

Brandhall Primary School

Brennand Road, Oldbury, West Midlands B68 0SH

Inspection dates

18–19 October 2016

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- There is too much inconsistency in the quality of teaching and, as a result, the outcomes of pupils are too low in some classes.
- Expectations of what the most able pupils can and should achieve are too low and the level of challenge is too easy for them in the majority of classes.
- Leaders' planning for improvement does not focus closely enough on the most important priorities for the school. Leaders do not set clear criteria by which to monitor and evaluate the impact that their actions are having on improving teaching and outcomes for pupils.
- An effective middle leadership team is not yet established to share the workload of leading improvement within the school.
- Teachers do not provide pupils with enough opportunities to use reasoning within problem solving in mathematics.
- Too often, pupils' mistakes in spelling frequently used words are not identified or corrected by teachers. As a result, the mistakes are repeated.
- There are not enough opportunities for pupils to carry out investigations or independent work in subjects such as science, history and geography.
- Leaders have not ensured that pupils have a clear enough understanding of what bullying is.
- Pupils have not been provided with a secure understanding of what fundamental British values are and how they link to the core values that the school promotes.

The school has the following strengths

- Children make a positive start in the early years provision, due to well-established routines and good teaching. As a result, most children are well prepared for when they start in Year 1.
- Pupils behave well in class and show positive attitudes to learning. Attendance has improved, due to the effective support that school leaders have put in place to ensure that pupils attend regularly and on time.
- Governance has improved since the last inspection and governors are now in a much stronger position to challenge and support school leaders. They recognise that there is inconsistency in the teaching and that outcomes are not high enough for some pupils.
- Pupils' behaviour around the school is good and they show positive attitudes to learning.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good in key stages 1 and 2 by:
 - ensuring that the work set for pupils, especially the most able, is sufficiently challenging and well matched to their abilities
 - providing pupils with more opportunities to undertake investigative activities across a range of subjects
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical knowledge and skills in reasoning and problem solving
 - ensuring that teachers identify and correct basic errors in pupils' spelling.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that school improvement planning accurately and incisively focuses on the most important priorities for the school, has robust systems in place for measuring the impact of actions taken and has clearly defined timescales for when the targets will be met
 - ensuring that all school leaders use monitoring and evaluation effectively to bring about improvements in teaching and outcomes for pupils
 - reviewing and revising middle leadership structures within school to allow subject leaders to have a greater impact on bringing about improvements within their areas of responsibility
 - making sure that pupils have a clear understanding that the core values of respect and tolerance that the school promotes are intrinsic and fundamental within British society
 - ensuring that all members of the school community feel safe and secure in school by developing their understanding of what bullying is.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher have, in the relatively short time that they have been in post, addressed the lack of stability in teaching staff and have addressed some of the least effective teaching. However, they are aware that there is still too much teaching in school that is not yet good and that this slows the progress for pupils as they move through the school.
- Planning for improvement is hampered by a lack of focus on the most pressing priorities that will have a rapid impact on raising outcomes for pupils. There is a lack of clarity in the improvement plans, in monitoring the impact that the targets will have and in setting clear timescales by when actions will be completed. This limits leaders' ability to judge whether the actions that are carried out are having the intended effect. Leaders have not been helped in developing effective improvement planning by the local authority, which has provided advice that is contradictory to the recommendations for further actions given by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors in the recent monitoring inspection of the school.
- Leaders have established a monitoring and evaluation system that includes observations of teaching, analysis of pupils' attainment and progress data, and scrutiny of teachers' planning. However, they have not ensured that the monitoring that they carry out has a sufficiently sharp focus and this means that they have not been in a strong enough position to identify exactly what needs to improve and how this can best be achieved.
- Currently, the capacity to bring about rapid and sustained improvement is limited, as the headteacher and deputy headteacher are trying to undertake too many roles of responsibility. The middle leadership team is not yet sufficiently established to share some of the workload and to lead improvement within specific areas of responsibility.
- The headteacher's vision for the school, that pupils need to feel safe and cared for if they are to achieve good outcomes, is shared by staff and governors. While pupils are respectful of each other and appreciate what Brandhall Primary School offers them, leaders have not ensured that pupils are sufficiently secure in their understanding that tolerance, respect and the right of law are fundamental values within British society.
- Leaders have taken robust action to address all of the least effective teaching that was previously in school. Teachers are held to account for the progress that pupils make and there are regular reviews of their performance. Teachers who are new to the profession are well supported through training that is matched to their individual needs.
- The headteacher has successfully developed and implemented an assessment system that allows for accurate tracking of the progress and attainment of all pupils. Teachers meet regularly with senior leaders to discuss the progress of individual pupils and to identify where extra support is needed and how this can be provided. Teachers meet with staff from other schools to compare the accuracy of their assessments and to share good practice.
- Leaders have further improved the way that pupil premium funding is used in school.

