

Fordbridge Community Primary School

Crabtree Drive, Chelmsley Wood, Birmingham B37 5BU

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	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The tenacious leadership of the headteacher, ably supported by senior leaders and governors, has ensured better teaching and improved achievement since the previous inspection.
- Leaders and governors know the school well and are relentless in seeking to tackle its remaining weaknesses.
- Staff provide a very wide range of activities and opportunities outside lessons. Pupils enthusiastically take part and develop interests and skills as a result.
- Teaching is now consistently good across most subjects and year groups. It is ensuring that most pupils make good progress.
- Teachers and teaching assistants plan interesting lessons. The teaching of reading and writing is particularly strong.
- Teachers and teaching assistants give regular, high-quality feedback that helps pupils improve their work. Pupils routinely check, correct and improve their work during lessons.
- Disadvantaged pupils make particularly good progress, so they now achieve as well as other pupils in the school and nationally.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and at other times of the day. They are considerate, confident and polite.
- Governors know the school well and are very committed to its continuing improvement.
- The early years provision is outstanding. Strong leadership, careful planning and consistently high-quality teaching mean that children make rapid progress.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Attendance is below the national average and is not improving quickly enough.
- The teaching of mathematics is not as good as other subjects. As a result, improvement in mathematics has been slower than in English.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve attendance, at least to the national average, by seeking out and implementing strategies that have been successful in similar schools.
- Improve the teaching of mathematics so that pupils in all year groups make consistently strong progress by ensuring that:
 - teachers have sufficient subject knowledge and confidence to anticipate, identify and tackle pupils' mathematical misconceptions
 - pupils routinely have good opportunities to think and reason, to solve mathematical problems, both in mathematics lessons and in other subjects.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The school has improved considerably under the headteacher's dedicated and thoughtful leadership. Better teaching has resulted in steadily improving outcomes for pupils, with a sharp improvement over the last two years. He is very well supported by senior leaders and other staff. All members of staff who responded to the online survey agreed that the school is 'a lot better' than when it was previously inspected.
- An overwhelming majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, agreed that the school is well led and managed and that they would recommend the school to another parent. One parent wrote, 'I really and truly believe Fordbridge Community Primary School is amazing. The leadership, teaching and resources are fabulous.' Another wrote, 'As a parent I feel that the school is doing a fantastic job with my children's education.'
- Senior leaders and governors know the school well, including its strengths and weaknesses. They implement comprehensive plans to tackle areas in need of improvement and they regularly review the success of these actions. As a result, previous areas of weakness, such as pupils' spelling, have improved considerably.
- Subject leaders form an increasingly effective group. Alongside senior leaders, they regularly check on the quality of teaching and the progress of pupils in their areas. When weaknesses become apparent, they quickly provide extra help and support to ensure that the problem is tackled. High-quality leadership of English, over a sustained period, has been particularly successful in securing better teaching and outcomes.
- The leadership of the early years is very effective and is one key reason that the provision is outstanding. The recent amalgamation, of Fordbridge Childcare Plus with the school's existing early years provision, has been managed smoothly and seamlessly, at the same time as a move to new premises. Standards in the early years continue to rise rapidly.
- Leaders regularly use assessment information to check on pupils' progress and they provide extra help for any pupil who is beginning to fall behind. In common with most schools, Fordbridge's assessment system is new and leaders recognise that it is something of a 'work in progress'. Leaders are confident in the accuracy of teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment in English and mathematics, but assessment in other subjects is less well established. Inspectors agree with leaders' evaluation.
- Leaders have planned a curriculum that provides pupils with an appropriate range of subjects and experiences. The school's focus on English and mathematics has not resulted in other subjects being neglected. All subjects have leaders who ensure that subject-specific skills are developed from Years 1 to 6. For example, teachers have recently been developing pupils' knowledge of different locations in geography, because this area was weak. All pupils in Years 3 to 6 study Latin: a language chosen, in conjunction with other local schools, to help to support pupils' grammatical and spelling skills. It is too early to judge whether this has been successful.
- Adults provide a very wide selection of extra-curricular activities for pupils before school, at lunchtime and after school. These range from street dance to philosophy, and from cookery to engineering. These widen pupils' horizons and, therefore, contribute greatly to pupils' personal development. Parents who spoke to inspectors were full of praise for the breadth of opportunities that the school gives their children.
- Leaders and governors spend additional funding wisely and they carefully check on the impact that it is having. Well focused use of the pupil premium has contributed to the improving attainment of disadvantaged pupils, who are now achieving similar outcomes to their peers in all year groups. The primary sports funding provides expert sports coaching that has increased pupils' participation and improved staff expertise.
- The local authority has provided effective support for school leaders over several years. As the school has improved and its leadership has strengthened, this support has lessened. The school now sources its own support, largely from the Unity Trust, a limited company consisting of schools and academies within north Solihull. For example, leaders have commissioned effective support for subject leaders, for the development of the Latin curriculum and for the school's teaching assistants. Regular liaison activities with local high schools, organised by Unity Trust, mean that transition arrangements are strong and pupils are well prepared for their move when they leave Fordbridge.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors know the school well. Each governor is linked to at least one area of school life and they visit regularly to keep up to date with developments. They use their knowledge of the school well to question leaders.
 - Governors' understanding of published data is developing and some governors have expertise in this

