

Berkswich CofE Primary School

Cedar Way, Walton-on-the-Hill, Stafford, ST17 0LU

Inspection dates 25–26 March 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
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.

- Leaders, managers and governors have not ensured that teaching is at least good. Consequently, pupils' achievement is not consistently good in reading and mathematics and especially not in writing and in the accurate use of grammar, spelling and punctuation.
- Governors did not, until recently, ensure that teachers were held accountable for their pupils' slow progress.
- Too much of the work of the governing body falls on the shoulders of a few willing individual governors.
- Until September 2014, the school's system of checking on pupils' progress was neither reliable nor accurate. As a result, subject leaders did not take action to improve weaknesses.
- Teaching has not been good enough to ensure that pupils of all abilities learn well over time. Not enough is expected of the most-able pupils in the school. The work they are set is often too easy.
- Not enough boys make good progress or achieve the higher levels in writing.
- Sometimes tasks set in writing do not inspire pupils or provide them with sufficient opportunity to write at length.
- Tasks provided for pupils do not always build on their prior learning. Consequently, there are many lessons in which pupils are not well challenged and do not make enough progress.
- The marking of pupils' work is not consistently effective in enabling pupils to know what they should improve and requiring them to make the necessary improvements.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher's leadership is dynamic. She is determined to improve pupils' learning and, as a result, the school is improving rapidly. The headteacher has moved swiftly to eradicate most of the weak teaching, although some still remains.
- Teaching in Year 6 and in Reception has improved. Some marking is excellent, especially in Year 6, and is helping pupils to accelerate their progress.
- In the early years provision good quality assessments are now in place so that learning is well matched to children's needs.
- Assemblies and the school's new curriculum promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- Pupils are well cared for. They say they are kept safe in school and their parents are equally convinced that the school is a safe place.
- Pupils respond well when learning is challenging. Their attendance is above average.
- The least-able pupils progress well because of the good support they currently receive from experienced and effective staff.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed parts of 20 lessons, four of which were seen jointly with a senior leader.
- They looked at work in pupils’ books in several different subjects, including English and mathematics. They heard pupils from Year 1 and Year 2 reading.
- Inspectors spoke with teachers, subject and senior leaders, governors, and a representative of the local authority. They held informal and formal meetings with pupils.
- The views of parents were gained from the 77 responses to the online questionnaire for parents, Parent View, and through direct conversations with parents.
- The views of staff were gained from meetings and from the 18 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors looked at the school’s records relating to: the safeguarding of pupils’ well-being; their behaviour and attendance; the progress made by pupils who had recently left the school and those currently on roll; governing body meetings; meetings with local authority representatives; the school’s self-evaluation and improvement planning and the school’s monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning.

Inspection team

Terry McDermott, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Lynda Townsend

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Children attend the Nursery part time. Reception is attended full time.
- There are single-age classes in all year groups.
- Most pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium is well below average. The pupil premium is additional funding to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or who are looked after.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school has undergone many changes of staff since the summer of 2014. The headteacher and deputy headteacher were appointed in September 2014. The leader of the early years and Key Stage 1 was appointed in September 2014, and moved to teaching in Reception in January 2015.
- The school operates a before and after-school club.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching further by:
 - always having the highest expectations of what pupils can achieve in writing in all year groups, including for boys
 - ensuring tasks provided in writing excite pupils' interest and inspire them to be more imaginative
 - providing work for the most-able pupils in reading, mathematics and writing that is not too easy
 - using the systems for checking on pupils' progress in different subjects more effectively and particularly to ensure that all teachers plan and set challenging work for pupils of all abilities
 - routinely providing constructive feedback when marking pupils work and then checking that pupils act on the advice they are given.
- Strengthen the impact of leadership and management on teaching and achievement by ensuring that all subject leaders:
 - have higher expectations of what pupils of all abilities can achieve in their subjects
 - check rigorously on the learning taking place in lessons and take action when it is not good enough.
- Ensure that all members of the governing body fulfil their responsibilities effectively.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management **requires improvement**

