

Mere Green Primary School

Mere Green Road, Sutton Coldfield, B75 5BL

Inspection dates 13–14 January 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Outstanding 1
Leadership and management	Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Early years provision	Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- The academy is led with great skill and ambition by the headteacher. She is strongly supported by a high-quality team of senior leaders, subject leaders and staff.
- Leaders, including governors, have made outstanding contributions to the sustained and significant improvements in teaching and pupils' achievement.
- The governing body plays a skilful role in the successful progress of the academy. Governors manage the budget expertly, and hold the headteacher and other leaders to account robustly.
- Pupils' behaviour is excellent because they have very positive attitudes to learning. They respect and care about each other exceptionally well. Their attendance has improved considerably since the school converted to an academy.
- Pupils are very well cared for, and the provision for their safety is exemplary.
- Teaching throughout the academy, including the Early Years, is outstanding. Teachers have high expectations, and a close knowledge of the progress and specific learning needs of all pupils. The high challenge to pupils of all abilities is common in all years.
- Pupils' achievement is good and improving rapidly. Disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs, pupils with speech and language difficulties, disadvantaged pupils, and the most-able pupils have made exceptional progress in the last year and a half.
- Children make an excellent start to their education in the Nursery and Reception classes, which are expertly managed.
- The academy has benefited greatly from its entry into the Arthur Terry Learning Partnership. Additional learning resources, teaching and leadership expertise, and preparation of pupils for the future have all enhanced the academy's development.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 14 lessons. Ten of these were seen jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- Meetings were held with pupils, the headteacher, other staff with leadership responsibilities, the executive headteacher of the academy learning partnership, and three governors.
- 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 44 responses to Parent View, the online questionnaire for parents. Inspectors considered these and also spoke to a number of parents informally during the inspection. The inspectors considered the 19 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- A range of documentation was examined, including the academy's self-evaluation and development plan, and analysis of pupils' achievement and progress. Safeguarding arrangements, school policies, and records of checks made by leaders on the quality of teaching were also examined.

Inspection team

Rodney Braithwaite, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Linda Bartlett

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The academy is slightly smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Mere Green Primary school converted to become an academy school in April 2013. When its predecessor school, Mere Green Primary, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be requiring improvement.
- The school joined the Arthur Terry Learning Partnership. This is a multi-academy partnership consisting of three high schools and four primary schools, all within a few miles of each other in North Birmingham.
- The academy has a Nursery which children attend part-time, a Reception class where children attend full-time, and eight other classes. There are two classes in Years 2, 3 and 6, and one in each of the other years.
- Almost two thirds of the pupils are White British, the remainder coming from a range of ethnic heritages. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language, about 1 in 10 pupils, is below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, about a quarter, is above average.
- The school has a Speech, Language and Communication Base, which is accessed at present by 18 pupils from North Birmingham.
- About 40% of pupils, above the national average, are disadvantaged and supported by the pupil premium. The pupil premium is additional government funding for pupils who are looked after or known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school has a higher than average turnover of pupils starting at times other than the start of the school year.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- In addition to its links with other partnership academies, the academy has a range of other links to other primary schools in the local cluster.
- The academy has a much higher than average turnover of pupils starting or leaving at times other than entry into the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- The academy provides a breakfast club. There is also a privately run after-school club on the school site. In addition, the academy provides a number of after-school activities and sports clubs.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that pupils take more care with the presentation of their work, and understand the importance of setting work out sufficiently accurately so that mistakes are avoided.
- Encourage pupils to respond more consistently to teachers' written comments on their work in books.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher leads the academy with great skill and determination. Her high aspirations for the academy are enthusiastically shared by a multi-skilled senior team of leaders and a highly motivated staff. They have driven increasingly effective improvement in the attainment and achievement of all pupils in reading, writing and especially mathematics. The management of the Early Years Foundation Stage is ensuring that children have outstanding teaching in a stimulating environment, and that they are being very well-prepared for their future in the main school. Additionally, academy leaders have also shown considerable success in developing the academy as a beacon and resource of the local community.
- The academy's leadership and management have gained considerably from joining the Arthur Terry Learning Partnership, particularly in the skilled leadership and availability of other local partner headteachers and staff.
- Senior leaders have led the monitoring of teaching and learning very effectively. This has helped considerably in the successful development of teachers' skills. In addition, continuous training of exceptional quality has enhanced the skills of all staff. The outcome has been a marked and sustained improvement in pupils' achievement and in teaching since the academy was created.
- The leaders have driven many improvements in the last eighteen months. These include the rise in achievement of pupils, the tracking of pupils' progress, the provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, and the provision for disadvantaged pupils and the most-able pupils. Pupils' attendance and behaviour have also shown significant improvement.
- Subject and other leaders make excellent contributions, especially to the development of the new curriculum. The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are outstanding, enabling these children to make excellent progress.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the school's performance. They are especially skilled in acting quickly to remedy identified areas of weakness.
- Leaders have a positive and accurate view of the academy's performance. Working closely with the governors and Learning Partnership, they have produced a detailed five-year development programme, which is both challenging and ambitious.
- The new curriculum is having a very positive impact upon pupils' learning, achievement and preparation for the future. It makes a powerful contribution to the outstanding promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. This is because the Learning Partnership's extensive additional resources and specialist teaching are giving pupils much wider learning opportunities across a range of subjects. Leaders have designed the new curriculum very specifically for the needs of the academy's pupils, placing a strong emphasis on the promotion of British values such as the rule of law and the importance of democracy.
- The additional sports funding is being used effectively to develop greater interest among pupils, especially older girls, in a variety of activities. Pupils join in with increasing success in competitions and games with other schools. They have links with a local football team, and a team from Year 3 now plays in a Sunday league. The use of specialist coaches from the partnership is benefiting teaching skills throughout the academy.
- The academy's promotion of equal opportunities and inclusion is outstanding, giving every pupil opportunities to do their best at all times. Leaders have been recognised for their work by the Department for Education. The academy tolerates no discrimination in the academy, and pupils are polite, enthusiastic, hard-working and proud of their achievements.
- The academy has a strong partnership with parents, nearly all of whom strongly approve of all aspects of