They have used national research findings and examples of strong practice to support disadvantaged pupils in achieving good outcomes. They have adapted planning and more closely matched support to the individual needs of disadvantaged pupils. This is helping to ensure that disadvantaged pupils continue to make progress that compares well to other pupils nationally.

- Leaders have revised the curriculum that is taught in school to better meet the requirements of the national curriculum. Subjects such as history, geography and technology are taught through a series of topics, such as 'Into the Woods', 'World War 1 and 2' and 'Saxons and Vikings'. Pupils' learning is supported and enhanced through termly visits for all classes matched to the topics, including the National Space Centre, Warwick Castle and the Black Country Museum. Older pupils also have the opportunity to take part in an annual residential visit to Ingestry Hall in Staffordshire, to participate in arts and performance activities.
- Pupils are provided with a good range of extra-curricular activities. There is a strong focus on developing pupils' appreciation and participation in a range of cultural activities, including instrumental tuition such as guitar and brass lessons. The school eco-club helps pupils develop an appreciation of and responsibility for the local environment. An example of this was the recent litter pick by pupils, which helped clear a large amount of litter from the local area.
- Leaders have made good use of the additional sports funding. Additional resources have been purchased to widen the range of sporting activities available to the pupils, including the building of a tri-golf course. External sports coaches have been employed to support teachers and other staff in building their confidence and skills in teaching physical and sporting activities. Pupils take part in competitive sports both within school and against pupils from other local schools. All pupils took part in an Olympics event in the summer. As a result of a well-thought-out approach to this aspect of the curriculum, an increasing number of pupils now regularly take part in sporting activities, both within school and outside of the school day.

Governance of the school

- Following the last inspection, governors undertook an external review of governance. They used the recommendations of the review to make significant changes in the way that they undertook their roles and they are now a far more effective force in the leadership of the school. A revised committee structure is now in place and this allows for a more systematic and thorough approach to monitoring the effectiveness of different areas of the school's work.
- Link governors work closely with members of staff in school to gain an in-depth knowledge of specific areas of the school's work. This allows them to get a detailed understanding of the quality of teaching, outcomes of pupils and the impact of additional funding on the progress and attainment of different groups of pupils. Governors have established very effective lines of communication, including an online information sharing system, to ensure that all members of the governing body are fully informed about the work that individual governors have undertaken.
- Governors have undertaken training to allow them to fully understand and analyse the range of external assessment information that is available to them and to compare the performance of the school with other schools. They use the regular reports that they

receive from the headteacher to ask searching and challenging questions. They recognise that some pupils, including the most able pupils, are not achieving the outcomes that they are capable of. They also are clear about the improvements that have taken place since the last inspection and the progress that school leaders have made in moving the school forwards. Governors fulfil their statutory duties well, including carrying out rigorous checks on safeguarding arrangements. They are now an important force in driving forward the necessary improvements to move the school to good.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- School leaders have a passionate belief that pupils need to feel safe and cared for in school if they are to succeed in their learning. This vision has helped to create a strong culture of safeguarding within school, with all members of staff having a clear understanding of their responsibilities in protecting pupils.
- An example of the school's commitment to put safeguarding at the heart of the work that the school does was the decision that leaders made to appoint a full-time family support worker. Since taking up this post in early 2016, the family support worker has further strengthened safeguarding arrangements and procedures within school. He is the first point of contact if staff have any concerns about pupils' welfare or well-being, and works closely with pupils and their families to provide support and advice. He has ensured that all staff receive up-to-date training on matters related to safeguarding, including their responsibilities in protecting pupils from the threat of radicalisation or extremism.
- The school has robust recruitment systems in place to ensure that any staff that are appointed to work in the school have been checked to make sure that they are suitably qualified and do not pose any risk to the pupils.
- Links with outside agencies are good and record-keeping is detailed and thorough. As a result of the effective arrangements that the school has in place, the most vulnerable pupils in school are well cared for and protected, and this supports them in accessing learning opportunities alongside other pupils in school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because there is still too much variability in the quality of teaching across the school. As a result of this, outcomes across the school are not yet consistently good.
- Not all teachers have sufficiently high expectations of what pupils can and should achieve. Where this is the case, they set work that is not sufficiently well matched to the varying abilities of the pupils in the class. This is particularly the case for the most able pupils, who are too often set work that is not sufficiently challenging. Some of the most able pupils spoken to during the inspection commented on the fact that they sometimes found their work too easy.
- There is now a consistent approach to the teaching of core skills in mathematics across

the school. However, there are far too few opportunities for pupils to undertake mathematical problems that require them to think deeply and to apply reasoning skills. This aspect of the mathematics curriculum has not been embedded within teaching and learning.

