

# Lea Forest Academy

Hurstcroft Road, Kitts Green, Birmingham, B33 9RD

**Inspection dates** 11–12 November 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b> <b>3</b>
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	Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- The quality of teaching varies too much. Consequently, pupils in Years 3 to 6 do not learn consistently well and should be making better progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Many pupils have not been taught to use phonics (knowledge about letters and the sounds they make) well enough. This means they struggle to read confidently or to spell words correctly.
- Gaps in achievement between different groups of pupils remain. Leaders and teachers do not focus sufficiently on whether or not gaps in each class are closing quickly enough.

### The school has the following strengths

- Leaders, including governors, have brought about rapid and necessary improvement to the quality of teaching through correctly identifying weaknesses, implementing effective systems to manage the performance of teachers and arranging high quality training and advice. As a result, pupils' achievement is improving.
- Teachers keep a close check on how well pupils' skills are improving. As a result, more pupils are now making good progress than when the academy opened. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 now make consistently good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Early Years provision is now good. It has improved significantly since the academy opened because leaders acted swiftly and decisively to tackle weaknesses. Children in the Nursery and Reception classes make good progress because of consistently effective teaching.
- The academy provides exciting learning experiences and opportunities for pupils to explore, innovate and be creative within a wide range of different subjects.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. Pupils are kind to each other and keen to learn. They enjoy having friends from many different cultures and show a genuine interest in others' beliefs.
- Staff work hard to ensure that pupils feel safe. The academy sponsor and academy leaders have established effective systems for identifying and managing potential risks to pupils' welfare and safety.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in 24 lessons. Many of these visits were conducted jointly with senior academy leaders. While visiting lessons, inspectors looked at the work in pupils' books and talked to pupils about their learning. They also carried out a short walk around the academy to observe the teaching of phonics.
- Two groups of pupils from Years 4, 5 and 6 accompanied inspectors around the academy to help them gather information about: the academy's curriculum; the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; and pupils' behaviour and safety.
- In addition to looking at pupils' books during lesson observations, inspectors reviewed pupils' work with the deputy headteacher and heard some pupils read. They also observed playtime and lunchtime activities.
- Meetings were held with: the headteacher and executive headteacher; other senior staff; staff with responsibility for leading different subjects and year groups; four members of the governing body; a group of teachers and teaching assistants; and the regional director for education from the Academies Enterprise Trust (AET), which is the academy's sponsor. Inspectors spoke informally with other members of staff and pupils as they moved around the academy.
- There were insufficient responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) to allow inspectors to view the results. Inspectors took account of the academy's survey of parents' views and a telephone call made by a parent during the inspection. They spoke informally to parents as they collected their children at the end of the day. The 35 questionnaires submitted by members of staff were considered.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation which included: the academy's checks on how well it is doing and plans for improvement; evidence about how teachers are set targets to improve pupils' progress; records of observations of the quality of teaching; minutes of meetings of the governing body; the academy's information about pupils' progress over time; and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

## Inspection team

Sandra Hayes, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Additional Inspector

