

Brierley Hill Primary School

Mill Street, Brierley Hill, Dudley DY5 2TD

Inspection dates	21–22 June 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

- Since the previous inspection, leaders and governors have brought about some significant improvements at the school. Leadership at all levels has been strengthened and academic standards have risen quite considerably.
- In 2015, Year 6 pupils reached above-average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Current pupils are making good progress from their different starting points.
- Recently, disadvantaged pupils at the school have done exceptionally well. In 2015, these pupils reached higher standards than non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.
- The quality of teaching across the school is good. Teachers give pupils plenty of support and inject interest and enthusiasm into lessons. Pupils work hard and complete a lot of good-quality work.
- Pupils are introduced to a wide range of new experiences at school. This helps them to develop a responsible interest in others and the world around them.
- Pupils behave well in class and on the playground. They understand the rules, get on well with others and are polite to visitors and staff.
- Procedures for keeping pupils safe at school are effective. Bullying or unkind behaviour of any sort is rare.
- Attention to pastoral matters is a strength of the school's work. Pupils are cared for and get help if they have problems or difficulties at school or at home.
- The early years provision is good and all children make good progress. In fact, some make excellent progress from low starting points when they first start school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils are not sure how to use some of the skills they have been taught. Some pupils lack the confidence to make decisions, and rely on teachers to tell them what to do next.
- New governors are still getting to grips with the expectations of their roles.
- Leaders' regular checks on teaching are not always tightly focused on pupils' learning.
- The mathematics curriculum does not provide sufficient scope for the development of pupils' reasoning skills.
- A few pupils miss too much school for no good reason, especially in the younger classes.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve teaching and learning by:
 - making sure that pupils have sufficient opportunities to practise and develop the skills they have learned in one subject in another subject or in a new situation
 - refining the mathematics curriculum so that pupils tackle activities that develop their reasoning skills.
- Strengthen the impact of leadership and management by making sure that:
 - leaders' regular checks on classroom practice are tightly focused on pupils' learning
 - newly appointed middle leaders receive sufficient training to keep them up to date with the requirements of their roles
 - all governors understand the expectations of their role and take on their fair share of work.
- Continue to work with families to improve the attendance of those pupils who miss too much school for no good reason.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher is modest about her own achievements at the school, but her ambition for the pupils and concern for their well-being are evident in many ways. For instance, under her tenure, leadership at all levels has been strengthened and this has had a marked impact on the quality of education and care provided. Teaching is good, standards have risen and attention to pupils' welfare and safety has resulted in some significant barriers to the learning of individual pupils being overcome. Everyone in the school community reports that this is a supportive and well-organised place in which to work and learn.
- The senior leadership team has tackled all the key improvement areas identified by the previous inspection with success. As part of leaders' drive to ensure consistent practice across the school, they took steps to improve middle leadership. There are now four middle leaders in place who help senior leaders to oversee the quality of teaching and learning in the school, with a core focus on English and mathematics. The impact of this strengthened leadership is clear to see: a new assessment system is in place and working well; the frequency of leaders' checks on the quality of teaching has increased; and standards in reading, writing and mathematics have improved.
- All staff get regular feedback about their teaching and this has been a key factor in improving classroom practice. Nevertheless, when giving guidance to staff, leaders often focus on what the teacher is doing rather than how well the pupils are learning. This is not always the case but, in their drive to improve teaching further, this is one aspect of leaders' work that would benefit from further refinement. Those middle leaders who have only taken up their posts quite recently would also benefit from some additional training in order to develop their leadership skills further.
- The pupil premium funds are used effectively. Leaders have chosen to vary the way they use these funds from one year to the next depending on pupils' differing needs. In this respect, the school is very responsive to the needs that present in school and has taken creative, and sometimes bold, decisions in order to gain maximum benefits from the funding. Clearly, their recent actions have been remarkably successful, as was shown by the strong performance of disadvantaged pupils in the 2015 Year 6 tests. The primary sports funding, too, is being put to good use. Visiting specialist teachers lead physical education (PE) and games sessions in every year group, and participation rates in after-school sports clubs have increased more than three-fold. On top of this, pupils from Year 2 to Year 6 receive swimming lessons, with the cost of tuition and transport subsidised by this funding.
- The school offers pupils a broad range of experiences across different subject areas. Leaders are alert to the need to broaden pupils' horizons and introduce them to new ideas, places and activities that they may not get a chance to experience out of school. During this inspection, younger pupils were learning about the coast in preparation for a trip to the seaside. Older pupils could explain how their visit to a residential activity centre had given them the chance to try new things, challenge themselves and succeed in ways other than classroom work. This helps to build pupils' confidence, self-esteem and interest in the world beyond their immediate environment.
- Within the school-based curriculum, pupils learn important skills in a sequential and progressive way as they move through the school. By the time they leave, they have acquired a good set of skills and developed positive attitudes and values that will serve them well in secondary school and later life. However, the curriculum could provide more opportunities for pupils to deepen their understanding and develop their reasoning skills by applying what they know in new situations.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governance is more effective than was previously the case. The chair of the governing body is heavily involved in school life, works closely with senior leaders and is particularly well informed. He has been very attentive to the recommendation made at the time of the previous inspection about the need to ensure that governance is sufficiently informed about the school's performance. In addition, his regular commentary on the school website has a warm, conversational style and helps to keep parents informed about school life. Currently, however, he carries out an excessive amount of work while other governors, some of whom are new in post, have yet to take on a strategic role. Governors have access to a wealth of information because school leaders are very good at providing it. The next step for governance is to establish systems that ensure work and responsibilities are shared out fairly and that governors use the information they get to operate collectively and strategically.

