

Blackheath Primary School

Britannia Road, Rowley Regis, West Midlands B65 9NF

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| Inspection dates | 12–13 July 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

- The headteacher has successfully led rapid improvements to the school's effectiveness in a short space of time. She has ensured that an ambitious culture permeates the school. Teaching has been strengthened and is now good. As a result, pupils now achieve well across the school and standards have risen.
- The school's vibrant ethos has created a happy and cohesive learning community. Pupils, parents, staff and governors are very supportive of the headteacher and the success of the school.
- Governors support and challenge the school well. The wider leadership team support the headteacher effectively. The school has improved considerably in this aspect of its work.
- Pupils in all key stages make good progress, particularly in writing and mathematics. Gaps in achievement between different groups of pupils are closing quickly.
- As a result of strong leadership and better teaching, provision in the early years has improved. Children make good progress from their varying starting points.
- Strong relationships exist between adults and pupils, leading to very positive attitudes to learning, excellent conduct and mutual respect.
- The emphasis on social, moral, spiritual and cultural education supports pupils' personal development and welfare effectively. As a result, all pupils are well cared for, treated equally and their individual needs are carefully managed.
- Targeted government funding for sport and disadvantaged pupils is used effectively and is having a significant impact on pupils' participation and progress.
- Pupils are proud of their school. They are enthused by the opportunities they have from Nursery through to Year 6.

The school is not yet outstanding because

- Outcomes in reading, although good, are not as strong as in writing and mathematics. Sometimes, the teaching of reading is not fully effective to enable pupils to make rapid progress. Boys, for example, do not achieve as well as girls.
- The school's marking policy is not consistently effective in supporting pupils' progress.
- Attendance is improving for most pupil groups, but the overall figure is not yet in line with the national average. Some pupils are absent from school too often and arrive late. Some parents continue to take their children on unauthorised term-time leave and holidays.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and pupils' outcomes by:
 - ensuring that pupils read more widely and often and those falling behind (particularly boys) are given appropriate help to support rapid progress in reading skills
 - meeting the needs of pupils more closely, helping them to make the progress they are capable of.
- Further improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - there is a higher priority on the teaching of reading across the school
 - the school's marking policy is consistently effective in helping pupils to improve their skills.
- Improve attendance by continuing to work closely with parents so that:
 - pupils consistently arrive at school on time
 - the level of unauthorised absences, particularly resulting from leave and holidays during term time, reduces.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher has led a wide range of swift, effective improvements across the school in the two years since the previous inspection. She has demonstrated strong, transparent leadership skills and changed the culture of the school, to one that is very ambitious, outward looking and responsive to advice. There is now a much greater focus on ensuring that the most vulnerable pupils are well supported and catch up quickly with their peers.
- The leadership team has been restructured and expanded. Leaders have clearly defined roles and support the headteacher well. They work closely with teachers and teaching assistants to deliver the school's priorities and improve pupils' progress. A few leaders are relatively new in their roles and are developing their skills to be able to offer further strategic support to the headteacher. Leaders and managers have a clear, cohesive vision of the journey the school is on and how it can improve further.
- Training, support and regular checks have been used to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school. Better teaching and well-directed support has led to much stronger progress for pupils by the time they leave the school in Year 6. Consequently, the latest assessment information shows that previous gaps between different pupil groups have closed or are closing. Leaders know that their next steps include making sure that pupils, particularly boys, achieve as well in reading as they do in writing and mathematics by further strengthening the quality of teaching of reading and the support for pupils, and raising the profile of the subject across the school's curriculum.
- Performance management is rigorous and used to hold staff to account to improve pupils' progress and has helped to eradicate some poor-quality teaching. Other aspects of the school, such as the quality of mathematics teaching, have also developed through this process. However, some evaluations of teaching are generous and not as closely aligned to the school's self-evaluation as they could be.
- Leaders and managers have commissioned a number of external reviews of the school's work. These reviews have confirmed the school's rapid improvement journey, although some reviews have been more useful than others. Leaders and governors have acted quickly on advice and know the areas of provision which need further development. The local authority has supported the school's rapid journey well, through termly visits and accurate reports on the school's progress on key issues.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively. Additional teaching and teaching assistants focus well on improving eligible pupils' English and mathematics skills. As a result, the progress of these pupils has improved quickly and the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in the school has nearly closed by the end of Year 6.
- Parents are very supportive of the headteacher, leaders, their children's education and the improvements made to the school. The headteacher and governors listen carefully to parental concerns and respond quickly and appropriately to requests where possible. Leaders have shown clarity and transparency by publishing improvement plans and a wealth of curriculum, assessment and safeguarding information on the school's website.
- The school's well-designed curriculum provides a rich range of learning experiences, rooted in the school's strong values. Pupils learn about equality of opportunity and democracy through the wide range of pupil leadership roles and the school's inclusive approach to ensure that all pupils, irrespective of ability or need, have equal access to learning. The school offers a wide range of extra-curricular learning opportunities including residential trips and 'memorable experiences'.
- Assemblies provide opportunities to tackle discrimination, promote equality and support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. As a result of a range of exciting experiences provided by the school, pupils have a strong knowledge of values, tolerance and respect, helping them to be well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Targeted government funding to improve pupils' participation and ability in sport has been used very effectively. For example, the school has used the funding to buy new physical education equipment, enable pupils to learn to swim and increase the range of after-school sports clubs. In addition, 'speedy tots' has helped children in the early years to develop their moving and handling skills. Healthy eating sessions have provided pupils across the school with increased knowledge about leading a healthy lifestyle. Following a healthy eating session, almost all pupils said that the workshop was positive and when asked why it was important to eat healthily, one pupil said, 'so we stay fit and strong'. The sports leader has built and sustained good links with a range of other schools, enabling inter-school competitive sports to take place and a sharp increase in the number of pupils from Blackheath taking part in these competitions.