John Croghan

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The academy opened on 1 December 2012. It is one of a chain of academies sponsored by the Academies Enterprise Trust (AET).
- It is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs (a little over one in six) is above average.
- Almost three-quarters of the pupils are disadvantaged and eligible for support through the pupil premium (additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or in care). This is well above the national average.
- Just under half of the pupils are of White British heritage. Around one in five pupils are of Pakistani origin. Almost a quarter speak English as an additional language.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage is made up of a full-time Nursery class for three- and four-year olds and two full-time Reception classes.
- The provisional 2014 end of Key Stage 2 test results show that the academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Since the academy opened, there has been a high turnover of staff, including the headteacher. The current head of school was appointed deputy headteacher and became acting headteacher in February 2014. She was appointed as permanent head of school in June 2014.
- The headteacher is supported by an executive headteacher, who is also the executive headteacher of Topcliffe Primary School in Castle Vale, Birmingham and Beacon Academy in Loughborough.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching to ensure all groups of pupils, particularly in Years 3 to 6, achieve well in all subjects by making sure that all teachers:
  - set work for pupils that is neither too hard nor too easy, particularly for the most able
  - always insist upon high quality and quantity of work
  - give precise guidance to pupils of all abilities on how to improve particular pieces of work
  - ensure pupils act upon this advice and apply their skills in future work
  - ensure pupils understand how their current work builds on what they already know and leads to the new skills they will soon be learning
  - check how well pupils are learning in lessons and move them on to harder work as soon as they are ready, so that pupils do not spend time repeating what they can already do.
- Ensure all pupils are able to use knowledge about phonics to read and spell new words confidently by:
  - effectively implementing a systematic approach to teaching letters and the sounds they make
  - keeping a close check on what sounds pupils know and which ones they do not
  - acting quickly to close gaps in pupils' knowledge when these are identified
  - ensuring teachers and teaching assistants in Key Stage 2 are skilled in teaching phonics to older pupils whose skills are weak.
- Speed up the rate at which gaps in achievement close between different groups of learners by:
  - using information about children's attainment when they enter the Early Years Foundation Stage and when they leave the Reception Year to track if pupils are achieving well enough
  - interpreting data about the attainment and progress of different groups of pupils in each class more strategically, so leaders can check that identified gaps between groups are closing rapidly.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- Leaders have quickly established a climate where all staff are ambitious for pupils to enjoy coming to the academy and to succeed. There is a strong sense of teamwork. Staff say leaders have turned the academy into a place where they enjoy working. They appreciate leaders' commitment to the welfare of pupils and staff and to the tackling of any discrimination; in return, staff have worked very hard to adopt new ways of working, which have had a positive effect on pupils' behaviour and achievement. Equality of opportunity is promoted well.
- Shortly after the academy opened, the academy sponsor identified that there were significant weaknesses in all aspects of the academy's work. They commissioned an external review which concluded that the quality of education and the pupils' behaviour and safety were inadequate. In response, the current leadership structure was quickly established. This leadership team, supported by the sponsor, has effectively tackled the weaknesses. As a result, pupils' behaviour and safety, and the Early Years provision, are now good and the quality of teaching is improving rapidly.
- Senior leaders have built an accurate view of the quality of teaching by regularly visiting classrooms, checking teachers' planning and looking at the work in pupils' books. Other leaders and subject leaders contribute well to this process by checking specific aspects of teaching. After each of these checks, they identify what the teacher is doing well and discuss with the teacher anything that needs to improve.
- Teachers value this approach, saying they feel well-supported to improve their practice. Well-focused training and advice are provided to help teachers make the identified improvement and a programme of coaching is put in place to ensure that teachers are able to act on the advice given. Leaders are rigorous in checking that these actions have had the desired impact and take appropriate action if not. This is why teaching is improving rapidly.
- Leaders have established a rigorous system of appraisal, which holds teachers to account for pupils' achievement. Teachers have embraced this process and accept responsibility for taking the necessary actions to achieve their performance targets. Pupil progress meetings are held frequently to monitor whether teachers' performance is having a positive impact on pupils' achievement.
- Although senior leaders use assessment data about pupils' progress and teachers' performance to inform their judgements about individual teachers, they do not analyse this information sharply enough to gauge how well gaps between the achievement of different groups of pupils are closing. This means there is a limited strategic overview of pupils' attainment gaps in some classes. As a consequence, gaps of achievement between pupils in some classes are closing less rapidly than in others.
- Leaders have used the pupil premium funding effectively to improve the achievement of disadvantaged pupils by providing smaller teaching groups, additional support for specific learning needs and a range of quality resources to support learning in school and at home. While these pupils have not caught up with others, the overall gap has reduced considerably since the academy opened.
- Parents are pleased with the improvements in pupils' behaviour and learning. The academy's surveys show most parents are positive about the way the academy is led and managed. This view was echoed by those spoken to during the inspection and confirmed by inspection evidence.
- The primary school sports funding is used well. The sports coaches have helped pupils to develop positive attitudes to a range of sporting activities and to understand the importance of keeping healthy. Training for teaching assistants has helped them ensure that pupils are more active at lunchtimes and use the high quality equipment creatively.
- The deputy headteacher responsible for the academy's curriculum has been effective in helping teachers implement an innovative approach to organising learning experiences. The units of work provide a broad range of interesting subjects, which support pupils in developing basic skills as well as in being expressive

