

Birstall Primary Academy

Chapel Lane, Batley, West Yorkshire, WF17 9EE

Inspection dates

4–5 November 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The new headteacher, superbly supported by her governors and the Academy Trust Board, makes sure that all staff are effectively focused on improving teaching and raising achievement.
- The newly formed leadership team fully understand the priorities for the school and are growing in confidence. They act quickly to address any gaps in teacher performance and to support their colleagues to improve.
- Teaching is consistently good which helps all pupils to make good and sometimes better progress than what is expected of them. This means they are well prepared for learning at secondary school.
- In every classroom teachers check pupils' work closely and help them to understand how to improve their work. Pupils act on teachers' advice and are keen to learn.
- The curriculum is well designed and provides stimulating literacy, numeracy and themed based activities which enable pupils to use a wide range of skills.
- Pupils are encouraged to think for themselves and to ask questions. They respect each other and work extremely well together. They take their learning seriously. This means that behaviour is good both inside and outside the classroom.
- Children make good progress in the early years because their teachers prepare well for their entry to Reception. They waste no time in planning their learning.
- This is a safe school and parents agree. Pupils enjoy coming to school and parents feel it is a very friendly learning community.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils sometimes lack the skills and the knowledge to read confidently and to understand what they are reading. As a result they are not achieving as well in reading as in other subjects.
- Too few of the most able pupils reach the higher levels of attainment because work is not always matched to their abilities and is sometimes too easy.
- Children in the early years do not have enough opportunities to play and learn in the outside environment because this area of the school is underdeveloped.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed eleven lessons, two of which were observed with the headteacher.
- A wide range of pupils' books and learning records were looked at, including those retained by the school from the previous year.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, groups of pupils, members of staff, a member of the governing body and two members of the Academy Trust.
- Two groups of pupils brought their reading books and diaries, read to the inspectors and discussed their views on the school.
- The inspection took account of 21 responses to Ofsted's online parent survey, Parent View, 22 staff questionnaires and the results of a recent school survey of parents and pupils' views. Discussions were held with parents at the start of the school day.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including achievement data, the school's evaluation of its own performance and development plan, behaviour and attendance records and information relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors also explored the school's provision for the social, moral, spiritual and cultural development of pupils.

Inspection team

Pauline Pitman, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Melvyn Hemmings

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school opened as an Academy in March 2013.
- It is smaller than most primary schools.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils known to be eligible for funding through the pupil premium is above average. This is additional government funding which supports pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils whose language is other than English is much lower than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is much higher than the national average. The proportion of those supported at school action plus or with a statement is below the national average.
- The school provides a thriving breakfast club and a number of after school sports and activities clubs.
- The school meets current floor standards which are the minimum expectations set by the government for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- The headteacher was appointed in September 2014.
- The school works with the Academy Trust Board and other external partners.
- Additional capacity is provided for the small governing body by the Academy Trust Board.
- The school does not have nursery provision but has a full time Reception class.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve reading so that more pupils reach the levels above those expected for their age by:
 - continuing to improve the quality of daily teaching of reading so that pupils, in every class, are better able to understand what they are reading and apply their skills in other subjects
 - regularly and systematically checking how pupils are progressing in their reading and taking swift action to help them to improve
 - further encouraging pupils to read for pleasure at home and in school.
- Raise the achievement of the most able pupils by providing work that is suitably hard enough and more closely matched to their abilities and interests.
- Improve the early year's outdoor learning environment so that children can further enjoy and make even better progress.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The newly appointed headteacher is astute, reflective and has already established a strong community of learners. This has meant that the work of the school has not stalled in its pursuit of excellence since her appointment in September 2014. She has high expectations for the school which are shared by all her staff.
- The Trust, alongside the governors, works in close partnership with the school. The headteacher makes good use of their expertise, where necessary, to help move the school forward.
- The three recently appointed Assistant Principals provide a strong lead and are already proving they have the ability and a deepening understanding of what works well. For example, they work closely and effectively with their teachers to check on the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' learning. They offer sound advice on how to improve so that more teaching is outstanding.
- Leaders have made sure that every aspect of the school is good, including the early years.
- Birstall Primary Academy is a reflective school. Leaders think carefully about what they need to do to improve. Their self-evaluation is accurate and the actions taken to address any emerging issues have been swift. For example, they have worked together to improve the consistency of teaching across the school. They check teaching regularly by observing lessons, looking in pupil's workbooks and by using data to identify weaknesses. This has led to improvements in teaching across the school.
- The interesting curriculum motivates the pupils. They really enjoy the learning challenges during afternoon themed lessons. For example, they are encouraged to research information about America, the Egyptians or the Romans at home prior to the lesson. Afternoon community groups bring pupils of different ages together and provide opportunities to work with each other, to share ideas and to explore the social, moral, cultural and spiritual elements of the curriculum. They recently took part in a themed week about living in modern Britain. Pupils explored what this meant to them in Birstall. The school promotes equal opportunities and helps pupils to understand what discrimination means. Last year they explored apartheid and made the pupils ask whether discrimination should be tolerated. The school is also working with the Trust to make sure that the new curriculum is well designed and meets the needs of all the pupils in the school, illustrating the commitment to promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination.
- The school has used their data to make sure that disadvantaged pupils have equal opportunities to the curriculum and life in school. The attainment of disadvantaged pupils across the school is as good as and sometimes better than other pupils because teachers now check their work more closely and have made good use of funding to provide additional support to help them to improve their reading, writing and mathematics.
- The primary school sport and physical education funding is used effectively to enhance the sporting and physical education of pupils. Every pupil has access to sport. Years 3 and 4 enjoy weekly swimming sessions and funding is used to provide sports coaching after school and during the school day including 'Golden Time' sport.
- There is good communication with parents. The learning mentor provides an important link for parents who may find it more difficult to visit the school. Meetings are held at parents' homes prior to their child starting Reception. This helps children to settle quickly. Older pupils are actively helped to plan for their move to secondary school. Transition arrangements are strong.
- The schools' arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements because staff are well trained, vigilant and understand the importance of keeping pupils safe. They involve appropriate agencies when necessary.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Although the governing body is small the Chair of Governors and the Vice Chair work tirelessly with the school. They ask pertinent questions about the performance of the school, including the quality of the teaching, and offer some outstanding support.
 - Additional capacity and high quality professional expertise are provided by members of the Academy Trust Board. They work with governors to effectively hold the school to account.
 - The governors manage financial resources well. For example, they have secured funding to increase leadership capacity and to buy new books. They know exactly how targeted funding has been used, such as pupil premium funding or the primary school sport and PE grant. They are able to explain the impact this has had on equality of opportunity and on achievement.

