

Briar Hill Primary School

Thorn Hill, Briar Hill, Northampton NN4 8SW

Inspection dates	26–27 May 2016
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 provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Achievement is rising across the school, because pupils now make good progress through each key stage.
- Children in the Nursery and Reception classes make good progress. Staff in the early years use their good knowledge of the children’s interests to plan activities which meet their needs well.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is now good. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and pupils are rising to the challenge to meet them.
- Senior leaders provide good support for teachers and use performance management systems effectively to develop the skills of staff. This is improving the quality of teaching and, as a result, pupils’ achievement.
- High-quality support from the improvement cluster lead has eased the transition of the new headteacher and strengthened leadership at all levels.
- In 2015, Year 1 pupils achieved above-average standards in the national phonics screening check.
- Additional government funding for disadvantaged pupils is used effectively. The gaps between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and their classmates are closing rapidly in all subjects.
- Pupils are well behaved in lessons and around the school. They frequently show their positive attitudes and good desire to learn.
- Leaders’ promotion of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Core values, such as resilience and determination, are carefully woven into every aspect of school life.
- Safeguarding is effective. The local advisory board keeps a sharp eye on all safeguarding practices. They monitor the school’s work closely to ensure that this remains a high priority for all staff at all times.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The quality and presentation of pupils’ work lacks consistency.
- Language support for pupils who speak English as an additional language varies across school.
- While attendance is rising slowly it remains below the national average.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Encourage pupils to have a greater sense of pride in their work, by ensuring that teachers insist on high standards of presentation in all subjects.
- Develop a whole-school strategy to support pupils who speak English as an additional language, so that they quickly overcome language barriers and make rapid progress in all areas of the curriculum.
- Improve attendance so that it reaches national expectations.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The high-quality support of the improvement cluster lead has facilitated the successful transition of the new headteacher. The new headteacher has raised the quality of teaching in all areas of the school. Teachers work closely with the cluster schools to share their expertise. This has raised the quality of their work to good.
- The relentless focus on values and developing the 'Growth mind-set' has lifted the school culture to one of high achievement and the pursuit of success. Leaders' high expectations are reflected throughout the school, and all adults work successfully to ensure that pupils believe in what they can achieve. This has contributed to pupils' positive attitudes to learning.
- Staff freely express their positive praise and support for the new headteacher and value the school's contribution to their own professional development. Subject leaders make a good contribution to raising standards in their areas because they are very well supported by senior leaders and benefit from external training.
- School leaders make sure that teachers' pay and performance link directly to whole-school priorities and pupils' progress. This has helped to improve the quality of teaching so that it is now typically good.
- The school reviews all aspects of its work thoroughly and leaders have a realistic and accurate view of the school's current priorities. Leaders routinely check assessment information and act quickly to address any dips so that the pace of improvements remains rapid. School improvement plans are realistic and accurately focused on key priorities. Plans to raise standards are linked to checks on the quality of teaching and achievement and are shared with staff at all levels.
- The school culture of tolerance and diversity is firmly embedded into the ethos of Briar Hill and pupils get along with each other very well. Pupils are all treated equally and accept each other's differences. Discrimination is rare and pupils frequently show their regard for each other.
- Leaders at all levels ensure that school policies are followed closely. For example, teachers apply the marking policy consistently, which results in pupils correcting and improving their work.
- Communications with parents have improved since the introduction of an online alert system. Teachers and parents use this to share information quickly and this keeps parents up to date with their children's achievements and daily school life. Parents increasingly take part in workshops run by the school and this helps them to learn more about online safety for instance, and how they can help their children with their learning.
- The new curriculum contains a good balance of English, mathematics and topic work, enhanced by a strong programme of enrichment activities. Pupils particularly enjoy learning through the many stimulating trips and visits planned for each year group and the regular sports and music events organised by the trust.
- The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptional. Briar Hill is a harmonious, multicultural community and pupils learn about others' faiths and beliefs first hand through the pupils in the 'multi-faith' prayer team. The team play an active part in delivering assemblies and base themselves in the 'Hub' area, which also serves as a place for quiet reflection. School values align with British values and are known and celebrated in each class and through curriculum topics.
- The trust provides good-quality support through the academy chain. The school accesses a full range of expertise and this is enhancing and developing the skills of leaders and teachers in all areas of the school.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The chair of the local advisory board has a very good presence in school. She is frequently on-site and has a wealth of relevant experience and understanding of the school's work. Governors form two committees and the small size of the full advisory board provides very effective transparency and depth of understanding of current school priorities.
 - Governors bring a good range of professional skills and expertise to their work and use this particularly well to support and challenge the school in equal measure. They look closely at how performance management is used to develop staff. They have supported the trust in appointing the new headteacher and sensitively managed leadership changes to retain high staff morale.
 - The impact of additional funds to boost the uptake of sport across the school is closely monitored. Governors check that pupils are actively involved in sports activities and that staff have improved skills and confidence in delivering physical education (PE) to pupils.