and creative. The curriculum provides meaningful opportunities for pupils to develop appreciation of a range of cultures and faiths and to understand about British society and its values.

- The regional director from AET has provided a good balance between support and challenge to the academy. In addition, regular review days involving the regional director, an external consultant, a peer headteacher from another academy in the chain and academy leaders help to challenge and validate the academy's self-evaluation. These events are also used by the regional director to evaluate the impact of support from AET and revise the package as necessary. Leaders work effectively with other academies in the chain to gauge how successful they are when introducing new ways of assessing pupils' progress without attainment levels. These changes are necessary as the academy, like other schools nationally, prepare for changes to the way pupils will be assessed in the future.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governance has been effective in securing improvement since the academy opened. Governors have made good appointments to key leadership posts and have then challenged and supported those leaders to eradicate inadequate teaching and to secure improvements in pupils' behaviour and safety.
  - Governors have an accurate view of where remaining weaknesses continue and have a clear view of how underperformance will be tackled. They have clear criteria by which to determine teachers' pay progression.
  - Governing body minutes indicate governors routinely use data about pupils' performance to challenge leaders about achievement and to evaluate the impact of funding decisions. For example, governors took the decision not to continue with a particular approach to accelerating some pupils' progress in mathematics because achievement data indicated it had not made sufficient difference to their learning. Governors know how pupil premium funding is spent and set an expectation that it will make a difference to the achievement of disadvantaged pupils.
  - Governors work well with academy leaders to ensure safeguarding requirements are met. Policies are thorough and effectively implemented. Governors are well informed about their responsibility to ensure pupils are kept safe from the dangers of radicalisation and have a strategy to respond if they suspected it is happening. They have ensured all staff share this understanding and are aware of potential warning signs.

## **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are good

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are interested in learning. They enjoy being challenged because they are confident that adults will help them succeed. They are keen to get on in lessons, so respond swiftly to instructions, wasting little time in settling down to listen to the teacher or moving to the next activity.
- They are confident to discuss their ideas and feel secure talking about difficulties or concerns because they trust adults and other pupils alike to be kind. Relationships are based on genuine respect and liking for one another. Pupils say they feel privileged to mix with people from many different cultures and genuinely enjoy learning about the different faiths within their friendship groups.
- Pupils' positive attitudes and behaviour contribute greatly to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This was exemplified by the moving experience shared when the whole school assembled on the playground to mark a one-minute silence to commemorate Armistice Day. Pupils from Nursery to Year 6 displayed tremendous empathy and exemplary behaviour.
- The well-managed log of unacceptable behaviour incidents shows the positive impact of the academy's systems for promoting good behaviour. Incidents have reduced notably. These logs show that individual pupils are well supported to develop strategies to help them manage their own behaviour.
- Pupils demonstrate genuine intolerance of racism or discrimination. Consequently, they report there is very little bullying. None spoken to was aware of it happening. Nevertheless, pupils know who to talk to if they are worried. They say all adults take their concerns seriously and sort problems out.

- Pupils of all ages enjoy taking responsibility and do so reliably, such as when they show visitors around the academy. They have limited opportunities to take a similar degree of responsibility for their own learning and so do not demonstrate how well they can do this. This is why behaviour is not quite outstanding.

