

Bhylls Acre Primary School

Bhylls Lane, Castlecroft, Wolverhampton, WV3 8DZ

Inspection dates 19–20 November 2015

Overall effectiveness **Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Under the astute leadership of the headteacher, the school has improved rapidly.
- The headteacher has been highly effective in developing the capacity of middle leaders to introduce major improvements in teaching and learning in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Leaders have built a highly cohesive staff team where teachers and teaching assistants are inspired and supported to do well.
- Standards in reading, writing and mathematics are at least in line with and often above average across the school. Pupils are consistently well taught and make good progress.
- Children's skills develop well in all respects in the language-rich environment of the Reception class.
- Teachers use assessments of pupils' work very well to give pupils very clear feedback and encouragement on how to improve. As a result, the pupils are highly reflective about the standard of their work and ambitious to raise it further.
- Pupils behave well in class and are orderly, polite and respectful in corridors and assemblies. They are self-confident, and relish the opportunity to take leadership roles.
- The governing body now monitors the work of the school closely and holds leaders fully to account for performance. Leaders are swift to identify and challenge underperformance through careful tracking of pupil progress and monitoring of teaching.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils' progress in science is constrained by a lack of opportunity to develop their practical and investigative skills.
- Pupils are not reflective enough about religious and cultural differences in Britain.
- Children in the Reception class sometimes lack practical opportunities, including in the outdoor area, to develop their imagination and initiative.
- Some gaps remain between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and others, and between boys and girls in writing.

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.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the curriculum and the quality of pupils' learning in subjects other than English and mathematics by:
 - urgently strengthening the science curriculum through the introduction of more practical and investigative work
 - continuing to develop pupils' understanding of the diversity of faiths and cultures in modern Britain
 - increasing practical opportunities for children to develop their skills, imagination and initiative in the early years, particularly through improved use of the outdoor area.
- Narrow further the gaps in attainment between key groups of pupils, especially those between disadvantaged pupils and others, and between boys and girls in writing.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher has been highly effective in leading the school from 'inadequate' to 'good' a little more than a year after taking up post.
- The headteacher's approach has centred on developing the capacity of her team of middle leaders to implement far-reaching and successful changes to teaching and learning. These changes have secured strong improvements in pupils' basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics so that they are now confident in tackling increasingly challenging work.
- Rigorous performance management for all staff, centred on extensive monitoring of teaching and close tracking of outcomes for pupils, has eradicated inadequate teaching and nurtured and developed that which is good. Staff have benefited from the close working links with nearby partner schools to see and share effective practice, and to moderate the accuracy of their assessments. Staff have worked cohesively and effectively as a team to ensure that new policies and approaches are implemented with consistent effect across the school.
- Leaders and teachers use assessment information well to monitor the impact of their work on the achievement of pupils. Pupils have clear targets for their attainment and progress, and teachers are quick to deploy extra help to those whose achievement falls below expectation. Additional support programmes, including those for pupils with English as an additional language and those who need extra help with literacy or numeracy, are evaluated carefully to ensure they are successful.
- Provision for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is well managed; pupils' progress is tracked closely against targets and provision adapted where necessary. Provision for looked after children is also well managed, and outcomes closely monitored.
- Leaders have successfully introduced a new assessment system in Key Stages 1 and 2 to link to the new National Curriculum. This replaces the old National Curriculum levels with age-related expectations for reading, writing and mathematics. It is already being used to focus efforts to lift those currently working below the expected level of attainment, and to extend the more-able pupils to exceed nationally expected standards.
- Leaders know their school well. Their evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses is honest and accurate, and shared widely with staff. As a result, plans for improvement are exceptionally well constructed, setting out precise actions to bring about improvements, and clear criteria for evaluating the success of these initiatives.
- Parents have increasingly positive views of the school. Responses to Parent View are markedly more positive for the current academic year, and those parents who spoke with inspectors were uniformly positive about the direction of the school.
- External support for the school's improvement has been coordinated and brokered very effectively by the local authority. The local authority's improvement adviser has promoted the improvement in the school's internal leadership capacity by providing training for middle leaders and developing the evaluative skills of governors through termly core group meetings. Formal external support has progressively been reduced as the school has improved.
- Spending of additional funding through the pupil premium has provided additional individual support that has successfully boosted the progress of disadvantaged pupils. The progress of disadvantaged pupils has therefore generally matched or exceeded that of other pupils, although gaps in attainment remain, which reflect a legacy of underachievement. While leaders track the progress of individual pupils well, school self-evaluation does not focus sharply enough on the relative success of these pupils as a group and how this might be improved.
- Funding from the sport premium has promoted a proliferation in sports clubs and activities during the last year that are much valued by the pupils.
- Leaders have directly addressed the weaknesses in pupils' basic skills identified in the last inspection report through fundamental changes to the curriculum. Reading skills have been secured by a very effective phonics programme from the early years onwards, supplemented by many programmes to promote regular reading at school and at home. Reading ages are regularly assessed to ensure that nearly all pupils are at least their chronological reading age when they leave, and are therefore well prepared for the next stage of their education.