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. In fact, some aspects of the school's work in this area are excellent. All the proper checks on staff and visitors are carried out in line with requirements, the school site is kept secure and equipment is checked regularly. Staff training is up to date, record-keeping is thorough and liaison with other agencies in order to support pupils' welfare or keep them safe is done promptly when necessary. During this inspection, inspectors noted several examples of some exemplary practice when staff had acted in the best interests of a child regardless of the difficult decisions or actions to be taken. This is commendable and indicative of a school culture that puts children's safety first.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Across the school, teaching is good. Teachers and teaching assistants do not just take an interest in pupils' learning; they show interest in their lives too. They have a well-informed understanding of pupils' aptitudes, interests and circumstances. Consequently, they establish warm, supportive and encouraging relationships with their pupils and aim to do their very best for them. Most pupils are aware of this and work hard at school. In all classes, positive relationships between staff and pupils and high expectations of behaviour mean that lessons run smoothly and a lot of work gets done. Much of this work is of a good quality.
- Staff promote an interest in books and reading. This is a strength. 'Author spotlight' displays are a regular feature in classrooms, and around the school building there are numerous signs that draw attention to the benefits of reading. The reading material in class is good quality and adults regularly read to pupils in school and talk about the books they enjoy.
- Since the previous inspection, teachers have established consistent routines in all classes. Across the school, the marking policy, assessment of pupils' progress and the guidance given to pupils all follow the school's agreed formats and staff implement these without variation. This consistency of expectation in classrooms has helped staff to lift standards and enabled leaders to check whether whole-school policies are being implemented.
- Pupils, too, display an excellent understanding of classroom routines and expectations. In conversations with inspectors, pupils could explain how 'steps to success' guide them through their work and enable them to check whether they have done what they should. However, they are less certain about the wider purpose or application of some of the skills they have learned. In several classrooms, pupils rely on the teacher's instructions and are not given the opportunity to make connections between earlier learning and new tasks. In addition, mathematics teaching, while highly effective in some areas, does not give pupils enough chance to develop their reasoning skills.
- Having said this, in some parts of the school, teaching does require pupils to reason and make decisions about how they can put their knowledge and skills to good use in new situations. In upper key stage 2, for example, pupils have recently started on a project about a fictional mystery in school. This project requires them to draw on earlier learning in order to make decisions about how to approach problems or record information. Pupils, especially the boys, are clearly inspired by the project and, during this inspection, spoke with interest about the different ways they could go about tackling the problems and the skills they would use in order to solve the 'crime'.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The school's attention to welfare and safety matters is commendable. Whenever pupils experience problems or difficulties in school or in their lives, school staff try to work with them and their families to find solutions. This inspection discovered several striking examples of the school's work to both challenge and support pupils and their families in order to overcome problems that were affecting well-being or performance at school.
- Pupils have many opportunities to get involved in local events. They have planted flowers in communal gardens for local residents, performed songs at nearby venues, and raised funds for good causes near and far. Such activities help pupils to develop a sense of social responsibility and to realise that their actions can make a positive contribution to their community.