- School leaders and governors have not maintained high standards and good achievement since the last inspection. Pupils' progress, including that of the most able, has progressively declined particularly in writing and in the use of grammar, punctuation and spelling.
- Leaders have not checked closely enough on the progress made by pupils in reading, mathematics and writing throughout the school. Until recently, the school's evaluation of pupils' work and the progress they were making was inaccurate. Although leaders have maintained a culture of positive attitudes and behaviour, teaching over time has not been consistently good enough to ensure pupils' good achievement.
- Some subject leaders do not communicate to teachers high expectations of what pupils should achieve. These leaders lack a clear picture of pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics. This restricts their capacity to bring about improvements in the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. By contrast, the leadership of the early years provision has improved and is strong.
- In the relatively short time since her appointment, the headteacher has taken robust, forthright and effective action to improve every aspect of the school. This is having a positive impact on the quality of teaching throughout the school. Consequently, pupils' achievement is also improving.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher have set a clear direction for the school. They are fully committed to making the changes necessary to raise pupils' achievement. They are successfully promoting equality of opportunity and removing any discrimination of boys by reasserting high aspirations for all pupils. Senior leaders are developing an improved system to check pupils' progress to accommodate the changes made nationally to assessment arrangements. However, not all subject leaders check on progress closely enough to know how well pupils are achieving in the subjects they lead.
- The school's curriculum has been rearranged so that pupils can apply and extend their reading, writing and mathematical skills through a range of topics. These include scientific enquiry based upon the principle of 'fair testing' to challenge pupils to take a balanced and considered view based on evidence, not on assumption. The improving range of learning opportunities is effective in underpinning pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and helping them to question for themselves bias, inequality and discrimination. As a result, they are prepared well for life in modern Britain.
- Senior leaders have a rigorous focus on raising the quality of teaching throughout the school. They now observe classroom practice closely and give clear feedback following their observations. They have also improved the learning resources available to teachers. Specific, well-focused professional development for staff is improving teachers' practice. Consequently, teaching is showing improvement, although it is not yet consistently good.
- Statutory safeguarding requirements are met. Administrative and procedural arrangements to ensure pupils' safety are carried through carefully. Child protection training and health and safety arrangements are thorough. Several staff are trained in first aid. Key staff and some governors have undertaken training for the safer recruitment of staff. As a result, pupils are kept safe at school.
- The school now has an accurate overall picture of its strengths and areas for improvement. Leaders know what action to take to secure improvements. Improvement planning is well thought through and has a sharp focus on learning. Consequently, there have been improvements to teaching and achievement, but these are too recent to have shown sustained impact in pupils' at the end of each key stage.
- The school provides good opportunities for physical and sporting activities. It is using the school sports funding effectively, including using specialist sports teachers. As a result, pupils' participation in sport and physical activities and their skills have increased.