### Safety

- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Staff are suitably trained; they are vigilant to the possible signs of extremist behaviour and alert to cultural practices that may put pupils at risk of potential harm, such as female genital mutilation. Staff follow up safeguarding-related concerns rigorously.
- Staff are visibly present at all school entrances at the start and end of the academy's day. They use this time to welcome pupils warmly, talk to parents about any issues and be alert to any concerns about pupils' well-being.
- Pupils confirm they feel safe in the academy. They say teachers help them know how to stay safe in different situations and gave the example of the display board which reminds them what to do to protect themselves when using the internet.
- The senior learning mentor and inclusion manager work well together to ensure a strong network of support is in place for pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. They keep other staff well informed about any concerns and what is being done for these pupils.
- Leaders have worked intensively to improve pupils' attendance since the academy opened. The impact of the work of the senior learning mentor is impressive. The attendance of almost every pupil with whom she works has improved. Overall, attendance is broadly in line with national figures. Nevertheless, improvement in attendance has levelled off recently. This is the reason why safety is not judged to be outstanding.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Previous weaknesses in teaching and assessment, frequent changes in class teachers and high levels of teacher absence have affected pupils' achievement over time. Teaching is improving rapidly, but it is not yet consistently good.
- Teachers do not always expect pupils to work hard enough in lessons. Where this happens, it limits the progress pupils make. Some of the worksheets pupils use in writing lessons limit the amount of work they can do because there is not enough room for them to write everything they want.
- Teachers do not sufficiently challenge the more able pupils. Work set is sometimes too easy for these pupils. Teachers do not always move pupils on to harder work soon enough if they are finding the task too easy in lessons. This happens quite often in mathematics lessons so, while standards have risen since the academy opened, more pupils could reach the higher levels in national mathematics tests.
- Pupils have not developed secure phonics skills because teachers have not taught these systematically or tracked pupils' learning to identify which sounds and letters they know, and which they do not. Consequently, teaching has not equipped many pupils well enough with the skills they need to read confidently. Younger pupils find it hard to attempt new words. While older pupils say they like books and enjoy using the library, many struggle to decode words and so they lose the sense of what they are reading.
- Teachers set pupils targets intended to build on what they can do and show them what skills they need to learn next. However, these targets are not always helpful because many pupils do not understand what they have to do to achieve them or whether they have been successful. This is because some teachers do not systematically plan opportunities for pupils to practise these target skills or show pupils where they have achieved targets in their work.
- Teachers put a great deal of effort into marking pupils' work. They show pupils what they have done well

and give advice on how to improve. For some pupils this is making a difference to their achievement. This is not so for all pupils. Some teachers do not give precise enough guidance to pupils on how to improve a particular piece of work. Comments are sometimes too general for some pupils to know exactly what they need to do. Sometimes, good advice does not lead to improvement because pupils do not act on it. In some books, pupils have responded to the teacher's comment and made the expected improvement, yet they did not go on to apply the improved skill in future pieces of work. Generally, teachers' marking is more effective in mathematics than in writing.

- Relationships between adults and pupils in lessons are strong and supportive. Pupils are keen to take risks and are happy to be challenged. Pupils strive to please and enjoy the praise they receive when they succeed.
- High quality training has led to improvements in the teaching of writing. Pupils are enjoying the new approaches and are confident to have a go at writing tasks. Year 2 pupils talked enthusiastically about how they map out the key events in a story and Year 5 pupils were observed working happily together to describe a setting using language cleverly to indicate it was a historical story.
- Teaching assistants make a good contribution to learning by working effectively with groups of pupils in lessons and in additional teaching sessions for pupils who are struggling with particular aspects of learning.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good because teachers work closely together across classes to share information about what children can do and plan interesting and challenging experiences which help them explore, discover new things and practise skills effectively.