- The quality of pupils' handwriting and presentation skills has been transformed since the last inspection, as a result of consistent implementation of school policies across classes. Similarly, a strong focus on ensuring that pupils are very secure in their basic number operations has secured a rapid improvement in attainment and progress in mathematics.
- However, the focus on getting English and mathematics right has led to some weaknesses developing in other parts of the curriculum. In seeking to provide opportunities for pupils to write in other subjects, important subject-specific skills are not always developed appropriately. In science there is much description of the natural world but little practical investigation or enquiry.
- In religious education, pupils are taught the main features of a variety of faiths, but do not always reflect sufficiently deeply, or spiritually, on cultural and religious differences. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is otherwise good. Pupils of different backgrounds integrate well, and develop values of tolerance and respect. The curriculum and extra-curricular provision has been strengthened to develop pupils' understanding of democracy and its function in British society. As a result, pupils enthusiastically take on a variety of leadership roles. For example, some are trained and work very confidently as lunchtime play leaders. Recently, two senior pupils were appointed as 'pupil governors' and attended a meeting of the governing body.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - is now very effective in carrying out its roles and responsibilities for monitoring the work of the school
 - understands school performance information and is increasingly finding out about the learning of pupils through visits to classrooms
 - has engaged very well with leaders and staff in shaping the vision for the school and identifying development priorities
 - has a good understanding of performance management and works effectively with the headteacher to set challenging goals for improvement throughout the school
 - manages the finances of the school efficiently to improve outcomes in spite of falling rolls.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Safeguarding procedures have been audited and comply fully with requirements. Staff at all levels in the school have a very good understanding of their roles and responsibilities in keeping pupils safe, and how to report any concerns or incidents. The school works swiftly and effectively with parents, carers and outside agencies to act on concerns and keep pupils safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment **is good**

- Teachers and teaching assistants have implemented new approaches to reading, writing and mathematics to consistently good effect across the school. Their high expectations for the standard of pupils' work have, for example, transformed the quality of pupils' handwriting and presentation during the last year. Regular recall of facts about number has markedly boosted pupils' confidence in mathematics.
- Teachers know their pupils well: their assessment of pupils' work is regular and accurate. The feedback they provide for pupils, both through written comments and oral feedback in class, is of a high quality. Through this feedback, pupils know exactly how well they have done, and they also respond fully to the additional individual challenges that teachers set them to extend their learning further. This underpins the strong progress made by pupils across the school. It also makes the pupils themselves very reflective learners, who can discuss their assessments and ways to raise standards further.
- Teachers use assessment information well to plan work that offers effective challenge and support to pupils of different abilities, including those with special educational needs. Teachers work well with teaching assistants to plan specific support to enable lower attainers to develop basic skills and higher attainers to work to the highest standards. Just occasionally work is too challenging for younger pupils in Key Stage 1.
- Teachers manage their classes well and relationships between teachers and pupils are very constructive. Teachers' questioning of pupils in class discussions is often a key strength; it encourages pupils to remember basic facts and to extend their thinking about topics. In the Reception class, the staff constantly reinforce good development of language and vocabulary through their interaction with children.
- Weaknesses in the curriculum and resources for science mean that staff lack confidence in teaching the

practical and applied aspects of the subject. As a result, too much low-level, descriptive work is planned for pupils. While pupils expressed enthusiasm for much of their learning, especially in mathematics, some told inspectors that they did not enjoy science.

