

Birchen Coppice Primary School

Woodbury Road, Kidderminster, Worcestershire DY117JJ

Inspection dates

12–13 July 2016

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Standards in reading, writing and mathematics have been too low for a number of years and are not rising fast enough.
- Pupils' achievement is not as good as it should be in key stage 2, particularly in Years 3 and 4. The school's assessment information shows that too many pupils are not making the expected rates of progress given their starting points.
- When pupils leave the school at the end of Year 6 many do not have the basic skills necessary to be prepared for secondary school.
- Pupils' basic skills are not developed well across the curriculum. Some work in history and geography is of a poor standard and evidence of progress is limited.
- Leaders' improvement plans lack precision so leaders do not know enough about whether their actions have been successful.
- Leaders and governors' checks on the single central record have not been rigorous enough. As a result, safeguarding is ineffective.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment varies across the school. Pupils make inconsistent progress from one class to the next, which results in attainment which is well below national standards.
- Across the school, teachers' feedback in pupils' books is not consistent with the school's policy.
- Teachers do not plan precisely enough to ensure that pupils learn the skills they need to in order to make progress.
- A number of teachers do not have high enough expectations of pupils' behaviour. Incidents of poor behaviour are frequent.
- Fixed-term exclusions are high and have risen again this year. Exclusions and incidents of physical intervention are not analysed well enough to understand why problems occur.
- Attendance rates are well below national figures and have declined further this academic year. Rates of persistent absence are high.

The school has the following strengths

- Recent appointments are helping to improve the quality of teaching and capacity in leadership.
- The early years is a strength of the school. Children in Nursery and Reception have a positive start to their learning journey.

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Urgently improve procedures to safeguard the welfare of pupils by ensuring that:
 - the single central register of checks on staff meets statutory requirements
 - leaders and governors frequently and thoroughly monitor the content and accuracy of the single central register
 - the organisation of personnel files ensures that documents are held in one central place and are easy to view.
- Improve the impact that leaders and governors have on pupils' outcomes, behaviour and attendance by ensuring that:
 - leaders analyse closely all aspects of the school's work, use this analysis to notice patterns and trends, and plan and implement their actions accordingly
 - the progress made by different groups of pupils is understood by everyone and closely targeted action is taken to remedy any underachievement
 - action plans are precise about the improvements the school wants to achieve
 - plans include measurable milestones and a clear timeline for reviewing the impact that teaching is having on pupils' progress
 - middle leaders are given suitable training to help them respond quickly to pupils' underachievement.
- Improve the overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
 - teaching offers a greater level of challenge and all teachers have consistently high expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - sequences of learning and intended outcomes are carefully planned and accurately identify the skills that are being taught
 - pupils are given greater opportunities to practise and apply their English and mathematics skills across the curriculum
 - feedback in books is in line with the school's policy in order to help pupils to make better progress
 - the most effective practice is shared widely.
- Improve standards of behaviour, personal development and welfare by making sure that:
 - leaders and staff at all levels have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and consistently help pupils to meet these standards in lessons and around the school
 - the use of physical intervention is reduced and records are completed in full
 - exclusion rates are reduced
 - systems for monitoring pupils' behaviour and physical intervention are analysed to show patterns or trends, and any findings acted on
 - leaders continue to work with families in order to improve attendance.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is inadequate