- Governors monitor the use of pupil premium funds to ensure that they are used effectively, and they receive regular feedback on how successfully the funding closes learning gaps for disadvantaged pupils.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. School leaders and governors have well-established partnerships with external agencies. The learning mentor plays a key role in getting to know the families of pupils new to the school and those who are vulnerable. The school minibus picks up pupils in the morning and brings them to breakfast club, to ensure a timely and safe start to the day. Safeguarding training for staff and governors is up to date. The designated safeguarding leads make thorough checks on all safeguarding practices. Governors and staff know precisely what to do in the event of a safeguarding concern and ensure that the school's safeguarding leads are highly visible and known to all staff. This ensures that staff have all of the information and guidance they need to provide highly effective support for pupils in their care.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- School leaders have placed a high priority on raising the quality of teaching and learning and this is one of the main reasons why teaching has improved and is now typically good in the majority of classes.
- In the majority of lessons, teachers express their high expectations and pupils make their best efforts to achieve them. Teachers plan lessons together, sharing ideas and expertise so that pupils have a good variety of challenging activities and opportunities from which to choose. For example, Year 5 pupils in each class were engrossed in writing a detailed description of a murderous character, inspired by the previous day's theme of 'forensic science frenzy'. In one class, pupils wrote in silence with classical music playing in the background. They said that this helped them to 'think without being distracted'. In contrast the other class was filled with conversations as pupils helped each other, sharing ideas and editing their work.
- Pupils are developing a good understanding of how the school's revised curriculum provides them with different stages of learning which regularly helps them to track their own progress. Pupils enjoy seeing how they are moving towards achieving their targets and show great determination to reach the higher levels in the new system.
- Pupils openly express their enjoyment of reading and praise the many incentives to encourage them to read more frequently. Year 6 boys report being spurred on by the competition to get high up on the reading ladder and actively try to gain more signatures in their reading records from adults at home.
- Teachers make regular checks during lessons and pupils have frequent opportunities to review and reflect on their work. Teachers' written and verbal feedback is quickly acted on by pupils, who use a different pen colour to correct their work. Pupils are being actively encouraged to take responsibility for their learning and this is contributing to their rising achievements.
- Teachers' approaches to the presentation and accuracy of pupils' work are inconsistent. In some classes, pupils' pride in the high quality of their work is far more apparent than in others.
- The most able pupils achieve well and make good progress. Teachers know who these pupils are in each class and frequently provide additional challenges to stretch their thinking further. Class pupil profiles show extra provision and support in place for individual pupils.
- Teaching assistants are well directed and make a good contribution to pupils' improved learning and accelerated progress. They know pupils well and understand their needs, providing the right balance of support at the right time. As a result, they help to ensure that all pupils with special educational needs and disability make good progress.
- Pupils appreciate the value of homework, which is now more regularly set. This ranges from weekly spellings, times tables and reading for the whole school, to more specific routines for the different key stages.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Adults take the time to get to know pupils and their families well and this helps to encourage parents to support their children's learning. Every child is known as an individual and adults carefully provide good-quality, tailored support for pupils with additional needs and those who are disadvantaged.