area. Leaders give governors high-quality information about current pupils and governors are beginning to be able to hold leaders to account for the progress of groups within school.

- Governors discharge their statutory duties with care and diligence. They regularly check the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding policies and procedures; they carefully monitor the spending and impact of the pupil and sports premiums and they ensure that the school's arrangements for managing teachers' performance are well focused on improving teaching and raising standards.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Policies and procedures are fit for purpose and all staff are well trained and vigilant to potential dangers as a result. There are two governors with oversight of safeguarding who regularly check safeguarding arrangements. The leadership of safeguarding in school is meticulous and dogged in its determination to keep pupils safe. All pupils who spoke to inspectors, all members of staff who completed the online questionnaire and an overwhelming majority of parents who responded to Parent View agreed that pupils feel safe and are safe in school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection and is now good. It is particularly strong in English, where pupils in all year groups read fluently and write confidently. The teaching of phonics (the letters that sounds represent) is consistently good and ensures that younger pupils use their knowledge of phonics to tackle new words. Pupils' books confirm that the school's recent focus on improving pupils' spelling has been successful.
- Lessons at Fordbridge are characterised by well-established expectations and routines supported by strong, respectful relationships between pupils and adults. Pupils settle quickly, work hard, move from one activity to the next with a minimum of fuss and, consequently, little time is wasted. Pupils are eager to learn and keen to contribute answers to questions and ideas to discussions.
- Teachers and teaching assistants consistently apply the school's marking policy. They give pupils regular and helpful feedback, often during lessons, and this helps pupils to improve their work as they go along. Unprompted by their teacher, pupils also routinely check their own work, or that of other pupils, correcting and improving it as necessary. This means that pupils are able to reflect on their work and talk eloquently about how they have improved it.
- Teachers and teaching assistants provide good support for pupils who have special educational needs or disability, both in class and at other times. As a result, these pupils make good progress. Teaching assistants make a strong contribution to most lessons. They work closely with the class teacher and then use their expertise to question, prompt and support pupils.
- Teaching in the early years is of a consistently very high quality. Excellent planning and thoughtful adult intervention ensure that children are highly motivated to learn. Consequently, they make excellent progress.
- The teaching of mathematics is less strong than that of English. This is because some teachers lack confidence because their mathematical subject knowledge is not as strong as in other subjects. This means that some teachers are not able to anticipate potential difficulties as they plan lessons, and they fail to identify and tackle pupils' mathematical misconceptions in lessons. However, the school's focus on improving pupils' calculation skills has been successful and pupils are confident in solving straightforward arithmetic questions.
- Teachers routinely make pupils think deeply and reason when teaching English. For example, inspectors observed a teacher posing a question to her class, 'Are all "ly words" adverbs?' Pupils had to think carefully, and apply their knowledge of grammar, in order to solve this problem. However, this approach is far less evident in the teaching of mathematics, because teachers are not as confident in their subject knowledge. Mathematical problem solving, involving reasoning, tends to be limited to explicit 'problem-solving lessons' rather than being woven into all lessons and activities. Pupils get too little practice in problem solving as a result.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are confident and articulate. From Nursery to Year 6, pupils are proud of their school and their work, and they are eager to explain why this is so. For example, in the Nursery, one child invited an inspector to

'Come and see what we are learning today.' Pupils regularly share with leaders their views about the school and they contribute to the planning of curriculum topics.