- Leaders and governors have not kept adequate checks on basic safeguarding systems. Requirements for the completion of the school's single central record were not fully met at the start of the inspection. Leaders and governors were unaware of the omissions or formats of records that were in place.
- Personnel files are not well organised and key documents are not always kept in a central location.
- Leaders' plans to secure improvements in pupils' progress lack detail and precision. Aims are often too broad and do not fully explain the desired outcomes. The impact that teaching is having on learning is not clear. Plans are annotated and reviewed, but leaders' evaluations lack rigour. As a result, self-evaluation lacks accuracy.
- The culture and ethos of the school has not been developed sufficiently to ensure that good behaviour is the norm. While some aspects of behaviour are improving, low-level disruption is not challenged by some teachers.
- Leaders' actions to improve the quality of teaching and the outcomes for pupils have had too little impact. Though standards are improving in the early years and key stage 1, outcomes across key stage 2 are too variable. Levels of attainment at the end of key stage 2 have declined in recent years. The quality of work in pupils' books varies considerably across the curriculum. Overall, progress is limited and teachers' expectations of what pupils can do are not high enough.
- The school should not appoint newly qualified teachers.
- The progress made by disadvantaged pupils has improved in some areas of the curriculum. School leaders are aware of any gaps in performance and have used pupil premium funding to arrange additional support to secure improvements. However, leaders do not fully analyse or evaluate the impact that additional funding is having on pupils' achievement.
- The progress made by pupils who have special educational needs or disabilities varies across the curriculum. The proportion of pupils making the expected level of progress in reading and writing is too low in some year groups. The new leadership of special educational needs recognises the need to improve and develop tracking systems so that assessment information is used more effectively to assist pupils' progress.
- Leaders with responsibility for English and mathematics are aware of their subjects' relative strengths and areas for improvement. The leaders have developed action plans which form the school's main approach to school improvement. These plans address appropriate areas for improvement in broad terms but lack the detail required to allow these leaders to evaluate the full impact their work has on pupils' progress.
- School development plans do not detail precise targets or milestones for achieving improvements in levels of progress or attainment. As a result, leaders are not sufficiently focused on any emerging areas of underachievement. Leaders are not able to talk with conviction and depth about the exact actions they will take to bring about improvements and reverse any areas in decline.
- The sport premium is used well to develop teachers' skills and extend opportunities for pupils to take part in physical activities. The school reports that more pupils are now attending clubs and several individuals have secured places with local clubs and teams, including Kidderminster Harriers.
- Corridors and displays proudly demonstrate the work the school is doing to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are encouraged to 'reach for the stars and believe you can achieve'. They take part in forest school activities, cooking classes, have a school government and visit a wide range of local attractions and centres.
- Pupils' understanding of democracy is promoted through the school's pupil government, in which representatives from across the school meet to discuss their ideas. The school has also established special displays and invested in a range of resources to promote British values and ensure that pupils develop mutual respect and a tolerance of different faiths and beliefs.
- The curriculum has been redesigned to meet the programmes of study outlined in the national curriculum; this includes the teaching of modern foreign language skills from Year 3 to Year 6. Some teachers are able to plan interesting lessons that capture the imagination of pupils and foster interest in the wider world. For example, Year 6 have learned about volcanoes with great enthusiasm. However, this approach to learning is not consistent across the school. Some work in history and geography lacks challenge, and opportunities to develop English and mathematical skills through these subjects are scarce.

- The early years is well led and the Nursery and Reception Years are a strength of the school. Assessment procedures and the overall quality of teaching and learning are very effective. Children develop positive attitudes and important skills at a rapid rate as a result of insightful leadership and practice.
- Recent appointments to the leadership team have brought about greater rigour to assessment procedures and have started to strengthen teaching. The leadership team are united and are committed to reversing the decline in attainment in key stage 2. Questionnaires show that staff feel that they are treated fairly and that they understand the school's aims.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors have not fully carried out their statutory duties. The single central record has not been adequately checked to ensure it meets requirements.
 - Governors have not ensured that the leaders secure better outcomes for pupils. Too many pupils do not make the necessary progress to help them attain the expected standards.
 - Governors have regular meetings to discuss standards across the school and financial matters. Minutes record the questions they ask and the range of assessment information they explore, but these actions are not yet leading to improved outcomes across the school.
 - Governors have paid close attention to succession planning and are training their members to ensure they are confident in new roles from September.
 - Governors have a good grasp of performance management procedures. They have already taken action to tackle poor practice and understand that they must continue this drive for improvement if the decline in standards is to be reversed.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective. Checks on school staff have not been recorded properly and staff personnel files are not well organised.
- The local authority's work has not sufficiently supported the school in bringing about the necessary improvements to standards and requirements for safeguarding.
- The school has identified three newly qualified teachers (NQTs) to join in September. No more NQTs may be appointed.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inadequate

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inconsistent across the school. Overall, it is too weak to have the necessary impact on raising standards.
- In some classes, expectations are not high enough. Teaching does not adequately challenge pupils, including the most able, and teachers too often accept work that is poorly presented. This is particularly evident in topic books where work can be dominated by undemanding pre-prepared worksheets and 'cutting and sticking' or 'colouring in' activities. There are very few opportunities to write at length or practise basic skills.
- Whole-school assessment procedures have been developed but are not yet having a sustained impact on standards. The early years teachers use assessment information well to inform careful planning and sequences of learning that result in rapid progress. The improving practice in the early years is becoming more evident in key stage 1 but lacks rigour and impact throughout the rest of the school.
- The objectives that are set for pupils' learning are sometimes too broad and do not accurately identify the skills that pupils will learn. Teachers focus too much on the activity that pupils will do as opposed to the skill that is being taught. This approach can be confusing and results in pupils being unsure about what they are doing and why. As a result, progress is slow and not enough pupils work at a greater depth or demonstrate sufficient mastery of the English or mathematics curriculum.
- Teachers' marking is improving but does not follow the school's policy with consistency. Common errors and basic punctuation mistakes are not routinely picked up by all teachers. This results in gaps as pupils move through the school.
- The most effective practice in teaching is not shared widely enough. As pupils move from year to year, the impact of teaching varies. In several classes, pupils are not sufficiently interested in the learning that they are presented with. They become restless quickly and then distract one another. This low-level disruption is not addressed quickly enough by teachers.
- In a minority of classes, pupils are making better rates of progress from their starting points in this academic year. This progress is evident in many writing and mathematics books in Years 5 and 6. In these books, it is clear that pupils receive helpful guidance, respond appropriately to feedback from

teachers and have more frequent opportunities to write at length.

