

# Lodge Farm Junior Mixed and Infant School

Willenhall School Sports College Campus, Furzebank Way, Willenhall, West Midlands WV12 4BU

## Inspection dates

26–27 January 2016

## Overall effectiveness

**Inadequate**

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an inadequate school

- Since going into special measures in 2013, academic standards at the school have not improved and remain inadequate.
- The school's performance has continued to be poor because the previous school leadership failed to tackle key weaknesses in teaching, learning and behaviour. Expectations have been too low for too long.
- Until recently, a lack of ambition in the school has hindered the work of staff and the progress of pupils. Over time, staff have not received regular training and pupils' poor achievement has been accepted as the norm.
- Pupils leave this school at the end of Year 6 having reached standards in reading, writing and mathematics that are well below average.
- There is some weak teaching in the school.
- Some lessons are dull. Pupils do not know what is expected from them or carry out tasks that do not assist their learning.
- Many staff do not know how well pupils are doing. Assessment information is often inaccurate. Consequently, pupils have not been given the work they need to achieve well.
- In several classes, staff spend a lot of time setting activities or issuing instructions that serve no productive purpose.
- In many cases, pupils who have special educational needs or disability do not get the right support. This hinders their progress and damages their well-being at school.
- Although outcomes in the early years are stronger than those seen elsewhere, there are some shortcomings in the leadership of this phase.

### The school has the following strengths

- The interim executive headteacher, senior leaders and members of the interim executive board of governors have a good grasp of the current situation.
- Pupils are taught about the difference between right and wrong and say they feel safe in school.
- Current key leaders are bringing change for the better. Teaching is starting to improve and some pupils are doing better than ever before.
- Pupils' behaviour and attendance have improved because leaders make sure the school's rules are followed.

## 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.

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

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

- Urgently improve the quality of teaching in order to eradicate underachievement and raise standards in reading, writing and mathematics, by making sure that:
  - effective practice is noticed and shared, and that weak teaching is challenged
  - all staff are given clear guidance and access to good-quality training so that they understand what is expected from them
  - there is a reliable and manageable whole-school system for tracking pupils' progress so that staff have access to accurate information about pupils' achievement and use it to plan purposeful lessons
  - teachers check how well pupils are keeping up in lessons and then adjust their teaching as needs be
  - teachers do not waste time on unnecessary nagging or issuing instructions that serve no purpose
  - pupils who have special educational needs or disability get the right sort of support at the right time.
- Continue to improve pupils' behaviour by making sure that:
  - all pupils have the chance to experience feelings of success and pride at school
  - the school rules are followed all of the time
  - all staff challenge pupils who use bad language
  - the different areas of the school are kept clean and free of clutter
  - pupils hang their coats up and keep cloakrooms tidy
  - school leaders and parents work together in order to improve the attendance of those pupils who miss too much school for no good reason
  - pupils get the support, guidance and help they need in order to learn how to exercise self-discipline.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
  - reviewing the leadership structure across the whole school so that everyone's strengths are used to best effect
  - establishing a clearly understood system for appraising the work of all staff so that they know exactly what is expected from them and can be held to account in a fair way
  - making sure that staff get regular, realistic and helpful feedback about their work so that they can grow and develop in their roles.
- Improve provision in the early years by making sure that:
  - staff give careful thought to how to organise and make the most of different learning opportunities
  - the indoor areas are given a thorough clean and the outdoor areas are improved
  - the leadership of the early years is up to date with current developments in practice and sets well-informed plans for future development of the provision.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### requires improvement

