.
- Similarly, until a few months ago, the teaching of mathematics was insufficiently challenging, especially to more-able pupils, few of whom reached high levels of attainment. Leaders have subsequently taken effective action in order to improve the teaching of the subject. Pupils' skills and attainment have improved throughout the school, and teachers are more confident in encouraging the development of numeracy skills across many subjects.
- Teachers do not evaluate their own practice sufficiently, especially when checking how well pupils are learning. Staff have benefited from some opportunities to observe good practice in their own school and elsewhere, and leaders are planning to increase this training.
- Following a period of change, staffing is becoming more stable and expertise is growing. In addition, leaders have been meticulous in monitoring teaching, and guiding and developing the skills of teachers. Their efforts have led to improved teaching and, consequently, better learning by pupils.
- The school's own observations and inspection evidence show that teaching is increasingly effective, especially in helping to improve reading skills, and improving pupils' understanding of the use of correct grammar and punctuation in their writing. Teachers are showing determination and thoughtfulness in their efforts to improve their own skills.
- Teachers' marking is accurate and carefully follows the school's marking policy. Pupils gain from the guidance they receive. Teachers usually ensure that pupils have regular homework to reinforce learning. Teachers inform parents about pupils' work and progress.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are good. Mutual respect strengthens pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Teachers work closely with teaching assistants, who know pupils well. Both teachers and assistants are especially effective in helping disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs to make good progress.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- In the school's first year, pupils' attainment overall in Years 1 and 2 was too low and some pupils were not reaching the levels of which they were capable in reading, mathematics and, especially, in writing.
- The reasons for this weakness were that some pupils lacked basic skills, and teaching was too variable, resulting in differing rates of progress by pupils. As a result of continuing action by school leaders,

progress and teaching have steadily improved during the last year.

- Some of the most-able pupils across the school are not reaching their full potential, because teaching is insufficiently challenging, and their work is sometimes too easy. In the Year 6 national tests in 2014, some of the most-able pupils did not reach the higher levels of which they were capable.
- In 2014, pupils' standards in the national phonics screening check were below the latest national average. Leaders recognise that this is an area for improvement which will particularly help the development of pupils' spelling skills, and are taking rapid action to raise attainment in use of phonics. However, standards are not yet at the level aimed for.
- Most Year 6 pupils reached standards close to the latest national averages in reading, writing and mathematics in the national tests in 2014. The change to new premises was managed well and avoided a poor set of results. However, fewer reached the higher levels than nationally.
- In Years 1 and 2, observations of pupils at work, their work in books and school data indicate that disabled pupils, those with special educational needs, and disadvantaged pupils, are making good progress – better than that of other pupils.
- Disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 achieved particularly well in 2014. Their good progress was made a leadership priority. In 2014, they attained levels a term ahead of those of other pupils in the school and ahead of all pupils nationally in reading and mathematics. Their attainment was similar to that of other pupils in writing.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs also make good progress because it has also been a particular focus for leaders since the school opened.
- As teaching steadily improves in Years 3 to 6, pupils' attainment and progress are also improving. More rigorous but achievable targets for the performance of teachers and pupils, and pupils' good attitudes to learning are leading to better progress in Key Stage 2.
- Pupils are enthusiastic readers. They talk about their interests in mystery books and mythical stories and have good knowledge of authors and their books, including Shakespeare and C.S. Lewis. Pupils say their wider reading includes Japanese comics, newspaper stories about road accidents – and giant spiders. Reading records are mostly well kept by pupils, staff and parents.
- Pupils are improving their achievement in a number of other subjects, including information and communication technology. Their skills in physical education are also improving quickly because school sports funding is used to provide more effective teaching of physical skills and healthy lifestyles.

The early years provision

requires improvement

- Children start in the Nursery with skills and experience below those typical for their age. Many have skills well below those normally seen in language and social development.
- Although children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress in some areas of learning, especially in reading and social and physical development, their progress is much more variable in the key areas of writing and number work. As a result, their attainment in these skills remains below national expectations by the time they enter Year 1.
- Assessment of pupils' learning takes place regularly, but the information gained is not used to provide sufficient challenge to children of all abilities, particularly the most-able.
- Teaching sometimes provides exciting and enjoyable learning activities for children, particularly in the

Nursery. However, it is not consistently good, so children do not always learn effectively, and their progress varies too much.

- Children in Nursery and Reception are well cared for and kept safe at all times. They learn quickly how to make friends, share and take turns. Their behaviour is good as they gain in confidence and become familiar with their surroundings and daily routines. They also learn to respect adults. For example, one child, waiting patiently to go outside asked politely, 'Excuse me, how do I do this zip?'
- In the absence of the leader of early years provision, the deputy headteacher has become the temporary leader. She is aware of the strengths in these classes and the priorities for improvement and is taking effective measures to accelerate improvement.
- Parents are encouraged to support their children's development, and have the opportunity to have regular meetings with staff to share information.

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	139913
Local authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	447807

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	243
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jenny Collins
Headteacher	Brigitte Letts
Date of previous school inspection	N/A
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