■ The governance of the school

- The governing body have supported the headteacher effectively to rapidly improve all aspects of the school's provision and create the ambitious culture which now permeates the school.
 - Governors have a good understanding of how well the school is performing. They use detailed information to regularly analyse the school's performance and ask challenging questions about pupils' progress and achievement. The local authority has provided effective training for governors and their skills have clearly been developed. At times, governors do not act as strategically as they could, ensuring all aspects of the school's provision are performing at the highest level.
 - Governors receive and interrogate detailed information about staff performance. They use this to ensure the performance process is rigorous and used to award pay increments for staff where they are deserved.
 - Governors have used funds effectively to expand the senior leadership team and increase the number of 'pupil premium champions' for example. This has helped to rapidly increase the reading, writing and mathematics progress for disadvantaged pupils.
 - Governors check on how the pupil premium and sports premium are used, know the impact of the spending and the progress of eligible pupils through reports provided by leaders.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. There is a strong culture of safeguarding throughout the school. The deputy headteacher provides effective leadership of this area of the school's work, ensuring that all procedures are up to date and checks on adults working in school are thorough. All statutory safety requirements are met and arrangements to support vulnerable pupils and families are effective. Individual cases of concern are followed up thoroughly to ensure pupils are kept safe. Staff training is up to date and includes child sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation and preventing extremism in education.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is now typically good and sometimes better across the school. This is a result of improved support for vulnerable pupils, higher expectations and an ambitious culture of improvement. Consequently, pupil progress has now quickened and attainment has improved to be equal to and sometimes above the national average.
- Teachers use their good subject knowledge well to motivate and interest all groups of pupils. Staff create an active climate for learning through positive attitudes, interesting lessons and effective questioning. This has resulted in pupils engaging in, and enjoying, their learning experiences at school. A good example of this was seen in Year 6 in science, where pupils were learning about soluble and insoluble substances. The teacher and teaching assistant used good subject knowledge and effective questioning to address any misconceptions and ensure all pupil groups made good progress during the lesson.
- Updated assessment systems used to check individual pupils' progress are well understood and shared with school leaders and teachers. As a result, teachers have a clear understanding of the progress required by individual pupils and organise adults well to provide additional pupil support.
- Teaching assistants typically provide effective support for pupils and are well trained and deployed. They use detailed questioning, both in lessons and with small groups, to maintain pupils' concentration and challenge them to deepen their thinking
- The teaching of mathematics has been a focus for development and, as a result of good leadership and improved teaching, pupils are now making faster progress. Good teaching ensures that pupils are able to use a range of strategies to solve number, shape and word problems. For example, through effective questioning from adults, Year 4 pupils were fully engaged in learning how to use Venn diagrams. Consequently, pupils of different abilities developed their understanding of how to use such diagrams to represent a range of information.
- The teaching of writing is effective and is speeding up the rate of progress in this subject. As a result of improved teaching and focused support, pupils have developed much better writing skills. Teaching now ensures that pupils are able to use a range of strategies to write well. For example, Year 1 pupils can write well-constructed sentences, using correct spelling and punctuation. Pupils' workbooks provide clear evidence of the strong progress they have made in their writing skills over time.
- Parents are invited to a range of information and shared learning sessions with their children in school. This results in better parental understanding of how their children are taught and improved adult skills to support pupils at home.
- The teaching of reading has improved and gives pupils a solid foundation on which to develop good