- In November 2015, a new executive headteacher took on the leadership of the school. At the same time, an interim senior leadership team, made up of staff from two other schools, was brought in. This new leadership team has brought about many sweeping changes. Much-needed, and long-overdue, improvements are now being made. At last, after a period of ineffective leadership, a firm hand is bringing about change for the better. Expectations have risen, poor behaviour has been stopped and teaching is improving. In places, standards are beginning to rise.
- The current leadership regime is very strict. In every word and action, the executive headteacher and her senior team have made it clear to staff and pupils that poor behaviour in school will not be tolerated and that standards must rise. Already, senior leaders have made sure that lessons proceed without disruption. New school rules are enforced and any misdemeanour is followed up quickly and efficiently. Consequently, pupils now feel safe in school, there is order in the school building and all are required to work hard.
- There is, however, much more to be done. Over time, leadership responsibilities within the school have not been managed well. The leadership of early years and special educational needs, for example, has been delegated to just one person. This has been an overwhelming responsibility in a school of this size and the leadership of both these key areas has suffered as a result.
- There have been no proper checks on the quality of the school's work to support pupils who need extra help. Pupils with particular complex needs have not received the specialist help they need and this has caused problems for them, for other pupils and for staff. This situation is now improving, but only because of the intervention of the new interim leadership team.
- School leaders have made sure that pupil premium funding has been used for the correct purposes. This significant amount of money has been used to employ a family liaison officer and additional teaching assistants. It has also paid for extra classroom equipment. The impact on pupils' achievement, however, has been limited. In part, this has been due to the lack of ambition in the school. Leaders have not made regular checks to find out whether this extra spending was actually making a positive difference and have accepted poor achievement too readily.
- There is a similar story to tell about the use of the primary sports funds. Extra sports teaching has been provided but, until recently, leaders made insufficient checks on its quality. During this inspection, it was difficult to gain evidence about the difference this extra resource has made.
- The school does teach pupils about the difference between right and wrong. Even when behaviour was poor, most pupils realised this was not right. During this inspection, many pupils told inspectors they are pleased that behaviour has improved. Similarly, numerous pupils can explain why being respectful, considerate, helpful and hardworking are all important qualities that will serve them well, both now and in their future lives.
- The school curriculum is suitably broad and all pupils get the opportunity to learn in different subjects. Having said this, the school's current focus is primarily on raising standards in reading, writing and mathematics, and this means that considerably more time is spent on these core skills than, say, history or geography. Given the school's current position, this is reasonable for the time being.
- In order to ensure that pupils do have opportunity to channel their energies and talents in creative ways, there is a focus on the performing arts, such as dance. Indeed, during this inspection a worthwhile dance session was running in the school hall, both during and after the school day.
- **The governance of the school**
  - Governance is increasingly effective. The final monitoring letter, written by Her Majesty's Inspector and published in September 2015, prompted the interim executive board into taking decisive action. In November 2015, following liaison with the local authority and consultation with the Department for Education, a new senior leadership team was put in place. Already, the benefits of this decision are plain to see. Looking to the future, the board is steering the school towards conversion to academy status, and consultation with parents and other interested parties is currently taking place. In the meantime, board members display a clear understanding that standards remain inadequate and are fully behind the current school leaders in their ambition to eradicate weak teaching and lift standards.

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Parents, pupils and staff all agree that behaviour at the school is considerably better than it used to be and that unsafe behaviour has been stopped. Policies and training are up to date and procedures operate properly. Record keeping is well organised and files on staff and pupils are managed very well by staff in the school office. The school site is secure although, from time to time, older students from the nearby secondary school try to distract or pester pupils by calling through the school fence. When this was observed happening during this inspection, the situation was managed swiftly by school staff.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inadequate**

- The quality of teaching in the school varies quite significantly from class to class. Some teaching is pitched to meet pupils' particular needs and some is not. Consequently, pupils' progress is erratic.
- In several classes, teaching is dull. Pupils are presented with work to do with no proper explanation of how to go about it or what is expected. Consequently, pupils either figure it out for themselves and finish the work easily or struggle to complete tasks because they are confused. In one class, for example, pupils were required to think of adjectives to inject into a sentence. There was little to stimulate their thinking or imagination and the task did not build on pupils' different skill levels in any progressive way. Some pupils were unable to come up with ideas so did nothing, while others tackled it with ease.
- At other times, teaching is focused on giving pupils unnecessary instructions or the constant nagging of pupils for no good reason. In response, pupils stop listening and appear bored. While unruly behaviour in class has been stopped, there are times when pupils are able to sit quietly and do nothing and no-one appears to notice. In some classes, pupils' exercise book covers are dirty and this does not help to instil a sense of pride in their work.
- Teachers have been able to see effective practice in other schools and this is helping to raise expectations and improve day-to-day practice in classrooms. In a recent staff survey, teachers agreed that the drive and ambition of the current leadership have brought about many improvements, especially in pupils' attitudes to classroom work. They realise that teaching needs to improve and several teachers commented that they welcome the high expectations and increased sense of accountability that have been introduced.
- Indeed, in some parts of the school, teaching has improved. In the Year 2 class and in some of the Key Stage 2 classes, teaching is increasingly effective. Pupils are prompted to think hard and teachers check what they understand before moving on to new work. Even so, across the school, assessment remains weak. Some teaching staff do not know what pupils already understand and do not have systems or routines in place to help them find out. This must improve quickly.
- Across the school, there is a greater sense of purpose and pupils are encouraged to see the link between hard work and success. Work in pupils' books is better this term than last term and, in all classes, the school's marking policy is implemented with consistency.
- There are flashes of brilliance that give real insight into pupils' knowledge, capabilities and enjoyment of learning. For example, in response to a teacher's questions about the meaning of different words, some of the answers provided were remarkably eloquent. Whole-school singing is enthusiastic and pupils' energetic participation in a very active dance session demonstrated what can be achieved when pupils are motivated and inspired.