the academy's provision. Parents appreciate the openness of the academy and the approachability of staff and leaders.

■ The governance of the school:

- The new governing body has rapidly developed its knowledge of the academy. All governors make significant contributions to the leadership and management of the academy. The governor overseeing the budget, for example, has a wide range of experience and expertise in financial management. This has helped the academy to have a healthy budget instead of a deficit when converting.
- Governors have undertaken much training which has enhanced their knowledge of school management, and have developed close links with all members of staff. They are very active on a regular basis in the academy. They are confident in challenging senior leaders, which they do regularly.
- Governors have developed good skills in analysing the academy's performance accurately. They also exercise rigorous control of the budget, ensuring that the academy gets the resources it needs; for example, new computers and specialist teachers.
- The governing body has an excellent knowledge of the quality of teaching. This helps them in their decisions on pay awards for teachers, based upon the performance targets of their pupils.
- Governors monitor the spending of funding for disadvantaged pupils very closely, and compare their progress with that of other pupils. A governor also ensures that the spending of the sports fund is fully understood by the governing body, who are also advised on its effectiveness in improving pupils' opportunities for participating in sport, and knowing how to lead a healthy lifestyle.
- The governing body ensures that safeguarding meets national requirements. All academy policies, especially concerning child protection, are regularly monitored and fully in place.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils have enthusiastic attitudes to learning, and are thriving on the challenges of their new curriculum. They especially enjoy the very challenging activities in science and mathematics, and other opportunities to learn French and Spanish. Pupils are particularly effective when working with each other in pairs or larger groups. As they get older, many show considerable capability in staying on task when working on their own.
- Pupils talk avidly about their many learning experiences, such as studying the digestive system, a residential trip to Aberdovey, and a wide variety of other educational trips, including to the vast local Sutton Park. Pupils also mentioned their trip to France, although appearing to be amazed because, 'We had to speak French!'
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and all areas of the academy is outstanding. This includes the Early Years Foundation Stage, where children are transfixed by their learning. Pupils show high levels of respect for those from backgrounds and cultures different from their own.
- Pupils report that behaviour has shown great improvement over the last eighteen months. They say, 'There used to be some exclusions but there aren't now'. They have an excellent understanding of the school's behaviour policy and sanctions if they transgress. Exclusions have dropped considerably and are now almost unknown.
- Pupils are especially proud of their involvement in Year 6 with peer mediation, where they take responsibility for dealing with the problems of other pupils. They also enjoy having their 'Pupil Voice', through their school council, in school matters, and appreciate that leaders listen to their views and take consequent action.
- Pupils are confident that they are well prepared for their next stage of education. They have benefited significantly from the school's conversion to an academy because of the opportunities they have for visiting their future schools for educational activities, and to meet and work with future classmates from other schools.
- Attendance has greatly improved since conversion and is now in line with the national average. It has

improved as a result of continual work by leaders with families where attendance of children may have been low in the past. A further factor is the great desire of pupils to come to school because of the rich diet of learning they receive. This enhances their excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils mix happily in a supportive and caring school community where many of them come from different cultures and faiths, or have significant barriers to learning.

- Almost all parents' and staff responses indicate that behaviour is well managed by the academy.