reading skills. Most pupils who did not achieve the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check have since improved their reading skills as a result of targeted support. However, inspection evidence shows that, for example, not all pupils read widely and often enough. Furthermore, in guided reading, where pupils read in small groups with support from an adult, pupils' reading skills are sometimes not developed and supported effectively.

- Teachers' feedback to pupils follows the school's marking policy. However, marking sometimes does not lead to clear improvement in pupils' skills. Leaders agree that further work is needed to improve the impact of teachers' marking. Plans are already in place to provide training and to develop this aspect of teaching.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and experiencing the broad and exciting curriculum on offer. They tell visitors about their learning and how they make progress. Their manners are a real strength as pupils share resources, hold doors open for others and greet visitors politely.
- Pupils have excellent opportunities to develop a wide range of leadership skills, such as 'maths champions', 'green hat thinkers', 'digital leaders' and a 'pupil leadership team'. Representatives of these groups are elected by other pupils and have published an action plan on the school's website. As a result of outstanding opportunities for pupils to voice their views and opinions, they feel listened to. This has been an integral part of the school's rapid improvement. Pupil leaders are rightly proud of what they do and wear their badges with enormous pride.
- Leaders have created an excellent climate for learning at this school. The exciting corridors are well designed and reflect the school's curriculum focus of each group of classes. The whole school provides a rich environment where pupils can extend their learning beyond the national curriculum.
- Leaders promote pupils' confidence, physical and emotional well-being effectively and ensure that pupils are given time to discuss sensitive topics. Consequently, pupils have good self-awareness and confidently try out new learning opportunities and challenges.
- Nearly all parents are very supportive of the school's actions to support pupils' personal development and welfare. For example, one parent said, 'staff are always friendly, approachable and willing to help with any issues I may have regarding my children. They are quick to let me know when there may be a health issue with my children. My children love the memorable experiences they take part in and their knowledge and understanding of the topics they do is shown at home when they come back and talk about facts they have learnt that day.'
- Leaders ensure that pupils have equal access to the curriculum. For example, staff check that appropriate adaptations are made for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities to fully participate in swimming lessons and all school activities, including trips.
- Pupils are aware of how to keep themselves and others safe. For example, they are knowledgeable about the dangers associated with the internet. Pupils say they feel safe in school because adults are there to help them if needed.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Their conduct in lessons is usually very positive and they show good respect towards both adults and each other. Pupils play actively and happily at playtimes and younger children are helped at lunchtimes by 'playground leaders' for example.
- This school is a happy and calm place to learn. All pupils have good attitudes around the school and during smooth transitions between classes.
- Staff promote good behaviour and manage pupils' needs well. Consequently, lessons run smoothly and are rarely disrupted. Nearly all staff and parents are very positive about the management of behaviour in the school.
- Pupils enjoy lessons and respond well to adults' questions and prompts. They move sensibly between activities in lessons and work thoughtfully during group work, carefully considering each other's views.
- Pupils are well informed of different types of bullying and say there it is not a problem here. If anything does go wrong, problems are dealt with quickly by the staff.
- The school analyses behaviour logs and patterns of behaviour carefully. Checks show that there have been 10 fixed-term exclusions and one permanent exclusion this year, which is a slight reduction compared to last year. The local authority has supported the school's strong efforts to ensure that a very