- Pupils and most parents value the school's approach to regular homework that encourages pupils to extend their learning through activities out of class and with their families.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are proud to wear the uniform of their school. They conduct themselves very confidently, for example in discussion with adults. They are keen to make a positive contribution to school life, and willingly take on leadership roles in a wide variety of activities.
- Most pupils and parents feel that the school looks after children well. A culture prevails across the school that makes pupils' safety and well-being paramount, so that all staff understand their responsibilities in recognising and reporting any concerns. Pupils learn to keep themselves safe, including when online.
- Pupils are very confident that they can report any worries they have to members of staff and that these will be taken seriously. They like the way that the first aid station has been moved outside at playtime so that they can receive swift attention if needed.
- Pupils confirm that incidents of bullying are rare and that staff respond when bullying is reported, although a few cases are reported to have persisted. School leaders engage with parents quickly to successfully resolve such concerns. Pupils can talk about different sorts of bullying and its harmful effects; the recent anti-bullying week reinforced pupils' understanding in this respect.
- Pupils' attendance has improved markedly since the last inspection. Attendance is above average and the number who miss school often is very low. Lateness to school is rare and pupils are very punctual in arriving at lessons and activities. Absence and lateness are followed up tenaciously by the school office, and pupils take much pride in receiving awards for good attendance.
- Positive steps have been taken during the last year to encourage pupils to engage in healthy activities, through the many activities on offer on the playground to the wider involvement in school sports.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Around the school building and in lessons, pupils' conduct is calm, orderly and considerate. They show a keen interest in learning and are attentive to their teachers. Disruption in lessons is extremely rare. There have been no exclusions during the last academic year or during this year to date.
- Pupils are generally at ease with one another and with adults, and were relaxed and conversational in all discussions with inspectors.
- On the playground, pupils get on well together. Play is boisterous, however, and minor accidents do occur. Some of the older boys in particular do not take enough account of the consequences of their activities on others.

Outcomes for pupils are good

- Pupils make good progress across all key stages in the school, particularly in securing their basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics. They are therefore well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Children's skills develop well in all areas of learning in the Reception class, so that the proportion reaching a good level of development was above average overall in 2015.
- Children's progress in reading and writing in the Reception class is supported by a well-taught programme of phonics. Good phonics knowledge and skills underpin pupils' confidence in reading across the school. Pupils' attainment in the Year 1 phonics test was above average in 2014 and improved further in 2015.
- Pupils' writing skills have developed strongly during the last year, although boys' improvement has lagged behind that of girls. Better basic pencil control and letter formation has improved the presentation of writing of younger children. Pupils' spelling has improved markedly and is now good, as they apply their

phonics knowledge and are in the habit of checking spellings using dictionaries. Pupils write widely in a range of different forms and styles.

- In mathematics, pupils have a very secure grasp of basic number routines and multiplication tables, and a good awareness of shape and space. As a result they are able to tackle more complex mathematics problems with confidence, and apply good reasoning to justify their approaches. Many pupils say that they really enjoy their mathematics, because the work is challenging and interesting.
- In English and mathematics, the quality of pupils' work in their well-organised and neatly presented books is testament to the good progress they make. This is confirmed by the school's internal assessment information. Results from national assessments at Key Stages 1 and 2 in 2015 provide further confirmation of success, as standards were at least in line with and often above national averages. Pupils' progress between Key Stages 1 and 2 in 2015 generally compared favourably with the national average across all subjects and for all groups of pupils.
- Higher attainers respond well to the regular challenges provided by their teachers. In 2015, more than a fifth of pupils attained the highest Level 6 in national tests in mathematics, which is more than twice the proportion of pupils nationally.
- The progress of the small number of disadvantaged pupils is monitored carefully on an individual basis. The 2015 national assessments for Year 6 pupils reflected the success of the support given to these pupils, because their progress exceeded that of other pupils in reading and writing, helping them to make up lost ground. Nonetheless, gaps in attainment for this group remain, so that in 2015 national assessments disadvantaged pupils were over a year behind their peers in mathematics and writing.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make progress which is broadly in line with their peers. Pupils for whom English is an additional language make good progress in response to the specialist support they receive.
- Pupils' progress in science is limited because they are not given enough opportunities to develop their skills of scientific enquiry.

