

# Stow Heath Primary School

Hill Road, Portobello, Willenhall, WV13 3TT

**Inspection dates** 18–19 March 2015

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	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

- Teaching is not yet consistently good across the school. As a result, the progress that pupils make is too variable, particularly in Key Stage 2.
- Not enough pupils attain the higher National Curriculum levels at the end of Years 2 and 6.
- Pupils in Key Stage 2 do not make fast enough progress with their writing.
- The quality of marking and feedback, while improving, is variable. Not all teachers are skilled at providing advice that helps pupils to identify and correct their errors or at providing a challenge to make pupils think more.
- The most-able pupils, including those in the early years, are not consistently stretched to enable them to reach their full potential.
- Teachers with responsibilities for subjects other than English and mathematics are not fully involved in monitoring the quality of teaching in their subjects.
- Not all teachers move pupils on to harder learning quickly enough in mathematics lessons. Similarly, teachers do not always plan work that builds on what pupils already know, and pupils have to repeat work they can already complete.

### The school has the following strengths

- This is an improving school. There is a tangible determination from leaders, governors and staff to make the school a good one as soon as possible.
- The changes that the senior leaders are making are improving teaching and helping pupils to make faster progress than in the past.
- Phonics (the sounds letters make) and reading are taught well.
- As a result of effective teaching and a stimulating environment, children make good progress in the early years.
- Behaviour and safety are good. The care for the emotional well-being of pupils is exemplary, particularly for those pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable.
- Pupils feel safe. They like school, are proud of their work and enjoy talking about what they are learning. As a result, attendance is improving.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 28 lessons or parts of lessons, eight of which were completed jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors undertook 'learning walks.' These comprised of short visits to a number of lessons to speak to pupils and look at their work, examine displays and to observe behaviour.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, two representatives from the governing body, teachers who hold additional responsibilities, a group of staff members and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors talked to groups of pupils, listened to them read and observed them during playtimes and lunchtimes. Inspectors spoke to pupils informally around the school.
- Inspectors considered the 54 replies to the staff questionnaire. There were too few responses to the online parent questionnaire, Parent View, to be viewed. The views of parents were sought at the start of the school day as they brought their children to school and from a recent parent questionnaire conducted by the school.
- The inspection team reviewed a range of documentation, including the school development plan, safeguarding policies, minutes of meetings, information about pupils' attainment and progress and records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance.

## Inspection team

Rachel Howie, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Mitchell Moore

Her Majesty's 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

- Stow Heath is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Children attend school part time in the Nursery. When they transfer to the Reception Year, they attend full time.
- Around two thirds of the pupils are White British; one third of the pupils are from minority ethnic groups. The largest minority group represented are of Indian heritage. At one in ten, the proportion who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported through the pupil premium funding is well above average. The pupil premium is additional government funding to provide extra support for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and for children in the care of the local authority. Almost half of the pupils in the school are eligible for this funding.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- There have been a number of changes of staff since the last inspection, including among teaching staff and senior leaders.