small number of pupils with very challenging behaviour needs have remained in mainstream education. This demonstrates the school's inclusive ethos for all pupils.

- Attendance is just below the national average although it is improving for most pupil groups. Leaders use measures such as meetings with governors and fines to send a strong message to parents that taking pupils out of school for leave or holidays during term time is not acceptable, unless in very exceptional circumstances. There has been success with some families, but other parents have chosen to ignore these messages and continue to take their children out of school in term time. In addition, a few pupils arrive consistently late at school.
- The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent has reduced since the last inspection. However, the school's own detailed analysis shows that it is the attendance of a few pupils which is preventing the whole-school attendance rates from being in line with the national average. Leaders are aware that further work with families is needed to improve the attendance of these children.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics has improved since the previous inspection and is now good in each key stage. Academic standards across the school have risen as a result. By the end of Year 6, the proportion of pupils who achieve in line with or above the national average has increased. As a result, pupils are increasingly well prepared for the next stage of their education by the time they leave this school.
- Standards by the end of Year 2 have been on a rising trend in recent years and are now closer to average than previously. Most pupils typically achieve at least in line with the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. This represents good progress from pupils' previously lower starting points. Even so, boys do not achieve as well as girls, particularly in reading.
- Since the previous inspection, progress in key stage 2 has notably improved. In Year 6 in 2015 for example, the proportion of pupils making the expected rate of progress through key stage 2, and the proportion doing better than this, compared very favourably with the proportion that did so nationally. The average standards these pupils reached represented good progress from their previously lower starting points. The school's assessment information and inspection evidence suggests that pupils currently in key stage 2 are achieving well; more pupils are now working at, and beyond, the expected levels for their age. In reading, although key stage 2 pupils do well, they do not do as well as in writing or mathematics. This is particularly the case for boys.
- Achievement for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has improved, especially by the end of Year 6, and is now good. Staff carefully check that pupils have equal access to the curriculum and that both their learning and physical needs are met. As a result of good-quality support and effective programmes, most of these pupils are able to make the most of school; they achieve well and grow in confidence.
- Disadvantaged pupils achieve well. They achieve in line with other pupils in the school and other pupils nationally by the end of Year 6. The focused additional support given has reduced the attainment gap between them and other pupils in the school. By the end of Year 2 in 2015, disadvantaged pupils were on average two terms behind other pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. By the end of Year 6 in 2015, the same gap was just over one term behind, but there was almost no gap for spelling, punctuation and grammar. The school's current assessment information indicates that disadvantaged pupils are progressing in line with other pupils in the school in almost all subjects in all year groups.
- In 2015, a slightly below average proportion of pupils reached the higher levels of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of both Year 2 and Year 6. In mathematics, the proportion achieving more than the expected level was closer to average. Inspection evidence, along with the school's current assessment information, shows that this group of pupils are now making strong progress in most year groups. This is because the most able pupils are now provided with more challenging work.
- The daily teaching of phonics has resulted in pupils' improved skills in this area. Consequently, the proportion of pupils meeting the expected level in the Year 1 phonics screening check has improved and is now in line with the national average. In particular, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils achieving the expected standard has improved over the past three years and the previous gap in attainment compared to other pupils has reduced. However, pupils' learning needs can be more closely met to help them make the progress they are capable of. For example, by the end of Years 1 and 2, boys do not achieve as well as girls in reading. This gap has not yet been successfully closed.

