

Blakenall Heath Junior School

Field Road, Walsall, WS3 3JF

Inspection dates 8–9 January 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Over the last few years the achievement of pupils at the end of Year 6 has been too low in reading, writing and mathematics.
- In 2014 not enough pupils achieved in line with national averages. Expected targets were only met in writing.
- Recent improvements in the quality of teaching have yet to deliver sustained improvements in pupils' achievement.
- Teachers have not yet fully developed the skills to deliver high-quality lessons in mathematics.
- Pupils' basic skills are not developed quickly enough, especially in mathematics.
- Learning activities do not always sufficiently challenge the most able pupils so they can achieve at the highest levels.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils are beginning to make more rapid progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Careful marking of pupils' books provides pupils with clear written feedback. Pupils respond well, which helps them to improve further.
- Members of the school's leadership, including governors, provide good support to the headteacher in her efforts to improve the quality of teaching and raise achievement.
- The headteacher has been very effective in changing the culture and ethos of the school. Staff now have greater expectations of what pupils should achieve.
- Pupils behave well and have good attitudes to learning. The school ensures they feel safe and takes steps to foster good relationships across the school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed learning in 15 lessons, and observed two assemblies.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils and senior leaders. The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with the Chair of the Governing Body and had a meeting with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspection team listened to pupils from Year 3 and Year 6 read and scrutinised samples of pupils' workbooks.
- The inspectors examined a wide range of documents, including the school's information on pupils' recent progress. They also looked at planning and documentation about checks on teaching, and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding arrangements.
- Inspectors took into account five responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and talked with parents dropping their children off at school. The views of staff were considered through the 27 staff questionnaires.

Inspection team

David Hogg, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Jonathan Keay

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school. All pupils attend full-time.
- Nearly all pupils are from a White British background.
- Currently the proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported on the school roll is over 15% of those who attend. This is much higher than the national average.
- Over 80% of pupils in the school are supported by the pupil premium. This is much higher than is found in most schools. The pupil premium is funding provided to give extra support to those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and to children who are looked after.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The headteacher has led the school since January 2014, previously having been the deputy headteacher for number of years. The deputy headteacher joined in May 2014.
- The school has undergone a significant period of staff turnover since the last inspection, especially in the last two years.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that teachers:
 - provide opportunities for pupils to practise their mathematical skills across the range of other subject areas so that they progress more quickly through more regular use and application of mathematics
 - stretch the most able pupils to achieve their potential by planning activities that provide them with appropriate levels of challenge
 - share those aspects of good practice that are evident within the school to improve the overall quality of teaching, particularly in mathematics.
- Raise achievement of all groups of pupils, including the most able, by ensuring that their basic skills, particularly in mathematics, are developed earlier and applied more quickly.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The senior leadership team has been effective in improving the quality of teaching in the school. As a result, pupils are now making greater progress than they have in the past in reading, writing and mathematics. The headteacher has overseen a change in the school culture, with staff now having much higher expectations of what pupils can achieve. There is a determined effort by school leaders at all levels to move the school forward.
- The school has seen a high turnover of staff over the last 12 months. Many new teachers have recently joined the school, and they have received good guidance and training from the senior leaders. They have visited an outstanding school on a number of occasions to develop their teaching skills further. This work has been key to accelerating the progress pupils make.
- The local authority has provided good support to the school. The local authority advisor has worked closely with the school, helping the senior leaders secure the necessary improvements and challenging the school when necessary. Training for governors has given the governing body a much clearer understanding of the role they must play in holding the school to account.
- The school has a strong middle leadership team. They have clear responsibilities in their subject areas, review the work of teachers in the classroom, and check the progress pupils make as a result. Two middle leaders have been given the responsibility of checking the progress of disadvantaged pupils. Their work has been highly effective in bringing about improvements in the support for this group of pupils. Rigorous assessments have identified areas for development and the subsequent interventions have begun to have a positive impact on the progress rates of targeted pupils. The progress of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is also followed carefully to ensure all pupils have an equal opportunity to succeed and achieve well.
- The school monitors the quality of teaching closely. The effectiveness of teaching is used as evidence as to whether teachers have met their own targets. Progress towards these targets is used to help make decisions about promotion opportunities for teachers or further salary advancement.
- The programme of learning opportunities across the school is well organised. Detailed plans set out what pupils will learn throughout the year. Activities are designed to widen pupils' experiences, with visits to places of interest such as the local arts centre. The pupils' research on the Second World War is not complete without a visit to the school's own original underground air raid shelter.
- The school promotes and encourages the social, moral, spiritual and cultural development of the pupils very well. Pupils are valued as individuals and high expectations of what they can achieve are promoted through the 'You Can Do It' scheme. Older pupils take on responsibility and act as buddies to the younger ones. The school works hard to foster good relationships, and this is evident in the way the pupils work well with all of the adults in school. The school helps pupils to understand the values within a modern democratic Britain; for example, members of the school council recently visited the council chambers and met with the mayor, gaining a useful insight into how local government works. The school provides opportunities for pupils to learn about the beliefs and values of other faiths. Discrimination in any form is tackled rigorously.
- The school makes good use of the additional primary sports premium funding. Staff work alongside a professional coach to develop their skills in delivering high-quality physical education lessons. The sports coach also organises playground activities for the pupils to stay active and enjoy physical exercise. The school now is able to provide more sporting activities for pupils to take part in and compete against other schools.
- Parents feel positive about the school and speak highly of the staff. They highlighted the approachability of the headteacher and the deputy headteacher. Parents feel the school addresses any problems very quickly and effectively.
- The child protection and safeguarding arrangements in the school are robust and meet statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body now takes a more active role in the school. Governors are knowledgeable about the strengths of the school and the aspects that still need to be improved. They hold the school leaders to greater account for how well the pupils are achieving. For example, they are developing their skills in analysing information on the progress pupils make, including the progress of specific groups within the school, so they can compare it with national averages. Governors visit the school regularly and have taken an active role in the improvement meetings over the last two years. Through meetings with key members of staff and reports from the headteacher they have a good awareness of the quality of