- Pupils have a good understanding of the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, liberty, respect and tolerance because they are taught about them in lessons and in 'culture days'. Pupils confidently explained to inspectors about the different religions that they had studied, and why it is important to respect everyone's views. Pupils in the school's 'journalists' group' talked to inspectors about the European Union referendum and several were keen to say how they would have voted and why.
- The wide range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities that the school provides contribute considerably to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, pupils take part in the 'Fordbridge University' where, for a term, they study subjects such as photography, plumbing and puppetry. This culminates in an 'extravaganza' where they showcase their newly acquired skills to parents and other pupils. Many pupils additionally commit to activities beyond the school that contribute to Birmingham's 'Children's University'. At the start of July 2016, 45 Fordbridge pupils will graduate from the Children's University at a ceremony to be held at Birmingham University.
- The school's curriculum ensures that pupils know how to keep themselves safe, from a range of possible dangers including bullying and the dangers that might arise when using the internet. Bullying is very rare in the school and any that occurs is dealt with well. Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe in school and that they trust the school's adults to deal with any problems that do arise. An overwhelming majority of parents who responded to the online Parent View questionnaire confirmed that their child feels safe and is well looked after in school. One parent wrote, 'All of my children are happy and progressing brilliantly.'

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils demonstrate good attitudes to learning. They are keen to do well. They enthusiastically answer teachers' questions and contribute ideas to class discussions. They support each other in class and they regularly check each other's work, maturely pointing out possible improvements.
- Pupils behave well in most lessons and as they move around the school, at break and lunchtime. They are considerate and polite to other pupils and to adults. At break and lunchtime, pupils play sensibly and make good use of the variety of play equipment that the school provides. However, in a small minority of lessons, when teaching is weaker, pupils sometimes become restless and chatty.
- Leaders use fixed-term exclusion rarely and appropriately as a sanction of last resort. Although the number of temporary exclusions has risen a little this year, very few pupils have been excluded more than once. This is because they learn their lesson and do not repeat poor behaviour. Adults provide very effective support for the very small number of pupils who struggle to manage their own behaviour. Consequently, these pupils' behaviour is improving as they move through the school.
- Attendance remains stubbornly below the national average for primary schools, despite leaders' best efforts to improve it. Leaders employ a wide range of strategies aimed at improving attendance, including attendance prizes and support for parents of pupils who are regularly absent. These strategies have yielded some success, for example the number of pupils with no absence has doubled this year. The great majority of pupils attend well, but a significant minority do not. Leaders have not sought out similar schools, which have been successful in improving attendance, in order to learn lessons from their practice.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils' progress has improved considerably over recent years and most pupils now make good progress from their starting points in a range of subjects. Outcomes have risen rapidly in Nursery and Reception and steadily in key stage 1. Progress in key stage 2 has also improved and is now good.
- Published key stage 2 test results for 2015 showed considerable improvement from the previous year and this trajectory has been maintained for current pupils. Pupils made particularly strong progress in reading and writing. Annual checks on pupils' reading ages confirm that pupils in all year groups are making considerable gains in their reading. Inspectors heard pupils read fluently and with understanding.
- Progress in mathematics has also improved, but at a slower rate than reading or writing, because mathematics teaching is weaker. Attainment has improved since the previous inspection, but unlike reading and writing, remains a little below average.
- Pupils make good progress in key stage 1. They start Year 1 with skills that are broadly average and their attainment at the end of Year 2 is also broadly average. Effective teaching of phonics has led to strong results in the Year 1 phonics reading check, which have been above the national figure for three years.