Early years provision

is good

- The early years provision is well led and managed. Staff systematically track how children improve their skills through play and modify activities according to children's needs. The classrooms and outdoor learning areas are very well equipped, giving children access to a range of learning activities to develop their skills.
- The majority of children start in the Nursery and Reception classes with skills and abilities that are below typical for their age. Some children start school with skills that are well below those typical for their age, such as physical, personal, social and emotional development. Adults provide well-directed support for these weaker areas of learning. They promote equality and encourage children's independence right from the start.
- Leaders ensure that pupil premium funding for disadvantaged children in the early years is used effectively. These children made rapid gains in 2015 and the gap closed between them and other children both in the school and nationally. Children typically make at least good progress by the end of Reception. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development rose sharply from well below the national average in 2014 to just above in 2015. The most recent assessment information shows that this improved achievement has been sustained this year.
- Children's positive attitudes are promoted well because the learning environments engage and interest them. Adults provide purposeful and exciting activities which are usually well matched to the children's needs and interests. For example, a strong focus on developing children's caring and sharing skills was seen during a transition session, getting ready for new classes in September.
- Teachers promote early reading skills through daily phonics sessions. Children's active participation helps to develop their enjoyment in learning letters and the sounds they make. Staff work closely together to ensure that all classes are focused on developing reading and number skills. Writing is also promoted well, through the effective use of resources.
- Children behave and cooperate very well as a result of good-quality provision and high expectations. They adapt well to new routines and respond positively to class systems. Whether playing indoors or outdoors, children are happy and behave in ways that keep them safe.
- Parents are encouraged to play an active role in their child's learning through maintaining good communication with the school and regularly contributing to their child's 'learning journey'. Parents are very supportive of the school's work in the early years. For example, one parent commented that her child has made very good progress in Nursery and that staff have identified the child's strengths and set additional learning suitable to their learning needs and requirements.
- Well-focused leadership, teaching and support enable children to make good progress in the early years and leave with skills typically in line with and sometimes above the national average. Consequently, most children are well prepared for the next stage of their education in Year 1.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 103981 |
| Local authority | Sandwell |
| Inspection number | 10009247 |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Maintained |
| Age range of pupils | 3–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 477 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Jill Rushton |
| Headteacher | Pali Nahal |
| Telephone number | 0121 559 1033 |
| Website | www.blackheathprimary.org.uk |
| Email address | office@bps.sandwell.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 5–6 February 2014 |

Information about this school

- Blackheath Primary School is much larger than most primary schools.
- Approximately four out of every five pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language is lower than other schools nationally.
- Nearly half of pupils are known to be eligible for the pupil premium funding, which is almost double the national average. Pupil premium funding is additional government funding for those pupils known to be eligible to receive free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school meets 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.
- Children in the Nursey class attend part-time.
- Children in the Reception classes attend full-time.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed 22 lessons or part-lessons, including examples of teaching in every year group. Some of these teaching observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher and deputy headteachers.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, middle leaders, governors and a representative of the local authority who works with the school.
- The inspection team looked at pupils' books with senior leaders in a range of subjects to establish the progress and quality of pupils' work over time.
- The inspection team talked to pupils during their lessons and at playtimes to find out their views about the school.
- The inspection team heard pupils read and observed their behaviour in lessons, around the school and at playtimes.
- Informal discussions were held with parents to gauge their views of the school. The inspection team took account of 49 recent responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View), including any free-text comments that parents made during the inspection.
- The inspection team looked at a wide range of documents, including the school's plans for improvement, external monitoring reports, records of checks made by leaders and information on pupils' progress and outcomes. They also scrutinised records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector
Senior Her Majesty's Inspector
Ofsted Inspector

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