

Harper Bell Seventh Day Adventist School

29 Ravenhurst Street, Camp Hill, Birmingham, B12 0EJ

Inspection dates 11–12 February 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Early years provision		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Achievement is not yet good. Standards in Year 6 are below average. Not enough pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics across the school.
- Children in Nursery and Reception do not achieve as well as they should. Checks on their progress are not sharp enough to direct teaching.
- The most-able pupils are not consistently provided with good opportunities to develop their knowledge and to extend their skills, especially in mathematics.
- Teaching in Years 1 to 4 requires improvement. Planned activities in lessons do not enable pupils to build quickly on what they have already learned. Teachers do not question pupils well enough to deepen their learning.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are not consistently good in lessons in Years 1 to 4. Staff sometimes do not step in quickly enough to help pupils sustain their concentration and effort.
- Pupils have few opportunities to develop leadership skills.

The school has the following strengths

- Senior leaders, including governors, lead the school well. They have made very significant improvements to all aspects of the school's work in the last 18 months.
- Pupils' attainment is rising in nearly all year groups. Gaps in attainment have reduced and pupils in nearly all year groups are working much closer to nationally expected levels.
- Teaching in Years 5 and 6 is good.
- The school's work to ensure pupils are safe and secure is much improved and is now good. Pupils feel safe in school and know how to stay safe.
- Attendance has improved and is above average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching during visits to classrooms to check on pupils' learning. On two visits, they were accompanied by the executive headteacher or the strategic headteacher.
- They heard a range of pupils in Year 2 reading and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Meetings were held with school staff, a group of pupils, three members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of 17 responses to a questionnaire completed by staff and the 24 responses made by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. Responses by parents and pupils to the school's recent internal questionnaires were also considered. An inspector spoke informally to some parents during the inspection.
- Inspectors checked a range of evidence, including: monitoring records; consultants' reports; the school improvement plan; the school's own data on pupils' attainment and progress; and policies, procedures and practice relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.