- They fully understand the link between pay and performance and work closely with the school to support and challenge the headteacher to raise the performance of teachers.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good because both staff and pupils have built good relationships with each other which help to make Birstall Primary Academy a successful learning community for everyone.
- Pupils enjoy learning and frequently demonstrate their ability to work together and to help each other. Pupils are confident to try new things and to learn from their mistakes because they are well supported. They are proud of their workbooks which are well presented. They have good attitudes to learning which is having a positive impact on their achievement in school.
- Attendance is a high priority for the school and as a result it is good and improving. Pupils like to come to school to learn. All staff, supported by the Learning Mentor, regularly remind parents, including a very small group of parents whose children find it harder to come to school, about the link between attendance and achievement.
- Pupils arrive at school with a smile and are extremely polite and friendly to staff and to each other. They greet all visitors with respect and genuinely want to show them how good their school is. They are proud to show off their achievements.
- Low level disruption in class is rare which means that pupils can get on with their learning. They are tolerant and sensitive towards a small minority of pupils who find it harder to behave. These pupils are well supported. There is a positive 'can do' atmosphere throughout the school, where everyone is treated equally. This helps to make the school very inclusive.
- Sometimes, because of the size of the playground, a small group of pupils can be boisterous and forget about others. For example, during games of football some of the boys can be over enthusiastic which increases the risk of accidents. The school is working hard to resolve this.
- Pupils can explain different forms of bullying because the school has helped them to understand them and to reduce risk. Pupils and parents report that incidents of bullying are extremely rare and minor incidents are dealt with quickly and appropriately.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say they feel safe in school and nearly all parents agree.
- Teachers explain the dangers of cyber bullying and even the younger children are aware of the risks of some social media sites. They can recall what they have been taught to keep themselves safe. For example, they have enjoyed visits from the police and the fire service and Year 5 pupils are taught to be safe on their bicycles.
- The governing body has undertaken risk assessments and ensured that the site is as safe as possible.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching over time is predominately good. Occasionally, when teaching has been less than good, the school has provided swift and appropriate support to help teachers to improve. This has meant that all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs are making good progress in all subjects across the school.
- Writing, communication and mathematics are taught effectively which helps all pupils to progress well. The teaching of reading has been less secure and has lacked the consistency to help pupils to reach the higher levels of achievement. Improvements have been put in place. All pupils now benefit from daily reading lessons where they are encouraged to explore different types of text and develop greater confidence in their understanding of what they read in other subjects. The school has also purchased a number of new books to encourage boys and girls to read for pleasure. These recent developments have not yet had enough time to make a difference to progress in reading.
- The quality and quantity of information in pupils' books show that most of the pupils are challenged to think carefully and research information to increase their knowledge and understanding of a particular subject. In some classes the work that is given to pupils is not hard enough which means that the most able pupils in particular are not always pushed to reach the highest levels of achievement. Work is not closely enough matched to their ability and they are not always encouraged to complete tasks before moving on.