- The school has very few pupils eligible for support through the pupil premium. There were none in Year 6 in 2013 or in 2014. However, inspection findings show that the school uses the funding effectively to provide support and resources where required.
- Prior to the summer of 2014, the school was not well supported or challenged by the local authority. Since September 2014, the local authority has provided a good level of targeted support for the school and this is currently having a positive impact on the quality of teaching.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body did not previously hold the school to account with enough rigour over the quality of education provided.
 - In the past year, the governing body has come to fully appreciate the decline in achievement and subjects and in the quality of teaching. Some governors are very committed and give unstintingly of their time to help the school to improve. These members have undertaken training now have a good understanding of how to use data to judge for themselves how well pupils are progressing. They are fully aware about levels of teacher performance, and only reward good practice in the classroom. They ask pertinent questions about how teaching is improving and oversee the school's use of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and for physical education rigorously.
 - Other members of the governing body are not as active in fulfilling their responsibilities. This weakens the capacity of the governing body to hold the school to account.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Their attitudes to learning are exemplary at times, particularly when work is set that challenges them. They are polite to visitors and cooperate well with each other, whether they are in classrooms, moving around school or playing together outside.
- Pupils consistently behave well because they know exactly what is expected of them. They understand the difference between right and wrong, and can be trusted to work, occasionally, without direct supervision. Older pupils told inspectors that they 'have to work much harder now'.
- Attendance is above average and has been for at least five years. Pupils say they like coming to school because everyone gets on well together.
- Behaviour is not outstanding because when pupils finish easy work quickly, they do not enthusiastically seek out the next task. They often sit and wait for the teacher to notice that they have completed their current one.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Statutory procedures are followed rigorously and all staff are appropriately checked prior to appointment.
- Pupils know that they can speak with a teacher if they have concerns about anything, confident that it will be dealt with sensitively and quickly. They told inspectors that they feel safe in school 'because no one can just walk in here'. Staff confirmed this situation, and the parents who responded to the online questionnaire were unanimous that the school was a safe place for their children to be.
- Pupils are fully aware of the different forms of bullying, such as, name-calling in school, via social media or through homophobic expressions. They say that bullying does not exist in this school. This is confirmed by the school's records. Pupils are convinced that it would be firmly handled should it ever occur.
- The before and after-school club is well attended and gets pupils off to a good start to their learning. Healthy breakfasts and a good range of activities settle children into school well in the morning and build on the school's values well after school.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching is not consistently good throughout school. This is why pupils in some year groups are not making consistently good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teaching has not enabled pupils to develop their reading and writing skills well from their different starting points. Not all teachers routinely challenge pupils and give them time to practise the skills they have previously been taught. Although in some classes pupils have many opportunities to practice their reading skills, in others this is not the case. For example, reading logs in Key Stage 1 indicate some pupils do not read regularly enough and this can be seen in their lack of confidence in working out new words.
- Teachers do not routinely expect pupils to use their imagination when writing independently. In many classes, writing tasks restrict pupils' opportunities to write at length or write creatively. Some untidy handwriting is not challenged. Inaccurate spelling is not always noted for correction. As a result pupils' achievement in writing, particularly that of boys, is not as strong as in other subjects.
- Pupils start school with skills at least typical of others of their age. However, their use of spelling, punctuation and grammar is lower than that expected by the end of Year 6, because these are not routinely promoted by all teachers.
- Learning in lessons is sometimes planned in minute detail, but with the same work for every pupil in the class. The plan is then usually followed and rarely adapted when pupils get stuck, or, much more likely, when they finish the work very quickly. This slows learning. Consequently, progress in reading, writing and mathematics is limited because teachers do not make effective use of assessment during lessons.
- The marking of pupils' work is too variable. Some marking is outstanding. For example, in the extended responses marking provokes from pupils, particularly when the teacher poses questions such as, 'can you think of another way to...?' In some classes, marking merely acknowledges that work is completed and gives minimal guidance to pupils on what to do next to improve it. Where guidance is given, all teachers do not check that pupils have acted on it.
- Leaders' success in improving teaching was seen most markedly in Year 6 and in the Reception class. Inspectors' observations of lessons and work in pupils' books in these year groups convincingly indicate these pupils are currently making consistently good progress. Some individual pupils are achieving exceptionally well.
- In other Year groups, teaching is improving. In consequence, pupils are making better progress in reading writing and mathematics than they did last year.
- When properly guided, teaching assistants give good support to the most-able pupils and positive guidance to disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. This enables both groups to learn well.
- The learning atmosphere in classrooms is positive. Relationships between pupils and adults are respectful and good. New books and other resources for learning are sparking pupils' interest. Older pupils in the school are fluent and confident readers with good comprehension skills.

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement requires improvement because in 2014 most groups of pupils in Year 6 did not make good progress from their starting points. Their attainment when they began Key Stage 2 in 2010 was well above-average in writing and mathematics. Attainment in these subjects had slipped and were not well above average. Progress in writing was slower than for other subjects.
- The information collected as to children's learning and development in early years and subsequently in Key Stage 1 has not always been accurate prior to September 2014. Leaders' recent rigorous reassessments and inspectors' observations demonstrate these to be now more accurate. This means they have a clearer

picture of achievement for current pupils. Currently children in early years are learning well from their starting points although this has not always been the case in the recent past.