Safety

- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. A wide range of evidence reviews, observations of pupils in lessons and around the academy indicate that leaders and staff are highly skilled at identifying any pupils at risk of harm. The academy engages very effectively with partners and external agencies when responding to pupils' specific needs.
- Monitoring of any incidents relating to pupil safety is robust. Academy records show that leaders are meticulous in following up incidents in order to ensure positive outcomes.
- Pupils have a good understanding of bullying, and indicate there has been none in the last year. They have great confidence in adults in the school to deal fairly with any incidents involving pupils.
- Pupils have a good understanding of cyber-bullying and how to keep safe when using the internet. They talk knowledgably about all the information they have been given in the academy about the safe use of modern technology.
- Pupils feel very safe in the academy. They say, 'we are well looked after and we look after each other.' This was seen throughout the inspection. In particular, although the academy is situated in two adjacent buildings, members of staff always accompany pupils when they are going from one building to another.
- All staff sign up to suitability declarations, and all risk assessments are checked rigorously by the headteacher. First aiders accompany all educational outings.
- Parent and staff responses were unanimous in saying that pupils are safe in the academy.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Teaching has improved considerably and is now outstanding, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage. It has enabled pupils to make high levels of progress in their learning since the school became an academy.
- Teaching and learning are under continuous review by senior staff. Effective and rigorous monitoring has played a major part in improving the quality of teaching to its present high level.
- Effective teaching is resulting in consistently high progress and rapidly rising attainment in writing, reading and especially mathematics in the last year. Teachers have high expectations and offer consistent challenge to pupils according to their particular learning needs and abilities.
- Highly detailed planning for the different learning and personal needs of all pupils is present and consistent in all year groups. As a result, learning is characterised by pupils working intensely in small and large groups, nearly always with the regular support of an adult. Teachers with specific specialist subjects such as English and mathematics are deployed throughout the academy, frequently to support groups of more-able pupils, disadvantaged pupils or pupils with speech and language difficulties.
- The provision for teaching pupils with speech, language and communication difficulties is excellent. As a result, these pupils, who are fully integrated into classes, make outstanding progress in their learning and personal development.

- Teachers, teaching assistants and the school 'super coaches' in all years accelerate the learning and progress of pupils very effectively through working with them in small groups. An example of this was seen when more-able pupils in Year 6 were learning how to identify imagery in their writing by studying the first paragraph of *Bleak House*. This greatly enhanced their speaking skills, and their understanding of writing techniques and grammar; as one pupil commented, 'Do you know that Charles Dickens used five different writing techniques in one sentence?'
- The records of pupils' progress are detailed and accurate, and are used consistently to drive learning and achievement. Pupils' learning is based firmly on teachers' use of constantly updated information about their progress.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are particularly good, which is a considerable factor in the development of pupils' outstanding attitudes to learning. The contributions of teaching assistants and senior learning mentors are of immense value to the learning of pupils. They are well trained and briefed, work exceptionally well in small teams with teachers, and share the same concerns for understanding the specific learning needs of each pupil. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, including those with speech and language difficulties, and disadvantaged pupils, are the chief beneficiaries of their support.
- Teachers promote literacy and numeracy strongly and effectively through a wide range of subjects in the new curriculum. Examples of this were seen in pupils' work last term in topics such as the circulatory system of humans, creating online surveys, using letters and symbols in writing, and Greek life and achievements.
- Teachers use regular 'conferences' with individual pupils to help them understand their learning and steps to improve. Consequently, pupils have detailed knowledge of how they are doing and how their learning can get better. However, pupils in some classes are sometimes careless in the presentation of their work which is not always corrected by the teacher. Teachers also make regular marking comments, but pupils' responses are not always evident.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils have achieved well and made good progress over time. Standards are improving as the school's initiatives to raise the quality of teaching take hold. Many pupils are now making rapid progress in response to outstanding teaching, although the impact of the improvements is not yet reflected in test results, because many of the improvements have been made in the past year.
- Children start in the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and understanding below those typical for their age. They make outstanding progress in Nursery and Reception and now start Year 1 with average standards. Standards on leaving Reception are improving year on year.
- Progress is good and improving at Key Stage 1. Pupils reached average standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 in 2014, despite starting the key stage with below average standards. There has been rapidly improving progress in Years 1 and 2 since 2013 and the work in current pupils' books shows that their standards are now above average.
- In Key Stage 2 in 2014, pupils reached average standards in writing, spelling, punctuation and grammar, and reading and mathematics. This was an improvement on 2013. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 have made further excellent progress in this school year in reading, mathematics and writing, and most are working now at above average levels although this has not yet been shown in national test data. Progress since academy conversion has been well above that expected for these pupils nationally in literacy and numeracy. This was confirmed in the inspection by the scrutiny of pupils' books, observations of lessons and discussions with pupils about their learning.
- The academy has targeted mathematics as a weaker area in the past, and measures taken have been highly effective in accelerating improvement. These measures include a detailed analysis of teachers' skills in teaching mathematics, followed by specific intensive training on their identified weaknesses. A

specialist teacher of mathematics from The Teaching Alliance has also been added to the staff.