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

- Further improve teaching so that pupils make faster progress in English and mathematics by ensuring that:
  - work is always hard enough, including in the early years, to enable pupils, especially the most able, to reach their full potential
  - all marking gives pupils clear guidance on how to improve their work
  - lessons in mathematics take into account what pupils already know and can do
  - pupils are provided with harder work in mathematics and literacy lessons as soon as they are ready
  - recent improvements in the teaching of writing are applied consistently in all classrooms.
- Further strengthen leadership by giving subject leaders more opportunities to observe the teaching of their subject, so that they have an accurate view of the quality of teaching and can bring about the necessary improvements.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, senior leaders and governors are a cohesive and committed team. They have been successful in rapidly driving forward improvements since the school was judged to require special measures. Their leadership is characterised by determination, tenacity and passion. The culture of the school is based on high expectations and high aspirations for all. All staff buy into this vision and morale is good. This was demonstrated in the overwhelmingly positive responses to the staff questionnaire. There is a clear commitment to ensure the school is judged to be at least good overall as quickly as possible.
- Leaders know the school well and have an accurate view of the improvements that need to be made because information about pupils' progress is analysed forensically. Leaders have a detailed understanding of the community that the school serves and have adapted the provision effectively to meet their needs increasingly well. The school action plan is an effective tool for planning improvements and provides the governors with precise targets by which progress can be measured.
- The deputy headteacher provides strong and direct leadership for improving the quality of teaching. A broad range of effective training has been provided for staff. The good practice of staff within the school is being increasingly well utilised to help others to improve. Teachers stated that the current model of 'coaching trios' is particularly effective in helping them to improve their practice. All inadequate teaching has been eradicated and the proportion of teaching that is good or better continues to increase. Teaching overall requires further improvement because the structures and support mechanisms that have been put in place need more time to fully embed so that they are consistent across the school.
- The system of performance management for teachers ensures that pay progression is not automatic. It rewards good teaching. There are regular meetings about pupils' progress to ensure that teachers are held to account. In addition, the quality of teaching is frequently checked through observations of teaching and learning, the scrutiny of workbooks and discussions with pupils. Following these checks, teachers receive helpful feedback, and this is ensuring that teaching continues to improve.
- Senior leaders have clearly defined roles and carry out their responsibilities thoroughly and conscientiously. The heads of schools (previously called assistant heads) take full responsibility for improving the quality of provision in their year groups. Classroom environments have improved significantly as a result of their clear guidance about expectations. Subject leaders are not yet fully involved in making checks on the quality of teaching in their areas of responsibility.
- The early years leader has made effective changes to the provision, using space and resources more effectively. She has developed a consistent and effective approach to learning in Nursery and Reception classes.
- Safeguarding and child protection procedures are well developed and thorough. Leaders go above and beyond their statutory responsibilities to ensure that pupils are kept safe from harm. They are proactive in their work with other agencies.
- During the period of special measures, leaders have ensured that, while basic skills in mathematics and English have been a priority, the richness of the curriculum has not been negatively affected. The topics that pupils learn about are relevant and interesting. They include a variety of visits to places of interest and museums. Pupils experience specialist teaching from sports coaches and musicians, and are set fun and practical homework activities. Assemblies and religious education lessons help pupils to develop understanding and tolerance of others, and the school's focus on equality of opportunity reinforces this. As a result, the spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding of pupils is well developed and is a strength of this school. The curriculum includes opportunities for pupils to learn about the British values of democracy, freedom and the institutions of law. However, leaders are not yet monitoring the impact of this on pupils' understanding.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively to provide small-group and individual support. Resources have also been purchased to support learning effectively. This is helping disadvantaged pupils to catch up with

their classmates.

- The primary school sport funding has been used to provide a broader range of after-school clubs and to increase the resources available for physical education lessons and playtimes. Pupils say that these clubs are enjoyable. However, leaders have not yet fully evaluated the spending of this funding to precisely measure its impact.
- The local authority has provided appropriate support and challenge for this school. The brokering of support from a local primary school, when the school was first judged to require special measures, was helpful.

#### ■ The governance of the school:

- The Chair of the Governing Body provides strong and effective leadership, and the work of the governing body has improved since the previous inspection. Governors have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. During the period of special measures, governing body meetings have been increasingly frequent. This has been effective in ensuring that improvements are being made with enough urgency. Governors have shown that they are prepared to make tough decisions to ensure that the school continues to improve.
- Governors have specific responsibilities and each committee has a well-defined remit. For example, one governor's role is to check on the impact of the spending of the pupil premium funding and report this back to the rest of the governing body.
- Governors are knowledgeable about the actions being taken to improve the school and have systems for finding out for themselves the effectiveness of these improvements. They have a good understanding of how pupils are progressing and how this compares to national averages and previous years' performance. They are well informed about the quality of teaching.
- Governors provide support and challenge in equal measure. Meeting minutes show that they ask probing questions, keep a close eye on the budget and are involved in the decisions about teachers' progression through the pay scale.

### The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

#### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Leaders have been successful in creating a calm, well-ordered and stimulating environment in which pupils can learn and play. Pupils behave in a sensible and considerate way around the school. They are polite and friendly and show good manners. Playtimes are busy and bustling social times where pupils generally get along together well. Adults are vigilant and intervene quickly if play becomes too boisterous.
- Expectations of behaviour are high and pupils respond well to this. Inspectors found that the behaviour policy is implemented consistently throughout the school and pupils understand how the rewards and consequences work. Pupils are enthusiastic about the system of 'going for gold' and being rewarded with a 'dip in the box.' Pupils, staff and most parents agree that behaviour is well managed. The older pupils told inspectors that behaviour has improved significantly in the last year.
- Attendance has improved since the last inspection because absences are followed up more rigorously. Attendance is currently just below the national average. Pupils want to attend school because they enjoy it. Positive attitudes to learning are fostered from when children begin in the Nursery. Pupils appreciate that adults try to make learning fun and relevant and, as a result, pupils speak proudly about their work and their achievements. They take particular pride in how smart they look and explained to inspectors that they helped to design the school badge and choose the colours. One child summed it up saying, 'Our uniform is the smartest around.'
- Effective support is in place for the small number of pupils who display challenging behaviour. 'The Base' provides help for pupils who find playtimes difficult. Where exclusion is used, school records show that it is used as a last resort and is proportionate and appropriate.
- The headteacher and inclusion manager work effectively together to monitor patterns in any poor

behaviour and are proactive in spotting trends and providing support where necessary. For example, leaders identified that Year 4 pupils were experiencing some difficulties in socialising together effectively and so they introduced some whole-class musical activities to enable pupils to work together in a fun and interesting way. Pupils say this has been helpful.

### Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. The school site is safe and visitors are checked thoroughly. The parents who spoke to inspectors agree that the school keeps their children safe.
- Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations; for example, when using the internet and in case of fire. They recall clearly a range of visitors coming into school regularly to remind them about safety issues. Children in the early years can explain the rules in the classroom that keep them safe and how to use the outdoor play equipment safely.
- Pupils of all ages say that they feel safe and trust the adults to deal with any worries or concerns that they have. The school's work to support and care for its most vulnerable pupils is excellent.
- Pupils are knowledgeable about different forms of bullying, including verbal and racist bullying. They understand the difference between bullying and unkindness and teasing. Pupils who spoke to inspectors said that bullying does not happen at Stow Heath. School records confirm that it is a rare occurrence.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Teaching is improving but is not yet consistently good throughout the school. As a result, not enough pupils make good progress. Inadequate teaching is no longer a feature of the school and the proportion that is good is increasing steadily. It is the lack of consistency of the good practice evident in many classrooms that prevents teaching from being good overall.
- Not all teachers provide the most-able pupils, including children in early years, with activities that are challenging enough. Often the most-able pupils are capable of more than the teacher expects. This limits the amount of progress that can be made. When teaching is effective and these pupils are provided with difficult tasks, they respond positively, are keen to succeed and make rapid progress.
- Some teachers do not check regularly enough during lessons how well pupils are doing. As a result, pupils are not moved on to harder work quickly enough, particularly in mathematics. Similarly, some activities do not build on what pupils have previously learned; sometimes, pupils repeat work that they have done before.
- Teachers' marking is inconsistent. In the best examples, for instance, in Years 2 and 6, pupils are provided with marking that helps them to make progress. Teachers give clear feedback on what pupils have done well. Pupils are also given specific advice about what they can do to improve or are given a short task to complete to extend their learning. Time is given for them to follow this guidance. Conversely, where marking is least effective, it is cursory and it does not require any action from the pupils.
- The teaching of literacy skills and writing is improving. Pupils have more opportunities to apply their literacy skills in a wider range of subjects than in the past. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve have increased. However, these improvements have been too recent to enable pupils to fully make up for previous inadequate teaching.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning because adults have high expectations. Topics are relevant to pupils' interests and are taught in an increasingly imaginative and inspiring way. Year 6 pupils told inspectors, with great excitement, about dissecting and preserving fish during their Egyptian topic, when they were investigating mummification.
- Pupils respond quickly to instructions. Younger pupils told inspectors that teachers make instructions to stop and listen fun, and this helps them to respond straight away. For example, 'Hocus Pocus – let's all focus!' This keeps lessons moving along at a good pace. Positive relationships between adults and pupils

are a strong feature of this school, and this supports pupils' learning.

- Teaching assistants are skilled and are deployed effectively, both within lessons and in small groups that are withdrawn from the class. They provide effective support for pupils because they understand what pupils should achieve. They receive appropriate training. Teaching assistants that work with disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, provide effective support in helping pupils to access activities at the right level of difficulty.
- As a result of effective training, teachers are asking questions that require pupils to think carefully and give longer, more detailed answers. Questions such as, 'Tell me more?' 'Why?' and 'How do you know?' help pupils to make good progress.
- The teaching of reading is effective. As a result, pupils develop positive attitudes to books. Phonics is taught from Nursery onwards and pupils quickly develop the confidence to sound out unfamiliar words and enjoy books of increasing difficulty.

