

# Palfrey Junior School

Dale Street, Walsall, West Midlands WS1 4AH

## Inspection dates

1–2 December 2015

## Overall effectiveness

## Requires improvement

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils' attainment in 2015, particularly in mathematics and English grammar, was below average.
- Over time, too few pupils have reached levels they are capable of in all subjects. Progress of current pupils is improving but is still not consistently good across all year groups or between classes in each year group.
- Leaders now regularly review how well teachers are performing. They have improved their work, learning from good practice elsewhere. However, leaders have not always tackled weaker performance quickly enough.
- Teaching has improved recently. However, the quality of teaching varies too much in writing and mathematics. Not all teachers have consistently high expectations of what their pupils can achieve.
- Teaching assistants do not always use information about what pupils know and can do effectively to make sure that work is not too easy or too hard. This is particularly so for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.
- Teachers do not always demand that pupils use their higher-level grammar, punctuation and spelling in all their writing.
- Pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to apply higher-level skills in mathematical reasoning and problem-solving activities.

### The school has the following strengths

- This is an improving school. In the past year, the leadership team and governors have worked well with teachers to improve pupils' progress, especially in reading.
- Pupils benefit from excellent support for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils talk passionately about the importance of key British values.
- Disadvantaged pupils continue to make similar rates of progress to other pupils in the school.
- Governance is strong. The experienced chair, well supported by members of the interim executive board, holds leaders effectively to account for pupils' performance.
- Pupils conduct themselves well in lessons and around school. Positive relationships between adults and pupils, coupled with robust safeguarding systems, ensure that pupils are safe.
- School leaders are now effective in tackling poorer attendance.

## 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 quality of teaching in writing and mathematics by teachers:
  - raising expectations, particularly for the most-able pupils
  - insisting that pupils practise and embed their grammar, punctuation and spelling skills in all forms of writing
  - providing pupils with more frequent opportunities to apply their higher-level mathematics skills in reasoning and problem-solving activities.
  
- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that all leaders:
  - check that teachers present sufficiently challenging work for all ability groups
  - identify training needs for teaching assistants and classroom support staff to help ensure that pupils' targets are sharpened, particularly for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- In recent years staffing instability resulted in weaker teaching overall in the school. This meant that pupils did not make the progress they should have. Teaching is now stable, with permanent positions secured in all year groups. As a result pupils' rates of progress have improved.
- Leadership of teaching is not as effective as it needs to be. A newly formed leadership team is now in place, with clear roles and responsibilities defined for English and mathematics. Improvement in teaching is now evident. However, leaders are not rigorous enough in checking that teachers consistently set work that challenges all groups of pupils sufficiently.
- Until recently, leaders have not sought to work with other agencies and schools to see what effective practice looks like and to consider how their school can make improvements. This has resulted in poor standards. Leaders, encouraged by the interim executive board, now actively seek out good practice and implement better ways of working. This includes improvements which ensure that pupils' current performance is accurately documented. Such work helps leaders understand which pupils require additional challenge in their learning.
- Teachers, including those who are newly qualified, value the support they receive from school leaders. Leaders have ensured that appropriate training, for example aimed at improving the teaching of physical education, has been offered and that teachers have taken up these opportunities. Regular pupils' progress discussions, involving subject and senior leaders, are now in place. Leaders are not yet rigorous enough in checking that pupils are receiving sufficiently demanding work.
- School leaders, ably supported by the federation headteachers and the local authority, have developed a culture of higher expectations for teaching and learning. While teachers are providing more challenging work, rates of progress are not consistently good in all subjects, most noticeably in writing and mathematics.
- Leaders have not been effective in ensuring that disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make consistently good progress. This is due to variability in how well support staff work with these pupils. Leaders are aware that staff require specific training which would enable them to identify individual needs and then sharpen progress targets.
- Subject leaders have developed plans which aim to motivate pupils in their learning. They are aware that more work needs to be done to ensure that pupils apply their key grammar, punctuation and mathematical skills in all subjects.
- The school provides excellent support for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Leaders ensure that pupils are taught British values well. Further, staff work with pupils to ensure that they develop a secure understanding of what such values mean to them. As a result leaders have created a climate where pupils behave well and are keen to learn in an environment free from discrimination.
- The local authority provides good support to the school. Its representative visits school regularly to meet with senior leaders, and members of the interim executive board, to monitor and evaluate the school's performance. Leaders are now well supported and have made the improvements identified at the previous inspection.
- Leaders make good use of pupil premium funds to improve disadvantaged pupils' progress. Teachers and teaching assistants have been appointed to provide these pupils with additional support. Progress for this group continues to be in line with their peers.
- The school has used its primary school physical education and sports funding successfully to meet its aims of increasing the opportunities for pupils to take part in physical activity and to swim more regularly.
- **The governance of the school**
  - The effectiveness of the interim executive board has improved, particularly over the last six months. It is effective in its role.
  - The chair is clear about how the board works with school leaders to ensure that improvements are sustained. He is well supported by members who have well-honed skills and experience regarding school improvement.
  - In the past governors have not provided sufficient challenge to the headteacher and other leaders. For example, they were not rigorous in checking how well pupils were progressing in their mathematics last year. This led to disappointing outcomes. Governors are now far more challenging, with minutes from meetings showing that members continue to question and demand to see further evidence in order to assure themselves that leaders are presenting accurate information.