- The improvement is primarily because of the relentless drive for improvement led by skilled senior leaders in the last eighteen months. This has involved the introduction of more accurate measures of tracking the progress of pupils in detail, and continuous monitoring of learning in all classes.
- Since becoming an academy, teachers have guided pupils to reach standards consistently above the national average in the national phonics tests (letters and the sounds they make) in both Years 1 and 2. This is helping the excellent progress of pupils in their reading skills.
- In 2014, the number of pupils making better than expected progress was higher than average in reading and writing, and most pupils made expected progress in mathematics. The momentum of improvement has been increased and pupils in all year groups are making at least good, and sometimes exceptional, progress.
- The most notable and sustained progress has been made by a number of groups of pupils in the academy. The achievement of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, including those with speech, language and communication difficulties, has more than matched the progress of other pupils in the academy. This is also the case for pupils from minority ethnic groups and the small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language. Their progress is due to the exceptional quality of teaching and provision for the specific learning needs of these pupils, who are fully included in all academy activities.
- The high proportion of disadvantaged pupils also makes exceptional progress. At the end of Year 6 in 2014, the attainment of disadvantaged pupils in mathematics was lower by about half a term when compared to other pupils in the academy and a term when compared to pupils nationally. However, this was a significant improvement on 2013. In 2014, there were no gaps between disadvantaged pupils and others in the school in either reading or writing. Currently, disadvantaged pupils are on track to exceed the attainment of other pupils in all subjects. There is little gap in attainment in any year group in the academy.
- Staff are also vigilant in ensuring that the high numbers of pupils joining the academy in years other than Reception are not left behind. As a result, these pupils also make rapid and sustained progress because of the staff's close analysis of their needs, and much individual tuition.
- The most-able pupils have improved their progress significantly because of the increased challenge in their learning opportunities, and the specialist teaching and support of the academy's additional teachers. Academy leaders ensure that the most-able pupils and gifted and talented receive suitable learning challenges in all areas of the curriculum, so that they meet their potential. Consequently, many more pupils are now working at higher than average levels of attainment.
- Pupils enjoy reading and many more are reaching above-average standards. They name many favourite authors and books, and older pupils are finding considerable interest in some of the classics such as *Macbeth* and *Bleak House*.
- Pupils, through their new curriculum, are making at least good gains in a wide range of subjects including information and communication technology, modern foreign languages, history and, increasingly, games and sport through the impact of the sports premium fund. The links to other resources in the Learning Partnership are also helping achievement.

The early years provision

is outstanding

- Children start in the Nursery with skills and experience below and sometimes well below those typically seen for their age, especially in language development and literacy skills. Children make excellent progress in the Nursery and Reception classes. They maintain high rates of progress in both classes, and staff are very effective in preparing them for transition into Key Stage 1.

- The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are outstanding. The provision for children is exceptionally well organised, and all staff work closely to provide the very best start to the education of these children. There is always huge attention to detail in the analysis of children's progress and their individual learning needs.
- As a result of a meticulous planning programme based upon detailed assessments of children's capabilities and needs, children's attainment in almost every area of their learning and development by the time they enter Key Stage 1 is in line with national expectations. Their achievement throughout their early years is outstanding.
- Teaching is consistently outstanding across a wide range of stimulating learning activities. Staff have a highly developed understanding of the next steps in learning for every child. This was demonstrated most effectively in activities in Reception based upon the topic of *Frozen*, the recent Disney film. The questioning of staff enabled children to think about their learning, as well as enjoying a range of practical activities, including making snow.
- The learning environment is creative and often exciting for children, who are highly motivated and exceptionally eager to engage in their learning.
- The excellent diversity of the curriculum enhances children's physical and emotional development as well as their learning.
- The behaviour of children is outstanding. They work very well together, have high levels of curiosity and react quickly and respectfully to the guidance of adults. Their health, safety and well-being are always the highest priority for staff. The staff team is vigilant at all times and their management of the safeguarding of children fully meets all statutory requirements.
- Staff work closely with parents, who are encouraged to discuss the progress of their children's' learning and development. Parents are delighted with and proud of the achievements of their children.

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	139452
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	453764

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	242
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Maxine Rowley
Headteacher	Anna Balson
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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