- The school places a strong emphasis on pupils' health and emotional well-being and has a good network of partnerships with specialists, to support those who are most vulnerable. Pupils can name several adults in school who they say they can talk to if they have any worries or concerns and the learning mentors frequently speak with parents dropping children off at the daily breakfast club.
- The school's work to care for and support pupils has recently been recognised through the award of an inclusion quality mark, which recognises the school as a centre of excellence for inclusion.
- The school is responding well to the rising numbers of pupils joining throughout the year who speak English as an additional language. Targeted support is being provided for these pupils both in and out of class by a languages specialist and through a closely monitored programme of support which is aligned with classwork in English and mathematics. However, a whole-school approach has not yet been established in all classes. Leaders are considering a 'buddy' scheme for new pupils, to help them settle and develop their understanding quickly, so that they can access all areas of the curriculum. However, this has not been set up yet.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They have positive attitudes to learning and enjoy coming to school.
- Attendance has risen slowly in recent years and there has been a reduction in the number of pupils who are persistently absent from school. In spite of the strategies currently in place to raise attendance, the school figure remains slightly below the national average. Leaders are targeting this as a key priority for further improvement. The recent improvements in attendance and pupils' punctuality demonstrate the increased importance that parents and pupils place on the value of being in school.
- Pupils learn to manage their own behaviours well and older pupils comment on how much behaviour has improved. The restructured school council are taking a more active role in improving playtimes for all pupils and are well respected within the school. They act as good role models and help to maintain the friendly, family atmosphere within the school.
- Bullying is rare and taken very seriously when it occurs. Leaders and staff monitor all aspects of behaviour thoroughly. They pay close attention to pupils' concerns and act quickly to confront potential perpetrators. Pupils learn about the different types of bullying through curriculum topics and their pastoral work, including how to stay safe online. They know what to do if they feel unsafe and have no qualms in reporting incidents to adults in the school. Adults present a clear message that bullying is not tolerated and promote the high importance of pupils' safety and well-being.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils now make good progress across the school in all subjects and key stages. In 2015, Year 2 attainment rose and was in line with the national average. Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 dipped to below average in mathematics, and in the English grammar, punctuation and spelling tests. In spite of this, Year 6 pupils made better progress in reading and writing than in previous years. The proportion of pupils making more than expected progress in reading showed considerable improvement and was high. Subject action plans and the new curriculum have contributed to pupils' good progress in all areas.
- Phonics is taught well in the early years and in 2015 Year 1 pupils achieved above-average results for the first time in the national phonics check.
- In 2015, the very small number of most-able Year 6 pupils made good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. They successfully attained the higher Level 5 in each of these subjects. In class, pupils are increasingly provided with more challenging work which they confidently tackle, determined to get it right.
- Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language make good progress. Those who need additional language support are identified early on and specialist teaching support is made available to help pupils develop their reading and writing skills.
- School tracking information and pupils' current work indicate that all pupils are making good progress. This is consistently high across subjects and in the vast majority of year groups. Reliable assessment information compared with pupils across the trust indicates that pupils in each year group are on track to reach the standards expected for their age by the end of the year and a good proportion are expected to exceed these.
- The small number of pupils with special educational needs or disability in each class make good progress in line with their classmates. This is as a result of receiving effective support early on and being provided with a tailored and flexible programme of support.

- Pupils who are eligible for support from the pupil premium funding now make good progress in almost all year groups. In 2015, attainment gaps were closing for Year 2, and at the higher levels pupils outperformed other non-disadvantaged pupils nationally in reading and writing and were closing the mathematics gap. Year 6 pupils successfully narrowed the attainment gaps in reading and writing compared with others nationally and at the higher levels narrowed learning gaps in all subjects within the school.
- Disadvantaged pupils make more progress than their classmates and a particular success has been the more than expected progress being made by this group in each subject. Current school achievement shows that additional funding continues to be used effectively to provide extra teaching support, two learning mentors, and to subsidise places on school trips and the week-long residential visit for Year 6 pupils.
- Pupils' achievements are higher than they were at the time of the previous inspection. This is because leaders have raised the quality of teaching and made good use of leadership support within school and through the cluster of schools and the trust. Pupils are now positive learners and are more actively involved in helping themselves to improve. The daily rigour of reading, phonics, spellings and mathematics problem solving improves pupils' knowledge, understanding and confidence and prepares them well for the next steps in their learning or the move to secondary school.