Inspection team

Derek Aitken, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Lynn Clark

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than most primary schools. Many pupils travel considerable distances to attend the school.
- The school's Nursery operates in the mornings and afternoons. It offers parents a choice of full-day or part-day attendance, or a mixture of both, for their children. Reception children attend on a full-time basis.
- The school's morning club is managed by the governing body. It was observed as part of this inspection.
- All pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Around six in ten pupils are from Caribbean backgrounds and two in ten pupils are from African backgrounds.
- More pupils than is usually the case join or leave the school at other than the normal times. For example, one quarter of pupils in the current Year 6 class have joined the school in the last six months. Several of these pupils are from overseas.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium, which is additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority, is above average at about three in ten.
- At around one in six, the proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is average.
- At its previous inspection in March 2013, the school was judged 'inadequate'. Since then Ofsted has conducted five monitoring visits to check on its performance.
- An interim executive board (IEB) was appointed to govern the school in April 2014.
- The executive headteacher took up post in September 2013. She is a local leader of education (LLE). She is also the headteacher of St Matthew's CofE Primary School in Birmingham. She is supported in Harper Bell by a strategic headteacher and an operational headteacher. St Matthew's, one of the partners of the St Mary's Teaching Alliance, is providing Harper Bell with various forms of support, including in leadership, teaching and the curriculum.
- For the pupils for which there are available data, the school does not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, especially in Years 1 to 4, and so improve progress and standards, by ensuring that all teachers:
 - use classroom activities that consistently enable all groups of pupils to build quickly on what they have learned and can do
 - use questioning more effectively to deepen learning and to engage pupils' interest
 - step in quickly when necessary to help pupils sustain their concentration and effort.
- Raise achievement in mathematics, especially for the most-able pupils, by providing a good range of opportunities for pupils to apply their number and calculation skills to solving challenging problems.
- Improve children's achievement in Nursery and Reception by ensuring that data and ongoing assessment are used rigorously to direct teaching.
- Develop suitable opportunities for pupils to acquire a range of useful leadership skills.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The previous inspection report highlighted many inadequacies in all aspects of the school's work. These included health, safety and safeguarding concerns. Since taking up their posts, the executive headteacher and team of senior staff have tackled these weaknesses very effectively. They have revitalised provision and have re-kindled pupils' sense of pride in their school.
- Actions taken are timely, well considered and fully focused on developing the school's work. Leaders have taken rigorous actions to tackle inadequacies in the quality and quantity of resources and underperformance in staff. At first, this resulted in discontinuity in teaching as teachers left and were replaced by temporary staff. Staffing is now more stable. The fruits of skilled coaching and a comprehensive training programme, which are being monitored robustly, are now emerging in pupils' improved rates of progress. At the same time, the school has successfully developed its preferred approach to assessment following withdrawal of National Curriculum levels and is on its way to implementing it in reading, writing, mathematics and science.
- Staff with responsibilities for key subjects have a good understanding of how well pupils are doing through regular checks on the quality of teaching in lessons, data on pupils' progress and the work in pupils' books. They are skilled practitioners and are clear about what needs to be done to improve teaching and to raise achievement. However, while significant improvements have been made to provision for children, the new leaders of the Early Years Foundation Stage do not yet have a sufficiently detailed overview of data on children's performance to enable them to direct teaching to best effect.
- The school ensures that there is no discrimination. Leaders know where support is needed to raise the standards of disadvantaged pupils. They have taken purposeful decisions to allocate extra resources, including staff, to improve rates of progress. Their successful use of pupil premium funding is reducing gaps in attainment in most age groups.
- The school's curriculum is broad and balanced. Pupils benefit from a useful range of enrichment activities which include opportunities to work with pupils from other schools, for example, in singing in a choir and on projects for gifted and talented pupils. Units of work which enable pupils to explore British values and democracy are being integrated well into the curriculum. Visits to the 'Health Bus' provide pupils with useful guidance on the importance of individual decision making. Some of these initiatives are relatively new and are still to have a full impact on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The national school sports funding has been spent appropriately, for example, to purchase resources to enable pupils to access a wider range of sports, to employ a specialist coach and to train staff. Leaders are monitoring the impact of this expenditure on pupils' health. Participation rates in sport have increased.
- The local authority has played an influential role in the school's improvement through brokering support from St Matthew's, through St Mary's Teaching Alliance, and through its work in setting up the interim executive board.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The interim executive board supports the school well. Key governors have much expertise in educational matters. They know how far the school has come in the last 18 months. They are aware of the school's strengths and can pinpoint areas of weakness in pupils' achievement and in aspects of teaching. They know about the initiatives that staff have taken to tackle these shortfalls. They have undertaken visits to lessons and examined pupils' books to check on how well pupils are learning. They have also carried out first-hand observations of teaching in St Matthew's to help them make valid comparisons between the two schools.
 - Governors know where gaps in attainment are reducing, including for pupils eligible for pupil premium funding, and can identify some of the actions the school has taken to raise achievement for vulnerable groups.
 - Governors are appropriately involved in managing staff's performance and take suitable steps to ensure any salary increases are merited.

- Governors ensure that current government requirements for safeguarding are fully met and that safeguarding arrangements are effective.