- In every classroom, pupils' work is regularly and effectively checked. Teachers offer individual advice to pupils to help them improve their work. They understand what success looks like and respond quickly which helps them to make progress.
- Additional adults are used very effectively to support all pupils. They work closely with the teacher and contribute positively to pupil's learning. Some are highly skilful in encouraging pupils with special educational needs to develop their literacy and numeracy skills. Small group teaching, such as focussed groups for disadvantaged pupils, is used effectively to accelerate rates of progress and has resulted in improvements in achievement.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Since the school opened, pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 has been above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. Last year pupils attained the higher levels in mathematics, writing and particularly in English grammar, spelling and punctuation.
- Although pupils reached the required level in reading, fewer Key Stage 2 pupils reached the higher levels or made the progress that was expected of them. Key Stage 1 pupils' attainment is broadly in line with others nationally but not enough pupils are reaching the higher levels expected of them in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Regardless of starting points, the majority of Year 6 pupils make good and sometimes better progress than what is expected of them in writing and mathematics. Evidence in workbooks and in the schools' data shows that pupils in each class made good and often better than expected progress in all subjects last year.
- Pupils do have enough opportunities to read in school and they now have access to a range of well planned reading resources to help them to achieve. However, the teaching of reading has not always been consistent and progress has not been checked as precisely as it should have been, particularly for the most able pupils.
- The curriculum is designed to allow pupils to benefit from a themed approach to learning during afternoon sessions. They are able to practise literacy, numeracy and communication skills during well thought out activities which cover a range of subjects. They learn quickly and are well prepared for the next stage in their learning.
- All of the most able pupils achieve the levels expected of them, in all subjects, by the time they leave Year 6. Too few pupils progress to the higher levels in reading and in mathematics.
- The attainment of disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 is similar to other pupils nationally in all core subjects but slightly below other pupils in the school. Their progress is often greater than for other pupils nationally and in the school.
- Pupils with special educational needs make good progress from their different starting points because they are well supported by skilful additional adults and their teachers. Their learning is closely checked and teaching is well matched to their abilities.

The early years provision is good

- Reception children come from a number of different early years settings and some have not been to nursery before. By the time they enter Year 1 most children, including disadvantaged children and those with special educational needs have made good progress from their individual starting points. Many of the children have reached a good level of development which prepares them well for their learning in Key Stage 1.
- Transition from home to Reception is good because the staff make home visits to find out where children are in their learning so that they can plan ahead with new learning before they arrive at the school. This allows children to make a rapid start and allows the school to tackle any gaps in children's learning.
- The leadership and management of the early years are good. The new coordinator works effectively with her team to carefully plan children's learning. They have a clear understanding of the strengths and areas of weakness in provision and act quickly to address any emerging issues.
- There is a very robust system to check on and record children's progress. Key developments in the seven areas of learning are recorded electronically which builds towards a profile of each child's achievement. A recent parents meeting was successful in encouraging them to log onto the website to view their child's progress and importantly to contribute to their learning profile.

- Communication between parents and the school is good. Parents report that their children enjoy coming to school and are learning quickly. One parent expressed her satisfaction and said 'This is a very friendly school where teachers are always willing to listen to any concerns.'
- The quality of teaching in the early years is good because teachers know their children. Work is carefully planned, includes focused activities and is closely matched to children's learning needs. There is a stimulating indoor learning environment which excites curiosity and supports them to explore their world.
- The development of literacy, numeracy and communication skills is an important part of the early year's curriculum. Children listen well and enjoy looking at books and writing the letters sounds make. They know that authors write books and are able to recall key events in a story. They recognise rhyming words and enjoy counting games. They understand the routines of the classroom. At other times they are given the freedom to make choices and to take the lead in some purposeful play. They have fun experimenting with sand and water, dressing up or playing with their friends in the den. There are well established attitudes to learning and behaviour which helps them to learn and to enjoy school.
- Opportunities to explore the world outside the classroom are more limited because the outside learning environment has been underdeveloped. This reduces the times when they can be outside to run around and to improve their physical and expressive skills and their understanding of the world.
- The early years environment is a safe place for children to learn because adults are trained well to keep children safe.

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	139356
Local authority	Kirklees
Inspection number	447996

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	182
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dan Spencer
Principal	Nadia Hannam
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected as an academy
Telephone number	01924 471372
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