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Although achievement for all groups of pupils has improved since the time the school was judged to require special measures, it is not yet good. This is because rates of progress are not consistent throughout the school. This is as a result of the variations in the quality of teaching.
- Results from teachers' assessments at the end of 2014 show that the proportion of pupils in Year 2 reaching the expected level in reading and mathematics is in line with the national average, but below this measure in writing. This demonstrates an improvement on the previous years' results in all three subjects. Work in pupils' books and school data show that this improvement is continuing and standards are likely to rise in 2015, particularly in writing.
- Results at the end of Year 6 in 2014 also improved, but not as quickly as seen in Year 2. Too few pupils reached the standard required in reading, writing and mathematics, although an increased number of pupils made the progress that is expected. Not enough pupils made faster than expected progress.
- The most-able pupils in the school make inconsistent progress. Some pupils make good progress as a result of a high level of challenge in lessons. However, this is not the case in all classes and progress for some of these pupils is too slow. Too few pupils reach the higher National Curriculum levels in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Years 2 and 6. This is because, in some lessons, expectations of what the most-able pupils can achieve are not high enough. In addition, pupils have not yet fully made up for lost ground caused by previously inadequate teaching.
- The school is working effectively to improve pupils' progress and attainment. Pupils in the current Year 6 are making progress in reading, writing and mathematics in line with that expected nationally. Some are making better than expected progress, and gaps in previous learning are being addressed through targeted catch-up activities. This is an improvement on the previous year, and results at the end of the year are set to improve. However, too few are making this accelerated progress, particularly in writing and the proportion reaching the higher National curriculum Level 5 will remain below that seen nationally. Writing remains the weaker subject.
- The teaching of phonics is strong. As a result, the proportion of Year 1 pupils who meet the expected standard in the national screening check compares favourably with the national average. Pupils develop a confident and positive approach to reading unfamiliar words and make good progress in their reading. Older pupils are able to have in-depth discussions about authors they enjoy and about their reading preferences. This is because they have a range of opportunities to read in school and are encouraged to read regularly at home.
- Disadvantaged pupils make at least the same progress as other pupils in the school. However, this progress has not accelerated enough over time to ensure that they achieve as well as their classmates. In 2014, disadvantaged pupils were behind their classmates by three terms in reading, writing and

mathematics. They were behind pupils nationally by four terms in writing and mathematics, and by three terms in reading. The school's information about disadvantaged pupils currently in the school shows that the targeted support is having a positive impact and attainment gaps are closing quickly.

- School leaders are effective in ensuring that the particular needs of children who are in the care of the local authority are well met. Their progress is tracked carefully and teaching is adapted if underachievement is identified. Most of these pupils make good progress.
- Almost all disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are making the progress that is expected and an increasing proportion are making accelerated progress, particularly in mathematics. This is because adults have an accurate view of their individual learning needs and support is precisely planned.
- Children join the Nursery and Reception classes unable to complete many of the tasks and activities expected for children of their age. For example, many are unable to express themselves in full sentences and have a very limited vocabulary. They make good gains in their learning and are well prepared to start Year 1. The proportion that achieve a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year is in line with the national average.

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

- Effective leadership has improved the provision and the quality of teaching in the early years. As a result, more children are making good progress and are well prepared to start Year 1.
- The classrooms have been reorganised to provide children with a wide range of resources and focused activities to choose from. There are good opportunities for children to make decisions for themselves about their activities. Pupils use the equipment imaginatively and creatively. Classrooms are bright, well organised and stimulating.
- Resources are well chosen to support the children's learning. For example, in the Reception class, there were magnifying glasses beside the tank containing frogspawn, along with a digital camera and photographs showing the life-cycle of a frog. This caused much excitement and children were keen to explain to the inspector how the frogspawn would change, using the tank and the photographs to demonstrate. 'Muddy Mondays' and 'Forest Fridays' provide children with exciting learning opportunities in the outdoor classroom. These contribute well to their learning and development. Activities in the other outdoor areas are not yet as focused as those indoors.
- Expectations of behaviour are high, and rules and routines are well embedded. Children respond quickly to adults' instructions and take care of the equipment in the classrooms. Children feel safe, show good attitudes to learning and have warm relationships with adults.
- The most-able children do not always make enough progress. This is because the activities that are made available do not offer sufficient challenge for these children.
- The newly introduced system for recording children's progress is effective. 'Learning journeys' provide a comprehensive record of each child's activity. Parents contribute effectively to these via 'proud clouds.' Parents are encouraged to play an active part in homework activities; for example, by making pirate ships with their children. This is leading to a higher level of home/school engagement. Parents who spoke to inspectors said that adults are approachable and that their children are safe and well cared for.



## 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>	104323
<b>Local authority</b>	Wolverhampton
<b>Inspection number</b>	454144

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	480
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Kevin King
<b>Headteacher</b>	Vivienne Bunce
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	4 December 2013
<b>Telephone number</b>	01902 558820
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