The behaviour and safety of pupils requires improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. In some lessons, pupils are passive during parts of lessons led by the teacher. In the younger age groups, they occasionally lose focus when they find the work too hard or when they are required to work on their own. These factors, in combination, slow pupils' progress.
- Pupils make full use of the playground to take vigorous physical exercise at break-times. This often takes the form of running races, football or other games. On a few occasions, collaborative activities become a little boisterous, although serious mishaps rarely occur.
- The school has very recently established a 'young leaders' (school council) group, which has undertaken its first fundraising activity. However, pupils have few other planned opportunities to develop leadership skills and to contribute fully to the school's work.
- Compliance with staff's instructions is much improved since the previous inspection. Pupils move around the school in a sensible, orderly manner. They are polite and speak freely to visitors about their school. Pupils behave well in assemblies, where routines and expectations for good behaviour are clear. Pupils listen respectfully and sing enthusiastically.
- In lessons, older pupils show that they value each other's opinions and ideas. They remain on task while working on their own. Pupils' books in both key stages reflect the increasing sense of pride they take in their work. Pupils keep their books tidy and present their work neatly. Their handwriting has improved.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Staff, wearing high-visibility jackets, supervise pupils well as they enter and exit from school. There are clear, computerised signing-in procedures for visitors. Fire marshals, fire exits and assembly points are all identified through photographs or labels. Staff ensure pupils use handrails when they negotiate the staircases.
- Staff with leading roles for safeguarding have undergone statutory training and have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. A comprehensive action plan, linked to staff training for safeguarding, has been implemented following a recent audit of procedures. Visitors and students are routinely informed about their child protection duties.
- Case studies show that the school has clear systems and procedures for reporting on, and supporting, vulnerable pupils.
- Pupils feel safe in school. They report that attitudes to learning and behaviour are much improved under new school leadership. Leaders analyse behaviour records weekly, take suitable actions quickly to tackle concerns, and communicate outcomes to parents clearly.
- Pupils are knowledgeable about e-safety procedures. They explain confidently that adults listen to their worries and act swiftly to tackle any concerns. They speak positively about the warm welcome the school extends to new pupils. They value the certificates they now receive for their good work and are proud of the badges they are awarded for 100% attendance. They approve of, and respect, the school's system of rewards and sanctions.
- The school's chaplain takes an active role in checking on, and promoting, attendance. He works closely with parents and pupils, including new arrivals at school, to ensure attendance is above average. Rewards have been used very effectively to raise attendance. Unpunctuality to school has declined by 80% in the last year.

- The morning club provides a useful service, especially for those parents whose children have a long way to travel to school.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Over time, teaching has not ensured that pupils achieve well. Lesson activities, particularly in Years 1 to 4, are not always precisely focused on the skills that groups need to acquire or to practise next, and so pupils, including the most able, are not moved on quickly enough to more challenging work. In a few lessons in Key Stage 1, staff are slow to intervene when individual pupils find the work they do on their own too hard or too easy, or when they lose concentration and become restless.
- Teachers and teaching assistants sometimes do not give pupils enough time to respond to their questions, or intervene too quickly to give answers to their own questions. This reduces opportunities for pupils to develop their thinking skills, to express their ideas and to be fully engaged in lessons.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs and pupils at an early stage of learning English as an additional language are usually supported effectively in small-group work.
- Teachers mostly manage pupils well and provide them with work which they enjoy. The teaching is steadily improving. Staffing is now more stable, and training is having an increasingly positive impact on developing teachers' expertise and in enabling them to close gaps in pupils' attainment.
- Early reading skills are mostly taught well, and this helps older pupils to feel confident about their reading skills. A suitable range of tasks helps them to retrieve information from narrative texts accurately and to identify literary features, such as sub-headings, correctly.
- Writing skills are usually taught well. Teachers provide pupils with a wide range of writing activities and ensure that they use their skills for a range of audience and purposes. This enables pupils in Year 4, for example, to apply their knowledge of electricity effectively to story-writing contexts.
- Mathematical skills are taught adequately. This enables pupils to develop their number and calculation skills securely. However, opportunities for pupils to explain their methods and to share their knowledge and understanding, for example of place value and equivalence between fractions and decimal points, are sometimes missed.
- Teaching is most successful in Years 5 and 6. In these year groups, teachers have strong subject knowledge and are more adept in selecting purposeful contexts for pupils' learning, such as an email from the Lord Mayor, to stimulate pupils' interest and responses. The teachers check pupils' learning closely. Their methods and skilful questioning usually engage pupils well and enable them to explain their ideas confidently, and in detail.
- Teachers' marking has improved since the previous inspection. Most teachers follow agreed policies consistently and provide pupils with useful written feedback. Marking is now more effective in identifying gaps in pupils' skills and in helping pupils to remedy misconceptions. Staff construct suitable tasks for pupils who need extra support to catch up.