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- The 2014 national assessments for Year 6 indicate that standards were below average in mathematics and well below average in reading and writing. Overall, pupils' scores were lower than when the academy opened. This is the result of the instability in the quality of teaching experienced by these pupils prior to the opening of the academy.
- There was a similar picture in Year 2, where pupils' attainment was well below average in reading and writing and only a little higher in mathematics. This represented a slight improvement in standards from the point at which the academy opened.
- The proportion of pupils in Year 1 who met the expected standard in the national check on phonics was below that in most schools, despite a rise from when the academy opened. This is why many younger pupils struggle to read accurately.
- The results of the 2014 Key Stage 2 national tests showed that the most able pupils achieved the expected Level 5 in reading, but that none attained a higher level. These pupils made significantly better progress in mathematics and some exceeded the level expected of them. Similar pupils did not make the expected rate of progress across Years 3 to 6 in writing. Inspection evidence indicates the most able pupils currently in the school are not being challenged enough in lessons, including those for reading, writing and mathematics.
- All the national measures from this year's invalidated test results show gaps between the attainment of significant groups across the academy and other groups of pupils. Although some of these gaps remain they are starting to close and pupils' achievement is improving because leaders are improving the quality and consistency of teaching and learning across classes.
- The achievement gaps between boys and girls; White British pupils and other ethnic groups; as well as those that exist between pupils who speak English as a first language and those for whom English is an additional language have narrowed since the academy opened. For example, the attainment of pupils who speak English as an additional language improved in both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. Although school data indicate many of these gaps are closing, some are not closing quickly enough.

- Overall, Year 6 pupils in 2014 had made less progress in reading since the end of Year 2 than pupils in other schools. Nevertheless, most made at least the progress expected of them and this marked an improvement compared to previous years. Their progress was similar to other schools in writing and they made significantly better progress in mathematics than pupils in other schools.
- Disadvantaged pupils made less progress in reading across Key Stage 2 than non-disadvantaged pupils in other schools. However, they made more progress than other pupils nationally in writing and mathematics. Test results show that disadvantaged pupils were around two terms behind other pupils in the academy in mathematics and around one-and-a-half terms in reading. There was little difference in writing. Compared with other pupils in all schools, disadvantaged pupils were two-and-a-half terms behind in mathematics and just over a year behind in reading and writing. These gaps were considerably less than when the academy opened.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs benefit from the extra help they receive. They make good progress in small group teaching sessions. In lessons, their progress mirrors that of other pupils and so there are still differences in the attainment of boys and girls and between disadvantaged and other pupils.
- Shortly after the academy opened, leaders identified that the assessment of children's skills on entry to Nursery and Reception in 2013 had not been accurate. Therefore, measures of children's progress since the academy opened are tentative. Assessments of what children could do at the end of the Reception Year in 2014 were reliable and confirmed that just under a half had reached a good level of development. Observations in this inspection indicate that children enter the Nursery and Reception classes with skills that are very low for their age, particularly in relation to reading and writing. Children who are currently in the Early Years Foundation Stage are making rapid progress from these starting points.

### **The early years provision** is good

- The quality of education provided in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. This is because teaching is consistently good and so children achieve well.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work as a close team to make sure children are safe and very well cared for. Children's behaviour is good. They share equipment, take turns and genuinely enjoy playing together.
- Teachers plan activities that appeal to children's interests and successfully extend their learning. This is particularly effective because teachers and teaching assistants work very well together to capture evidence of what children can do and then skilfully plan learning activities using this information.
- When a new leader joined the Early Years Foundation Stage in January 2014, she identified that the baseline assessments carried out in 2013 were inaccurate. This has made it difficult for the academy to demonstrate the progress made by children over the previous year. All children currently in the Nursery and Reception classes are making good progress from very low starting points.
- The children who left the Reception classes in 2014 were not well prepared for Year 1 because half of them had not reached a good level of development. This is because the quality of teaching and the leadership in the Early Years had previously been inadequate. Since the new leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage has been in post, provision has improved markedly. As a result, the current cohort of children is on track to be ready for Year 1 by the end of the July.



## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	139003
<b>Local authority</b>	Birmingham
<b>Inspection number</b>	440074

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	456
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Peter Armitage
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ian Lowe (Executive Headteacher) and Hilary Thompson (Headteacher)
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	0121 6753985
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