teaching in the school. They understand how the school is working to tackle underachievement. Governors understand the links between the achievement of the pupils and the opportunities for salary advancement and promotion for staff. They examine the financial position of the school closely. They review carefully that safeguarding and child protection systems meet the required standards and that pupils are well cared for when in school.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. As a result of their positive attitudes in lessons, more pupils are now making better-than-expected progress than in the past. Pupils take care in the presentation of their work and are proud of their achievements.
- Pupils are polite, courteous and well mannered. They move around the school sensibly. During break-times they play well together. Pupils say that incidents of unkindness are very rare. They have a good understanding of what bullying is, but do not feel that it is an issue in school.
- Pupils enjoy the learning activities in class. When asked, most subjects emerged as someone's particular favourite. They say their teachers help them learn interesting new things. They demonstrate a good range of skills when working together in groups or when tackling tasks on their own without the close supervision of an adult.
- The school makes a great effort to celebrate the pupils' achievements in assemblies. The pupils appreciate the system of providing rewards for both good work and having positive attitudes in class.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say that teachers take good care of them and keep them safe. Pupils are taught about road safety, and older pupils are provided with the opportunity to take a cycling proficiency training course.
- Pupils have a good understanding of why they must be careful when using social media sites or playing games online. Even younger pupils can explain the potential dangers of sharing too much information.
- Attendance is a little above the national average. It has improved over the last few years. The school works very hard with families to raise their understanding of why good attendance is so important.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching has not been good enough. In the past, pupils have not made sufficient progress from their starting points in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils do not make the progress they are capable of in mathematics because they do not have enough chances to practise and use their mathematical understanding outside numeracy lessons. They do have opportunities to develop their creative writing skills in other subject areas, such as history, which have contributed to more recent general improvements across the school.
- The tasks provided by teachers do not always challenge the most able pupils or help to develop their skills sufficiently to achieve at the highest levels. Teachers have more recently developed higher expectations of what pupils, generally, can achieve. They are currently using the information gathered on the progress of different groups of pupils well, and planning learning activities that are much better matched to the abilities of the pupils. As a result, the learning taking place in lessons has much improved.
- Pupils' books are marked carefully and the comments teachers write provide pupils with clear written feedback on how to improve their work further. Teachers give pupils opportunities to make the necessary corrections and improve their skills further.
- Through well-targeted training and support for individual teachers, the quality of teaching has improved more recently. Although it still needs to improve, it is now more effective. A greater proportion of pupils in each year group is making at least expected, or better, progress than has been seen in the past.

The achievement of pupils**requires improvement**

- The achievement of pupils has been too low. Attainment at the end of Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics has been consistently below national averages for several years.
- The changes the new headteacher brought about in 2013 quickly began to improve the effectiveness of teaching in the school and the amount of progress pupils made rose accordingly. The information the school held for pupils in Year 6 in 2014 indicated that their achievement would be in line with national averages. However, pupils only met their targets in writing.
- The school has identified weaknesses in pupils' basic skills, particularly in mathematics. Pupils are not confident with their times-tables or calculating answers in their heads. The school has developed more focused teaching to develop pupils' understanding, but the full impact of this work is has yet to be seen.
- The school has invested resources in producing a high-quality library that pupils visit regularly each week. Pupils say they read each day in school and also more frequently now at home. By the time they leave in Year 6, pupils read with accuracy and improving fluency.
- Information the school holds indicates that the proportion of pupils currently making at least expected progress is high. The proportion of pupils making good progress increases as the pupils move up through the school. The quality of written work seen in books during the inspection supports the school's own assessments.
- There is a very high proportion of disadvantaged pupils in all year groups. The school works very effectively to ensure any gaps in their skills and understanding, compared with other pupils, are closing. In 2014, disadvantaged pupils lagged behind other pupils in school by over three terms in reading, one term in mathematics and less than half a term in writing. When compared with other pupils nationally they are about four terms behind in reading and mathematics, and two terms behind in writing. The school's own information shows that over the last two years, and so far this year, disadvantaged pupils are making better progress than other pupils in school.
- The school closely checks the progress made by disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. Support in class and in small-group work enables them to make generally expected progress that is broadly in line with that of other pupils in school.
- The number of most able pupils in school historically has been low. The school has in the past worked to accelerate their progress, but has not been successful in ensuring the most able achieve at the highest levels. The school now recognises that some of them may develop later and is providing greater challenge for these pupils, especially in Year 6. The school is taking action to ensure the most able pupils lower down the school also make more rapid progress. The information the school holds shows that, as a result, the most able pupils are now making more rapid progress than other pupils.

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	104144
Local authority	Walsall
Inspection number	453458

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	208
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sukhy Somal
Headteacher	Kim Baker
Date of previous school inspection	10–11 January 2013
Telephone number	01922 710145
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