- Governors know how well teachers are performing. They understand how leaders manage teachers' performance and that only good teaching is rewarded. Improved reports from leaders are helping them understand how weaker teaching is being identified and subsequently tackled.
- Governors have ensured that staff have received suitable training and are clear about their responsibilities in keeping pupils safe. Together with leaders, they ensure that statutory duties for safeguarding pupils are met, including those relating to child protection. The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment** requires improvement

- Although teaching has improved and continues to do so, previous weaker teaching means that pupils are having to make up lost time. Better teaching is now leading to pupils making sound rates of progress. However, improvement is not yet rapid enough for pupils to secure good outcomes in all subjects by the time they leave school.
- Teachers do not always give pupils, particularly the most able, work that is sufficiently demanding. This is because teachers do not ensure that their planning enables this group of pupils to work on tasks specifically designed to challenge them effectively. This is especially the case in writing and mathematics.
- Teachers are now using their secure subject knowledge to question pupils more effectively. However, this is inconsistent between year groups. Where most effective, teachers listen to pupils' responses and then ask questions which enable pupils to deepen their understanding. Too often initial questions are not developed further, which restricts pupils' ability to secure a better understanding.
- Teaching assistants, who work with disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, do not provide good enough support and challenge for these pupils. This is because specific barriers to learning are not clearly identified, which leads to tasks being selected that do not precisely address the needs of the pupils.
- Teachers' marking of pupils' writing and mathematics work is increasingly helping pupils make better progress. However, this is not consistently the case. Its effectiveness varies between classes in each year group.
- Teaching of mathematics is better this year than previously, with teachers demonstrating secure subject knowledge. However, pupils are not developing sufficient skills in their reasoning and problem solving. This is because there are not enough opportunities for pupils to use such skills in their mathematical activities.
- Teachers have ensured that pupils have more opportunities to write across a range of subjects, enabling them to practice skills more often. Teachers do not always insist on pupils applying skills in their writing, for example the use of more complex grammar, punctuation and spelling skills. As a result pupils do not show that they can consistently use these skills to develop better writing across all subjects.
- Pupils make good progress in reading, and talk about their enjoyment of reading, as a result of better teaching. Teachers focus on developing pupils' comprehension skills. This can be seen in their group reading sessions and in their workbooks where they are required to respond to questions about the books they are reading. This enables them to form well-considered opinions. Pupils say they enjoy reading at home and this helps them in their homework activities.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare** requires improvement

### **Personal development and welfare**

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils typically display positive attitudes to their learning. When they do not this is usually because they are not sufficiently challenged by activities they are presented with. This is especially the case for the most-able pupils, disabled pupils and pupils who have special educational needs.
- Leaders ensure that all staff attend regular training related to pupils' welfare, and then check that staff follow agreed processes. This has led to the development of a school environment in which pupils feel and are safe.
- Leaders, including governors, recognise the importance of children's welfare by ensuring that all policies are reviewed and kept up to date. Such policies include those related to child protection. All staff working with pupils are checked to ensure that they are suitable to carry out their roles.

- Parents and pupils agree that bullying is rare and when it does occur staff deal with it effectively. Pupils have a good understanding of bullying and how it can take different forms, such as cyber bullying. Staff are vigilant in classrooms and around school, which helps ensure that discrimination does not occur.