Early years provision

is good

- Children join the Reception class with skills that are generally typical for their age, and quickly develop into confident and articulate young people. The development of children's language is a particular strength as every opportunity is taken by teachers to enrich their vocabulary. So for example when discussing reasons for handwashing children use words such as 'poison' and 'germs', while at snacktime children describe the taste and texture of their food.
- Staff work well together to nurture children's good academic and personal development, so that children can sit respectfully through and contribute to whole-school assemblies, change themselves quickly for physical education, talk confidently about their work, and enjoy singing and listening to stories. By the end of Reception the proportion reaching a good level of development is above average. The proportions achieving at least the expected standard is above average in nearly all areas of learning. Children are therefore well prepared for Year 1.
- Children are well taught. The assessment of children when they arrive and as they make progress through the year is accurate and precise, and used to ensure that children make the most of well-planned activities to take their learning forward. The activities offered to children are broad and varied, but limitations on practical activities, particularly in the outdoor areas, place some constraints on the development of children's imagination, initiative and creativity.
- A strong programme of phonics supports good development of children's early reading and writing skills. This is evident in their excellent 'learning journeys', through which pupils' progress is shared very well with parents. Parents speak very positively about teaching and communication in the Reception class, and especially about the quality of induction when children first arrive.
- Children behave well, cooperate constructively and conduct themselves safely. Procedures to keep children safe are thorough and well managed.
- The early years provision is well led and managed. The school leadership team and the teacher in charge of early years monitor and evaluate provision accurately and set challenging targets for outcomes. Leaders identify clearly the areas for further improvement, including in carrying through the whole-school priority for improving boys' writing. Additional funding for disadvantaged children is very effectively managed to deploy resources to support progress.

School details

Unique reference number	124139
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10005191

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	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	177
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nigel Cox
Headteacher	Lynn Dunn
Telephone number	01902 761153
Website	http://bhyllsacreprimaryschool.org
Email address	office@bhyllsacre.staffs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	19–20 March 2014

Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average primary school where the number on roll has declined since the previous inspection.
- The large majority of pupils are White British, although a minority of pupils are drawn from many other heritages. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is greater than that found in most schools.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged (those known to be eligible for free school meals, and those looked-after children in public care) is below average.
- A relatively low proportion of students are disabled or have special educational needs. One child is looked after in public care.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- When the school was last inspected in March 2014, it was placed in special measures, and has subsequently received four monitoring inspections.
- The current headteacher was appointed in September 2014.
- No support is now provided by any local or national leaders of education; this support ended prior to the third monitoring inspection in June.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching in all classes over 19 lessons, including two joint observations with the headteacher. They looked at pupils' books, and heard pupils from Key Stages 1 and 2 read. Inspectors also observed sessions to provide additional support to individual pupils, and they attended whole-school assemblies.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, governors, and school staff and leaders. Informal discussions also took place with staff and pupils, including in the playground during lunchtime and breaktime.
- The inspector took account of 19 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire to provide evidence for the inspection, alongside the school's own survey of parents and carers. Discussions were also held with parents before the start of the school day.
- The inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including assessment records, the school's self-evaluation and development plan, and its safeguarding policies and records.

Inspection team

Ian Hodgkinson, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Martin Pye	Her Majesty's Inspector
John Bates	Ofsted Inspector

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