- On the playground, quite a few minor bumps and knocks do occur but these are attended to promptly and pupils generally display resilience and common sense. They get along very well with others and when spoken to by inspectors, pupils could not recall any instances of bullying. Pupils report that the rules are fair and that everyone follows them. They are taught how to manage everyday risks and how to use technology, such as phones and computers, in a safe and responsible way.
- Nearly all pupils wear full school uniform and are particularly proud of it because they were involved in choosing it. Pupils say that they often have a voice in making decisions at school. They can also explain how this helps them to learn how democracy works and to understand the responsibilities that come with the choices they make.
- In class, pupils learn to persevere and develop a good work ethic; they want to do their best and please their teachers. However, their conscientious attitudes are not yet matched by their confidence to make decisions or use what they know without reminders from adults.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- In lessons, around the school building and on the playground, pupils behave well. They are polite to adults and, while they enjoy some lively banter with one another at playtimes, pupils respect others and show interest in what they have to say and concern for their welfare. During this inspection, for example, older pupils were seen comforting another pupil who had fallen on the playground. This was done without prompting and inspectors' conversations with pupils and staff revealed that this sort of kind behaviour is typical. In another example, pupils who went out on a school trip drew numerous comments from passers-by about their good behaviour. Pupils told inspectors that everyone was expected to keep to the school code of 'kind hands, feet, mouth and never leave anyone out'. All the evidence gathered during this inspection confirms that good conduct is the norm for most pupils.
- Nevertheless, some pupils struggle to control aspects of their behaviour at school. The school provides extensive support for these pupils and it is only when every available strategy has been exhausted that a decision is taken to exclude a pupil. In the last two years, there have been several exclusions but, since September 2015, the number has decreased. When a pupil has been excluded, it has been with good reason and all the proper processes have been followed.
- Since the previous inspection, attendance has improved and, in the current year so far, is only just below average overall. This is testimony to the school's work — particularly the sterling work of the learning mentor — to encourage regular attendance at school. Even so, some pupils continue to miss too much school without good cause. This is more common in the younger classes and lessens as pupils move up through the school. For some pupils, however, poor attendance remains a bad habit that hinders their progress at school and, if unchecked, could hamper their future prospects.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Academic standards have risen. In 2015, Year 6 pupils reached above-average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. This is a significant rise from the standards seen at the time of the previous inspection and this increased progress and rise in standards are continuing for current pupils. Across the school, almost all pupils are making good progress and the majority are on track to reach age-related expectations or above by the end of key stage 2.
- The recent achievement of disadvantaged pupils is a notable success. Last year, disadvantaged pupils at Brierley Hill Primary reached higher standards than other pupils nationally in reading and mathematics and matched the national standard in writing. This is testimony to the effective teaching and support provided for these pupils. It is also indicative of the school's commitment to helping pupils overcome barriers to learning and make the most of their opportunities.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability are identified swiftly and additional support is put in place. Quite a number of pupils have some complex learning or behavioural needs which, by and large, are managed very well by school staff. In addition, specialist input, such as speech and language support, is provided when necessary. The special educational needs leader keeps a watchful eye on the school's provision for different needs and how well pupils are doing. The information she gathers is then used to adapt and refine the support provided in response to pupils' different or changing needs. Consequently, while progress rates vary, the vast majority of these pupils are able to make the most of school; they achieve well and grow in confidence.