- The reading skills of pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 are not as well developed as would be expected from their earlier assessments, but are now moving forward. Inspectors found that some readers however still lacked confidence to tackle new words, or sounded out each word letter by letter rather than remembering words from prior experience.
- In the 2014 national Year 6 tests the standards reached by pupils were varied. They were ahead of the national averages in mathematics and reading, almost exactly at the national average in writing and below the national average in grammar, punctuation and spelling. These results however were a sharp decline on those of the previous year. Boys had made less progress than girls and were more than a year behind girls in their writing.
- The most-able pupils did not achieve well in 2014. A smaller proportion than nationally made more than expected progress in reading and mathematics. Although the small number of lower-ability pupils made better progress than the most-able in 2014, no group of pupils made good progress overall, in 2014, whatever their background or starting point.
- Pupils develop and extending their mathematical skills and understanding well in some classes and some pupils do achieve at the highest levels. Pupils achieve well when presented with opportunities to solve written problems at the limit of what they already know or can do. Indeed they appear to relish such challenge. In other classes, when the same single task is set for all pupils, too many finish the work quickly and progress is slowed.
- The school's new and accurate assessment system confirms the progress seen in pupils' books. The current Year 6 pupils are now making better progress. They are on course to improve on the 2014 results. Similar improvements in progress are evident in all year groups although they are most rapid in reception and Year 2. Their achievement is now good.
- Pupils in other classes are also accelerating their achievement in reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers are becoming more skilful at asking questions which make pupils think before giving an answer. Pupils are now expected to explain how they solved a problem in mathematics, or what the inferred meaning of a piece of text might be. This deepens their understanding which can then be applied to the next stage of learning.
- The progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is now checked carefully and these pupils are regularly set challenging work in lessons. They are making good progress as a result.
- There were no disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 in 2013 or 2014. Throughout the school, disadvantaged pupils benefit from good support and so make good progress.

The early years provision

requires improvement

- Most of the children start school in the Nursery class with skills at least typical of children of their age and sometimes better, for example in language, communication and literacy, personal development and numeracy.
- Until January 2015, the quality of early years provision including the range of resources available for learning and the assessment of what children could already do was limited.
- A new early years leader was appointed in September 2014 and became the Reception class teacher in January 2015. With the strong support of the headteacher, she quickly set about tackling major weaknesses.
- The resources available for learning through imaginative play are now good. This has enlivened the whole

of the early years areas, and as a result, children's learning has accelerated rapidly.

- The school has identified that some of its previous assessments of learning and development at the end of the Reception Year were inaccurate. All assessments are now accurate because they are moderated rigorously. This is allowing adults to plan work accurately and is ensuring that move forward smoothly and quickly.
- The Nursery and Reception classes have been transformed. They have been cleaned and refurbished, resources have been acquired and teaching has improved. Assessment has been much improved and staff now have an accurate picture of where each child has reached in their development. Children are kept safe and all the required welfare, health and safety procedures are in place.
- Teaching is now consistently good, and this is leading directly to good learning and achievement across all areas of learning. All this and children's good behaviour and improving achievement means that they are now better set up for learning in Year 1.
- Children know what is expected of them. They are calm, happy and get on well together. They have very positive relationships with their teachers and are kept safe. They have many opportunities to practise their writing and speaking skills. The school's new approach to phonics (the sounds that letters make) is consistent, challenging and varied appropriately according to the learning needs of each child.
- Children experience a mix of short, effective, teacher-directed learning alongside a wide range of well-organised activities from which they can choose to consolidate or extend what they can do. This has accelerated children's' learning, which is now typically good from day to day.

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	124234
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	453285

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.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	230
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Steve Cope
Headteacher	Samantha Jackson
Date of previous school inspection	11 December 2008
Telephone number	01785 354600
Fax number	Not applicable
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