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

### **Personal development and welfare**

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Until this year, pupils who have found it difficult to manage their behaviour or to cope with aspects of school life have not been given the support they need. This has resulted in some confrontational situations that have been distressing or frightening for adults and children. School records document some telling examples of unacceptable situations happening again and again. This is no longer the case because proper attention to pupils' behavioural needs is now in place. However, clearly this situation went on for too long and caused considerable disruption to learning and pupils' well-being in school. Many pupils became resigned to crisis management and either kept their heads down or fuelled the trouble. Consequently, they have not developed into confident, inquisitive learners. Recent improvements in classroom practice are

helping to remedy this but there is still some way to go in order to make sure that all pupils develop the self-discipline needed to become successful learners.

- Bullying or unkind behaviour is not common but it can happen at times. When it does, it is stopped. Pupils falling out with one another or tempers flaring on the playground are more common occurrences and can lead to upsets. Most of the time, these are followed up properly and sensibly and are resolved to everyone's satisfaction.
- In their comments to inspectors, pupils said they feel safe at school because behaviour is better than it used to be. Parents also said they have confidence in the school's work to keep everyone safe. Inspection evidence confirms that current procedures to keep pupils safe in school are effective.

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Lessons now proceed without disruption and pupils move around the school site in an orderly, controlled fashion. It is clear that this is the result of a strict regime brought in by the new leadership.
- Supervision on the playground has increased. Adults wear high -visibility jackets so that they stand out from the crowd. Lunchtime supervisors are reminded to stay attentive at all times. Staff collect their classes from the playground and walk them smartly back into class. Disobedience is now rare and any wavering from the rules is quashed quickly. All of this has had a marked impact on improving playtime behaviour.
- Nevertheless, without such close supervision, some poor habits still surface. On their way into the dining hall, pupils discard their coats so that they are strewn carelessly around the cloakroom floor. In addition, pupils report that bad language is used by some pupils, especially when the adults are not around to hear.
- Attendance at the school has improved. Figures for this year so far are close to the national average, which is much better than the attendance levels seen in previous years. School leaders follow up unexplained absence with tenacity and challenge families whose children miss school for no good reason.
- The number of fixed-term exclusions from school last year was high. In the main, this was because exclusion was used as repetitive short-term punishment rather than for any constructive purpose. This policy has now changed. This year, there has been just one fixed-term exclusion.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

### **are inadequate**

- Since going into special measures in October 2013, standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of both key stages have failed to improve. In fact, in reading and mathematics, standards have gone from bad to worse. Any early improvements seen during monitoring inspections in 2014 and early 2015 were short-lived. In 2015, pupils left this school at the end of Year 6 having reached standards in reading, writing and mathematics that were well below average. There is no doubt that pupils who left the school in recent times were not as well prepared for secondary education as they should have been.
- For many pupils, these low standards have been the result of slow progress caused by weak teaching. On top of this, in some classes, learning has been disrupted by poor behaviour. Until last term, staff were unable to focus on teaching because they were trying to cope with bad behaviour. The bad behaviour has now been stopped and, in places, standards are rising. However, many pupils still have a lot of lost ground to make up.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability have not received the support and help they need. The school has been quick to identify particular needs and to come up with plans to support pupils, but some of the checks on their progress and the effectiveness of the support provided have been weak. Pupils have floundered in class and their lack of success has resulted in them losing interest in school. In other cases, good intentions and a caring approach have not equated to effective support.
- Disadvantaged pupils did slightly better than their in-school peers in the 2015 Key Stage 2 tests, but both groups underachieved. Whether disadvantaged or not, all pupils were more than a year behind other pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The Year 6 pupils are now taught in ability groups every morning. The most-able pupils are responding well to this. Work in class and in books shows that, on the whole, these pupils are doing quite well. They present work neatly, get a lot done and the standard is good. The most-able pupils in other year groups get rather a mixed deal. Some are pushing ahead but others are being kept back because of teachers' low expectations or because classroom routines do not give them the opportunity to excel.