- There are several reasons for the overall rise in standards since the previous inspection. Leadership has been strengthened, teaching has improved and pupils are given very clear and specific guidance about what is expected from them in lessons. Pupils have responded well to this; they produce good-quality work and experience feelings of success in class and in tests. However, inspectors also found that, at times, pupils are heavily reliant on teachers' instructions and do not readily apply the skills and knowledge they have learned in one subject in another, or in a new situation. This prevents them from reaching even greater heights in their learning or, in some cases, from developing a deep understanding in specific areas of learning. This is more noticeable in mathematics than in other subjects.
- The most able pupils are also doing well. Standards at the end of key stage 2 in English and mathematics were high last year and current pupils have plenty of impressive work in their books. Like other pupils, however, they are sometimes held back or lack confidence in new situations because they do not have enough opportunity to practise and develop their literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum.

Early years provision

is good

- In the vast majority of cases, children start in Nursery with a level of knowledge and skill below that typical for their age. Many children have underdeveloped language, communication and physical skills. Their knowledge of the world is also more limited than that of most other children of a similar age. School staff are alert to these low starting points and make the best use of the available expertise, space and resources to help children catch up. Just recently, the nursery has started to admit two-year-olds in order to boost their skills at an earlier age. This aspect of provision is still developing but it is clearly heading in the right direction.
- All children do very well in the Nursery and the Reception classes. Teaching is never less than good and children make at least good progress. Indeed, some children make outstanding progress and catch up completely so that they enter Year 1 at age-related expectations. Last year, for example, the proportion of children that reached a good level of development was in line with the national figure. This is a significant achievement. Most years, however, including this current year, the proportions are usually below the national figure.
- Children make such good progress because adults in school act as very positive role models and ensure that children are exposed to a nurturing environment where they are kept safe and learn how to cooperate. Staff provide children with lots of opportunities for creative play, language development and exercise. Children soon settle into school and adopt good learning habits, and most behave well.
- Parents are frequently invited into school to see how their children are getting on and to discuss information about their learning and welfare. In addition, school staff have provided positive parenting courses in order to help parents support their children's learning at home. Some of the school's pupil premium money and sport funds have been used to arrange activities that promote healthy lifestyles and self-care. Children and their families have benefited from this additional provision and guidance.
- The early years leader provides good leadership. She is aware that the early years curriculum in the Nursery needs further refinement, especially now that two-year-olds are being admitted, so that it is more relevant to the children's many different needs. Plans are in place to implement a curriculum that builds more carefully on children's interests and experiences, but these plans have yet to be put into action.

School details

Unique reference number	103776
Local authority	Dudley
Inspection number	10009243

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	2–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	245
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Graham Moffitt
Headteacher	Mrs Teresa Allport
Telephone number	01384 816980
Website	www.brierley.dudley.sch.uk
Email address	info@brierley.dudley.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	6–7 February 2014

Information about this school

- Brierley Hill Primary is similar in size to the average primary school. The number of pupils on roll has increased since the previous inspection.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is in line with 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.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is above the national average.
- The school offers morning or afternoon early years provision for Nursery-age children and full-time early years provision for Reception-age children.
- In 2015, 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 key stage 2.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been several changes of staff and governors.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in all year groups. Some of these observations were carried out alongside the headteacher. Inspectors also 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 going out on a school trip.
- Meetings were held with pupils, staff, senior and middle leaders, three governors and a representative of the local authority.
- By the end of the inspection, there were seven recent responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View), which were too few to generate a report. However, inspectors noted the school's routines for gathering parents' views and talked to some parents at school. Inspectors also talked to a group of staff about what it is like to work at the school and the changes that have taken place since the previous inspection.
- A number of school documents were examined. These included information about pupils' achievement and evaluations of the school's performance. Records relating to governance, staff performance management, the quality of teaching, behaviour, attendance, safety and safeguarding were also scrutinised. The school's website was also checked.

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector

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