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Pupils work and play well together, and they exhibit a strong sense of right and wrong. On a few occasions pupils' play can become boisterous on the playground. This results in some inconsiderate behaviour towards others.
- Pupils are interested in the topics teachers choose for them to study, showing this by collaborating well in their learning. This leads to positive attitudes which contribute well to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are tolerant of others and respectful of adults, not only in classrooms but also in their behaviour around school.
- Attendance for all pupils is below the national average. A high proportion of pupils are absent on days when specific religious festivals occur. When such days are removed from the calculation attendance is above the national average. Leaders have been more effective this term in reducing unauthorised absence, including holidays taken in term time.
- Pupils show good conduct when moving around school, consistently using good manners between themselves and with adults.
- Parents are confident that their children are well looked after in school. They say that behaviour issues are addressed appropriately by teachers and leaders.

## **Outcomes for pupils**

### **require improvement**

- The quality of teaching is not consistently good enough to ensure that all groups of pupils make good progress in writing and mathematics as they move through the school. This was confirmed by work seen in pupils' books, which showed that pupils were not sufficiently challenged in their activities.
- National curriculum test results and assessments for Year 6 pupils in 2015 showed attainment was below the national average overall, with English grammar and mathematics being the weakest subjects. Progress was not good, as fewer pupils made expected, or better than expected, progress in any subject compared with others of their age nationally. Progress in mathematics was weakest.
- Pupils arrive in Year 3 with standards that are above average. School leaders check how well pupils perform at the start of the Year 3 curriculum. Leaders and teachers are more confident and competent this year in assessing how well pupils are progressing.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs do not make consistently good progress relative to their starting points. This is because pupils are given work which is not sharply focused on helping them make the progress they need to.
- Over time, pupils attain less well in mathematics than in any other subject. Last year, the proportion of most-able pupils making expected and better than expected progress in mathematics was lower than the proportions nationally. This year there is some improvement but not consistently so. This is because pupils do not receive sufficiently demanding work in their reasoning and problem-solving activities.
- So far this year pupils' progress in writing is not as good as their progress in reading. This is because pupils' writing does not consistently show effective use of grammar, punctuation and accurate spelling. This is especially the case for the most-able pupils.
- Pupils' current achievement in reading is better than in other subjects. When reading aloud pupils demonstrate secure phonic awareness (knowledge of the sounds that letters make) and are able to answer questions about the difficult books they are reading.
- Year 6 test results in 2015 showed that disadvantaged pupils attained similar outcomes in reading, writing and English grammar when compared with their classmates. They were a term ahead in mathematics. When compared with other pupils nationally they attained similar outcomes in writing and were approximately two terms behind in reading, mathematics and English grammar. Progress of the current group of disadvantaged pupils is similar to their classmates.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	104160
<b>Local authority</b>	Walsall
<b>Inspection number</b>	10001605

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	360
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Interim executive board
<b>Chair</b>	Roland Roberts
<b>Headteacher</b>	Tina Dunkley
<b>Telephone number</b>	01922 721092
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.palfrey-j.walsall.sch.uk">www.palfrey-j.walsall.sch.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:postbox@palfrey-j.walsall.sch.uk">postbox@palfrey-j.walsall.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	5 November 2013

## Information about this school

- Palfrey Junior is larger than schools of this type.
- Almost all the pupils are from minority ethnic groups, with significant numbers from Pakistani and Bangladeshi backgrounds.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is above the national average (the pupil premium is additional funding to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority).
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is average.
- The school does not meet the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.
- The headteacher was absent from school at the time of the inspection, due to illness. The school is being supported by two headteachers from Alumwell Junior/Butts Federation. Its executive headteacher is a local leader of education.
- The interim executive board was put in place in June 2014. Together with the local authority the board secured support from the federation at the end of September 2015. The interim executive board is currently considering options regarding how the school can be best supported moving forward.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 15 lessons, six of which were observed with senior leaders and the headteachers from the federation.
- Inspectors held meetings with pupils, the chair of the interim executive board and another governor, staff and a local authority adviser.
- Inspectors took into account the 21 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire. Inspectors also spoke with parents and considered a recent school survey of parent views.
- Inspectors observed the work of the school, looking at a range of documentation. This included an examination of work in pupils' books.
- Inspectors talked to pupils about their reading and listened to them read.
- The school's child protection and safeguarding procedures were scrutinised.

## Inspection team

Jeremy Bird, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Sarah Noble	Ofsted Inspector
Kathryn Hanson	Ofsted Inspector

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