- On a positive note, the standard reached in the most recent Year 1 letters and sounds check was close to the national figure. This indicates that the pupils coming up through the school are further ahead with their early literacy skills than in previous years. This is encouraging. Furthermore, in all classes, pupils are now being made to work hard. While the quality of teaching is still variable, there is a consistent approach to behaviour management which means pupils can concentrate on the tasks they are given. Pupils are getting more done and, increasingly, more and more pupils are experiencing feelings of success at school.

## Early years provision

## requires improvement

- Inspectors' examination of provision in the early years found a mixed picture. On one hand there are some strengths and evidence of improvement over time. On the other hand, there are a few shortcomings that act as obstacles to further development of the provision.
- The key weakness is that the leadership of the early years lacks strategic vision and an up-to-date awareness of the current needs within the phase. This limits the potential of the early years provision to develop and improve further.
- While children are always kept occupied and safe, staff do not make the most of the activities they plan in order to assist learning. When children are engaged in various practical or creative activities, for example, adults often leave them to it rather than exploring opportunities to develop language and assess learning.
- At other times, tasks are not organised using common sense. During this inspection, for example, children were seen battling against the wind and rain as they tried to produce a piece of writing. Paper and letter prompts were getting blown about and children struggled to get much done. There seemed to be no good reason to be doing this activity outside in such weather.
- Furthermore, the outside learning area is not well equipped and would benefit from an investment of imagination and money. Inside, the whole area is rather dirty and could do with a thorough clean.
- On a day-to-day basis, however, the quality of teaching does have several strengths. Adults are warm, kindly and calm. Children in their care learn to behave well, take turns and cooperate. The teaching of phonics (letters and sounds) is effective and the impact of this is being seen in the rising phonics standards going up into Year 1.
- While standards in the rest of the school have remained low, achievement across the early years has improved. Indeed, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year has increased slightly each year. The most recent results are not far behind the national figures. Considering that the majority of children start in the Nursery class with skills that are below those typical for their age, this represents some good progress. Indeed, while there is work to be done to strengthen leadership in the early years and create a long-term vision for the provision, the quality of day-to-day teaching has proven more effective than teaching elsewhere in the school.



## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	104215
<b>Local authority</b>	Walsall
<b>Inspection number</b>	10001606

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

<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>	340
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The interim executive board
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Jeremy Bench
<b>Interim Executive Headteacher</b>	Mrs Gill Morris
<b>Telephone number</b>	01902 368587
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.lodge-farm.walsall.sch.uk">www.lodge-farm.walsall.sch.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:postbox@lodge-farm.walsall.sch.uk">postbox@lodge-farm.walsall.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	17–18 October 2013

## Information about this school

- Lodge Farm Junior Mixed and Infant School is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Most of the pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is just above the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils at the school is above the national average. The term 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to describe those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority. These pupils receive additional support from pupil premium funding.
- In 2014, the school met the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6. The unvalidated results for 2015 indicate that the school is unlikely to meet the 2015 floor standards.
- The school offers part-time early years provision for Nursery-age children and full-time early years provision for Reception-age children.
- In November 2015, the school's permanent headteacher left her post. At the same time, a new executive headteacher and five new senior leaders were appointed as an interim senior leadership team. The executive headteacher and three of the senior leaders are from Northwood Park Primary Academy in Wolverhampton. The other two senior leaders are the headteacher and deputy headteacher from Rushall Primary School in Walsall.
- Prior to this inspection, the school had been in special measures for more than two years. It may convert to an academy later this year. Consultation about this is currently taking place.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classrooms. Some of these observations were carried out alongside senior leaders. Inspectors also attended a school singing practice and an assembly, examined pupils' work in books and on display, and considered school test and assessment information.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour, and the school's procedures, at the beginning and end of the school day, at lunch and breaktimes, and when pupils were moving about the school site and taking part in an after-school club.
- Meetings were held with pupils, staff, school leaders, subject leaders, a local authority adviser and three members of the interim executive board of governors.
- By the end of the inspection, there were 13 recent responses and three written comments on Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors looked at these, talked to some parents at school and checked the school's routines for consulting with parents. In addition, inspectors considered responses to the school's own recent survey of staff views.
- A number of school documents were examined. These included information about pupils' progress and school improvement plans. Records relating to governance, staff performance management, behaviour, attendance, safety and safeguarding were also scrutinised.

## Inspection team

Martin Pye, lead inspector  
Christopher Bandfield  
John Bates

Her Majesty's Inspector  
Ofsted Inspector  
Ofsted Inspector



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