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Attainment at the end of Year 6 was average overall in 2012 and 2013. Attainment dipped to below average in 2014, largely due to discontinuity in teaching. Currently, boys in Year 6 are working at the expected levels but the attainment of girls in the year group is much lower. This is because one half of the girls are at an early stage of learning English and/or have limited experience of school.
- Pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, do not make fast enough progress in Key Stage 2 to enable more of them to move on to work at more challenging levels. While gaps in attainment between boys and girls have reduced considerably across the school since the previous

inspection, a few gaps remain in Years 2 and 4.

- In 2014, disadvantaged pupils were working behind all pupils nationally: five terms in mathematics, four and a half terms in writing and two and a half terms in reading. They were also behind their classmates: two terms in mathematics, one term in writing and one and a half terms in reading. Across the school these gaps are now reduced, as disadvantaged pupils are making slightly better progress than their classmates. A few gaps remain in some year groups in reading and writing.
- Some of the most-able pupils are not given good opportunities to develop their skills over a sustained period of time. On occasion, they complete tasks quickly or spend too much time in mathematics lessons practising lists of calculations or simple problems which they have already mastered. Consequently, they do not have enough time to use and apply their knowledge in a range of investigative tasks or to solve multi-step problems.
- Results in the Year 1 screening check for phonics (the sounds that letters make) have been above average in the last two years. Less-able pupils in Year 2 read accurately and with little hesitation. Their good memory of the texts enables them to answer questions about what they have read confidently and to predict how story-lines might unfold.
- Attainment in Year 2 has risen to average. Previous underachievement in Key Stage 2 has been eliminated, but not enough pupils are making good progress.
- Nonetheless, pupils' attainment in Key Stage 2 is rising steadily and pupils are now working much closer to expected levels. Pupils in Year 6 use and apply their knowledge of features of genre, such as diary, reports and instructions, competently in other subjects. Lower-attaining pupils in Year 4 write their ideas clearly and their command of punctuation and vocabulary is improving steadily. Lower-attaining pupils across the school are swiftly placed on support programmes in mathematics to speed up their progress. Middle-attaining pupils demonstrate a secure understanding of mathematical facts, concepts and strategies.

The early years provision

requires improvement

- The skills and knowledge of most children when they join Nursery are below those typical for their age. The percentage of children in Reception who reached a good level of development in 2014 was much higher than in 2013 but was slightly below the national average.
- Until recently, the quality of provision was undermined by discontinuity in teaching and leadership and a shortage of suitable resources. Assessment systems are under-developed and not fully consistent across the two year groups. Children's learning journeys indicate that staff record children's achievements regularly and clearly in all areas of learning, but rarely identify next steps for individual children.
- Lesson activities and staff's questioning do not always ensure continuity or rapid development of children's skills. Some children dwell too long on tasks, before being moved on to new challenges. These factors, in combination, slow children's progress and mean that they are only adequately prepared to move into Year 1.
- Children nearly always respond well to the interesting activities provided for them in the newly equipped indoor classrooms. They listen carefully to adults while sitting on the carpet, or in adult-led activities in small-group work. They behave safely and enjoy finding things out for themselves. They work contentedly on individual tasks without needing undue adult intervention. Sometimes, they do not make the best use of opportunities to practise their decision-making skills in collaborative tasks.
- Children, especially the most able, make good progress in phonics lessons. They concentrate well, enjoy correcting the teachers' 'mistakes' and are quick to blend new sounds into words. Staff ensure that all necessary resources are readily to hand, so that little time is lost. Children apply their new knowledge quickly and accurately both orally and in writing to construct banks of words with similar sounds. The writing skills of the most able Reception children have improved significantly in the last few months

following bespoke training for staff.

- The new leaders, within a short period of time, have implemented several positive changes to provision. They know that they have to develop their understanding of data to ensure that full use is made of assessment to direct teaching and to develop provision further.

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	136440
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	453820

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	199
Appropriate authority	Interim executive board
Chair	Rosemary Campbell-Stephens
Headteacher	Paulette Osborne (Executive Headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	7 March 2013
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