- Teaching assistants work proactively to ensure pupils stay on task and understand what is expected of them. Some pupils become over-reliant on this high level of support from other adults, which limits the development of their independent work skills and sense of self-direction.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate.
- Arrangements for safeguarding are ineffective.
- Large team games can dominate the shared spaces and adults do not always deal with problems quickly enough.
- Pupils reported to inspectors that they are taught how to stay safe on the internet. They know which sites are safe to visit and what they should do if they have any worries or concerns. Pupils know that leaders are able to see if anyone has visited a site that may be unsuitable and that this will be addressed.
- Displays in corridors give clear information about the dangers of being part of a gang and what pupils should do if they ever feel scared about another person's behaviour. Pupils told inspectors that they understand the messages in these displays.
- First-aid procedures are well established and pupils are confident that they will be looked after if they have an accident.
- The school has worked hard to establish, and host, a wide range of family learning events to help parents support their children's personal development and well-being. Some parents have gone on to receive accreditation in English and mathematics.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are positive. Staff have worked hard to understand the welfare needs of pupils. As a result, some pupils have made considerable progress socially and emotionally.
- Parents that inspectors met with at the school gate, and the vast majority of those who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View), said that their children enjoy coming to school and feel safe.
- Pupils who attend the after-school club are well supervised and the club is calm and orderly.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is inadequate.
- Not all staff demonstrate high enough expectations of behaviour. Some low-level disruption is not challenged and pupils are sometimes allowed to distract one another and deviate from their learning.
- The use of physical intervention within school is too high. Interventions used to support pupils are not always logged correctly and leaders do not carry out sufficient analysis to establish any trends or patterns.
- Exclusion rates have increased this year and are well above the national average. Exclusions are not helping pupils to improve their behaviour as in several instances the same pupils are excluded repeatedly.
- Attendance rates have declined this year and rates of persistent absence are above the national average. Over 12% of the school's population have attendance that is below 90%. The school has sought specialist support to improve the attendance of different groups. This is helping the school to engage more constructively with families but, to date, attendance rates remain too low.
- Some pupils report that they hear derogatory and homophobic language. Pupils say that they tell staff about the words that are used that they do not like.
- Some pupils say that there is bullying in school and that some parts of their playground do not always feel safe.
- The school's walking bus is helping to promote the importance of punctual attendance at school and is bringing some improvement in this area. Pupils who take part in the walking bus behave very well, show a good understanding of how to stay safe, enjoy one another's company and arrive on time.
- Incidents of poor behaviour have reduced over the course of the year. Staff have worked hard to develop 'time out' spaces and places for pupils to go if they want to receive extra support from an adult.

Outcomes for pupils

are inadequate

- Pupils' progress across the school is too slow. There have been insufficient improvements in recent years. In too many cases, pupils do not make the expected levels of progress from their starting points. The school's own assessment information confirms the variability and slowness of progress.
- As a result of low attainment over time, pupils are not fully prepared for the next stage of their education. When pupils leave at the end of Year 6, many lack some important basic skills. Attainment in writing is particularly poor and is not yet showing signs of any sustained improvement.
- Rates of progress in the early years are better than the rest of the school. Children's reading and writing skills in the Nursery and Reception years develop quickly as a result of good teaching and learning. Assessment information is used to match exciting activities to the children's interests.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check rose this year, albeit from a very low point the previous year. Recent initiatives to improve phonics (letters and the sounds they make) are having a positive impact for younger pupils. In the most recent screening checks, the school was broadly in line with national figures. This is a significant gain on 2015 when only 33% of pupils reached the expected standard. Nevertheless, while improvements in reading are being made in key stage 1, this is not the case in key stage 2. Outcomes in reading continue to decline in Year 6 and in 2015 only 66% of pupils reached the expected standard, compared to 89% nationally.
- Attainment at the end of key stage 1 has risen over time and more pupils are reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics. However, very few pupils attain at a higher level, particularly in writing.
- Progress from Years 3 to 6 is very variable and too few pupils reach nationally expected standards by the time they leave school. In 2015, attainment dropped further and no pupils achieved the combined higher standard in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The standard of work in pupils' books can range significantly across different year groups. Some pupils do not take enough pride in what they do and standards of presentation are often poor. Better rates of progress are evident in writing in Years 5 and 6, but this is not the case in Years 3 and 4. In Years 3 and 4, writing skills are not routinely developed through the wider curriculum and progress is generally poor.
- Like other pupils, disadvantaged pupils leave school at the end of Year 6 having reached standards in reading, writing and mathematics that are some way behind those reached by other pupils nationally.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disabilities do not make consistent rates of progress throughout the school or progress that is in line with their peers.
- Too few pupils reach higher levels of attainment by the end of key stages 1 and 2. In 2015, very few pupils achieved level 3 in writing at key stage 1. Similarly in 2015, no pupils achieved combined level 5 in reading, writing and mathematics in Year 6. The most able pupils are not sufficiently challenged to ensure that they achieve at the highest possible level. This year, the most able pupils, and particularly those in Year 6, have made better progress than has been seen in previous years. However, they are still not reaching the standards that they should.