- Children in the early years make outstanding progress. Their starting points are consistently below those typical for their age and very strong teaching ensures that they made rapid progress. Outcomes at the end of Reception have improved rapidly over recent years and are now close to the national figure, with further improvement anticipated this year.
- Disadvantaged pupils make consistently good, and often better, progress in all year groups. Historical gaps between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and others, which existed in the early years and in key stage 2 mathematics, have now closed. Teachers and leaders are quick to give disadvantaged pupils extra help when they need it and this ensures that they do not fall behind their peers.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability make similar progress to their peers. Teachers plan lessons that help them to learn, and teaching assistants are skilled at giving the right amount of support. Teachers and teaching assistants quickly identify pupils who are falling behind and give them extra help, outside lessons, that helps them to catch up.
- The most able pupils now make good progress, especially in English. The proportion of pupils attaining the highest levels in reading and writing was close to the national figure in 2015. The proportion of pupils doing so in mathematics improved in 2015, but remains below that national average.

Early years provision

is outstanding

- Children make rapid progress from their different starting points because of determined, relentless and expert leadership and consistently high-quality teaching. The proportion of children who reach a good level of development by the end of Reception is increasing rapidly and children are very well prepared to start Year 1.
- Adults have created exceptionally well organised and stimulating learning areas, both inside and outside. There is excellent coordination of approach and organisation across the three settings: Nursery, Reception and Fordbridge Childcare Plus. Children are fascinated by what they are learning and very eager to tell adults about it. Children in the Nursery enthusiastically shared with inspectors what they were currently learning about farms.
- Adults assess what children understand, know and can do regularly and accurately. Many parents and carers also contribute to this picture. Adults then use this information expertly to plan each child's next learning steps. This means that children take part in activities that are very well matched to their ability and they learn quickly as a result. For example, inspectors observed the most able children completing difficult number problems. Inspectors also observed two-year-old children developing independence as they copied adults and other children.
- The teaching of phonics in the early years is very effective and this best practice is being shared with other schools. Children are able to use their phonics knowledge to sound out words and inspectors observed more-able children writing independently using correct or plausible spellings. The strong phonics teaching in the early years prepares children very well for Year 1 and is one reason that the school's performance in the Year 1 phonics reading check is consistently above the national average.
- Behaviour is excellent. Children move from one activity to another safely, sensibly and with a minimum of fuss. Adults have successfully established clear routines that children follow impeccably. Children are polite, articulate and considerate of others.
- Adults take great care to make sure that children are safe. All adults have been well trained and are vigilant to the signs that children might be vulnerable to harm. Positive and warm relationships between children and adults pervade the early years. Children trust adults and feel safe.
- Leaders spend the pupil premium funding wisely. They focus it on high-quality resources and activities for disadvantaged children and, as a result, the gaps between the achievement of these children and their peers have all but vanished.
- Leaders work hard to involve parents in their children's learning and their efforts are proving successful. They conduct an initial questionnaire with parents, which helps to establish each child's starting point. Having identified weaknesses in some children's speech and language, leaders organised a workshop for parents to help them support their children's speech development. Parental attendance at this and other workshops has been very high. Leaders have recently opened a 'family café' that operates regularly to encourage school attendance. There are early signs that it is having a considerable impact.

School details

Unique reference number	104121
Local authority	Solihull
Inspection number	10009251

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	492
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Steve Taylor
Headteacher	Rob Fletcher
Telephone number	0121 779 8040
Website	www.fordbridge.solihull.sch.uk
Email address	office@fordbridge.solihull.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	18 March 2014

Information about this school

- This is a larger-than-average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for pupils looked after and those known to be eligible for free school meals, is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is above average.
- The school moved into new, purpose-built premises in September 2015.
- The governing body has managed Fordbridge Childcare Plus (a private nursery) provision for many years. In July 2015, this setting became part of the school and ceased to have separate registration. The school therefore now educates 2- to 11-year-olds.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in lessons, and some of these were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors talked to pupils about their learning and their attitudes to, and opinions about, school. They observed pupils at break and lunchtimes and as they moved around the school.
- A wide range of documents was scrutinised including information relating to attendance, behaviour, safeguarding, pupils' progress and the checks made on the quality of teaching.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and other leaders, and the chair of the governing body. An inspector met with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors evaluated 41 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and spoke with parents at the beginning and the end of the school day.
- Inspectors took account of 28 responses received to a staff inspection questionnaire.

Inspection team

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