Early years provision

is good

- Children make good progress from their starting points into the Nursery and Reception classes. Typically, children enter the early years with a range of skills which are below those expected for their age. The proportions achieving a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year are rising. Current information shows that a higher proportion than in previous years have already achieved this.
- Early years staff take account of children's interests and regularly plan weekly activities around them. Adults organise the indoor and outdoor areas and use the start of each week to 'walk' children around so that they have a good idea of the learning focus in each one. As a result of the children's interest and excitement about pirates, adults created a pirate boat which was used to enhance children's mathematics learning about money and counting.
- Adults assess children early on and regular checks using a new digital assessment system allow them to quickly adapt and adjust support so that children make consistent and rapid progress. The quality of teaching is good and the early years team is well led by a member of the extended leadership team. Good collaboration between early years staff lies at the heart of children's improved progress.
- Children enjoy learning and are encouraged to help themselves as much as possible. Children move confidently around the classroom and outside and make many of their own learning choices, showing the good impact of the weekly walkaround. Children quickly gain confidence and develop and practise new skills, preparing them well for the move to Year 1 learning.
- Behaviour is good and children often show their patience and kindness towards each other. They share resources and wait patiently to take their turn.
- All adults provide a safe and caring environment for the children. Safeguarding and paediatric first aid training is up to date and adults ensure that risk assessments are securely in place. Adults fully understand each child's needs, monitor their progress and listen to them closely. Records kept by staff show good attention to detail and thoroughness in documenting what children can do.
- Early years staff share information about each child during team meetings and this ensures that children make the best possible progress and their needs are quickly addressed.
- The new assessment system and the school's digital communication system provide quick, effective methods of communication with parents and families. This is helping to include them in their child's learning journey.

School details

Unique reference number	138917
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	10011766

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

Type of school	Academy sponsor-led
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	364
Appropriate authority	David Ross Education Trust
Chair	Daniele Hill
Headteacher	Janey Cooksley
Telephone number	01604 768 392
Website	www.briarhillprimary.co.uk
Email address	jcooksley@briarhillprimary.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	3–4 June 2014

Information about this school

- This is an above-average sized primary school with slightly more pupils on roll than when it was previously inspected.
- The school has gained an inclusion quality mark, as a centre of excellence for inclusion.
- The early years provision is formed of children in the Nursery and Reception classes.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is well above average, as is the proportion of those who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged and eligible for support through the pupil premium is well above average. The pupil premium is additional government funding to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are in the care of the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and disability is well below average.
- A higher proportion of pupils than is seen nationally join and leave the school part way through the year. In 2015 a large proportion of these pupils also spoke English as an additional language.
- In 2015, the school failed to meet the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school forms part of a cluster of nine others within the David Ross Education Trust.
- A new headteacher joined the school this year from another school within the trust.
- The school runs a daily breakfast club which is overseen by the local advisory board, formerly known as the governing body.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 31 lessons, six jointly with the headteacher, and looked closely at support in and out of class for pupils who need additional help with their learning.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read in class and attended one school assembly.
- The inspection team looked closely at pupils' work in every class and spoke with pupils about their work.
- Inspectors spoke informally with parents at the start of the inspection and took note of their views through the five responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and through the school's own online communication system.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils around the school and met with school councillors and a group of vulnerable pupils.
- Staff expressed their views by speaking with inspectors and sent 10 emails to share their experiences of working in the school.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of the local advisory board and also spoke with the improvement cluster lead and director of school improvement for the trust. Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, school leaders responsible for English, mathematics, the early years, assessment, and for coordinating the provision for pupils with special educational needs.
- Inspectors checked the school's documentation on attendance and behaviour and looked closely at records of assessment of pupils' progress and those relating to monitoring of safeguarding. They looked at records of local advisory board meetings and how the school manages staff performance.

Inspection team

Aune Turkson-Jones, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Janet Satchwell	Ofsted Inspector
Michael Wilson	Ofsted Inspector

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