Early years provision

is inadequate

- The early years provision is judged inadequate as a result of ineffective safeguarding at a whole-school level. In all other respects, the provision is effective.
- Children make a strong start to their learning journey at Birchen Coppice. They make rapid progress in the early years from low starting points and, by the end of the Reception Year, they are ready for their move into Year 1. Current levels of attainment are improving and the school forecasts that attainment will be in line with 2015 national figures this year.
- The learning environments in the Nursery and Reception classes promote creativity and children are generally engrossed in their learning.
- Regular communication with parents is a strength in the early years part of the school. Parents speak very highly of the provision and are regularly encouraged to come and learn with their children and see what is happening in class.
- Recent topics have included the Amazon rainforest. Children have created large models that display the different layers of tree canopy, and during the inspection a group of boys were observed busily digging

an 'Amazon River' in the sand area outside. The boys were clad in all-weather suits and wellies and worked hard to dig a path through the sand so that the river of water running down a large white drainpipe could reach the far side of their work area. Such imaginative, exciting activities are typical and grab and hold children's attention.

- The leadership of the early years provision has established a clear vision for effective learning. This vision is shared by the whole team, who know individual children well. Consequently, teaching meets children's early learning needs.
- Assessment practice is also strong. Learning journals provide evidence of what children have achieved over time and observations are used to build bespoke medium- and short-term plans that lead to effective teaching.
- Activities are well planned to help children make progress in all areas of learning. For example, Nursery staff have recently built in greater opportunities for children to explore numbers and different shapes. These activities were evident in the outdoor environment.
- Children's behaviour is good. They cooperate and play in an exemplary manner. In Nursery, they are learning to take risks on their trikes and scooters as they move up and down the hills in the grassed area. In Reception, they play skittles together, build rivers and explore the plants and vegetables they are growing in raised beds. They follow adults' instructions quickly and understand the importance of taking turns in different activities.

School details

Unique reference number	135045
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	10009282

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	2–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	289
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nicky Gale
Headteacher	Kay Butler
Telephone number	01562 823 582
Website	www.birchencoppice.co.uk
Email address	office@birchencoppice.worcs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	30–31 January 2014

Information about this school

- Birchen Coppice is an average-sized primary school.
- Since the last inspection, a headteacher was appointed in September 2014 and a deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher in September 2015.
- A number of teaching staff have left the school and several new appointments have been made. Three newly qualified teachers are due to take up post in September 2016.
- The number of 'learning support' classes at the school has been reduced. One is now in operation.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disabilities is above average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, those who are supported by the pupil premium funding, is well above average. The pupil premium provides additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- Most pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below that seen in most schools.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics in Year 6.
- The school website meets requirements.
- A breakfast club and after-school club operate on the school site. The clubs are managed by the governing body.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in 15 lessons or parts of lessons. A number of lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors looked at work in pupils' books and listened to them read. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at lunchtime and at the end of the school day, as well as in lessons. They spoke with pupils during lessons and breaktimes and reviewed the four responses to the online pupil survey.
- A scrutiny of pupils' work in books in key stage 2 was undertaken jointly by the inspection team and senior leaders.
- The inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including assessments and records of pupils' progress, the school's checks and records relating to safeguarding, child protection and attendance records and the school improvement plans.
- The lead inspector met with governors, including the chair of the governing body. He also spoke with two representatives from the local authority via a telephone call.
- A member of the inspection team joined staff on the school's morning walking bus.
- The lead inspector visited the school's after-school club.
- The inspectors took account of the 18 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View) and talked to parents at the start of the school day. They also analysed and evaluated 21 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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