- The teaching of writing has improved since the last inspection but there is still some inconsistency in this aspect of pupils' work in English. While most pupils are provided with well-planned activities to write at length and to apply the grammatical and punctuation skills that they have learned, this is still not the case across all classes. There are too many occasions where teachers do not identify basic errors in pupils' spelling of words that they use often, such as the days of the week or the months of the year. This allows the mistakes to be repeated and slows the pace of learning for pupils. During the inspection, through scrutiny of pupils' work, there were also incidents of spelling errors in the comments that teachers and other staff had written in pupils' books. This indicated a lack of consistency in secure subject knowledge.
- Opportunities for pupils to undertake investigative work and to work independently are not sufficiently developed across all classes. Evidence gathered during the inspection indicated that, too often in subjects such as history, geography and science, all pupils in some classes undertake the same activity that is often mundane and undemanding. However, there is good teaching practice in classes across all year groups and this needs to be further shared and developed across all classes. This will help to ensure that all pupils are provided with activities that are stimulating, relevant and that allow them to apply knowledge in reading, writing and mathematics in independent investigative work.
- Where teaching is good, teachers make learning interesting and demanding. Evidence gathered during the inspection, including through scrutiny of pupils' work in books, indicates that there is consistently good teaching in an increasing number of classes. For example, during the inspection, in a key stage 2 history lesson on the Romans and Celts, pupils worked in groups to discuss statements relating to the lives of people in the Roman army and then sorted the characteristics into groups. Challenging questions from the teacher promoted high-quality discussion from the pupils and, as a result, all pupils made good progress.
- Teaching across Year 6 and in early years is consistently good. Expectations of what should and can be achieved by pupils in lessons are clear and demanding. Activities are accurately matched to the range of abilities within the classes and, as a result, in these areas of the school progress is rapid.
- Teachers use assessment effectively to measure the progress that pupils make and to then adapt their planning. Leaders have ensured that assessment is accurate by creating opportunities for teachers to work alongside staff from other schools to compare the accuracy of their assessments and to review work in pupils' books. Teachers follow the school's marking policy and provide pupils with indications of how their work can be improved.
- Teaching assistants work effectively alongside teachers and provide good support to individuals and small groups of pupils. They strike a good balance between explaining how a task should be undertaken and requiring pupils to work independently.
- The teaching of reading is generally effective across the school. Teachers and other staff ensure that pupils have a good understanding of phonics and can then apply this

knowledge to read words in books. There are regular opportunities for pupils to undertake a range of reading activities in school and the range of reading books is being widened to provide more challenge and interest for pupils as they develop their confidence and interest in reading.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils spoken to during the inspection said there is some bullying in school. They identified occasional name-calling and the use of inappropriate language as bullying. However, they felt it was happening to other pupils and were not concerned about their own safety or well-being, and did not feel that there was a culture of bullying. It was apparent through conversations with pupils that the school had not ensured that pupils had a clear understanding of what bullying is and what the differences are between unkind actions and bullying. While pupils display through their behaviour that they are caring and considerate individuals who understand the need to show respect for each other, their understanding of what bullying is and confidence that it is dealt with effectively if it does occur, are not secure.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe in a range of different situations. They are taught about and understand the risks that can be associated with the use of the internet. Pupils recognise the need to have secure passwords and to not give personal details out to people that they do not know. Pupils are also well taught about other aspects of personal safety, including road safety and water safety.
- Opportunities for pupils to take on and demonstrate responsibility within school are well established. These opportunities include a strong say in how the school develops, through their representation on the school council and their roles in looking after and caring for the ducks and chickens in the school's animal area.
- The well-run before- and after-school clubs are valued by parents and their children. Pupil premium funding is used to allow disadvantaged pupils to attend the clubs and this is an indication of the emphasis that the school places on ensuring that there is equality of opportunity for all.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They show positive attitudes to learning and behave well, both in the classrooms and at break and lunchtimes.
- Leaders have been successful in addressing the challenging behaviour of a small minority of pupils, who have shown marked improvements in their behaviour over time. Pupils recognise that they have a responsibility for their own actions. They understand and respect the sanctions that occur when any of them do not reach the expected standards, and also appreciate the rewards that they receive for sustained good behaviour.
- Pupils are proud of their school and are appreciative of what it offers them. They are

polite and courteous to adults and each other, holding the door open and saying 'please' and 'thank you' as appropriate.

- The school has robust and successful systems in place to promote good attendance and, as a result, attendance is in line with the national average. The family support worker works closely with parents where attendance of children has previously been below that which is expected.
- During the inspection, inspectors observed one of the regular half-termly attendance assemblies that celebrate and reward high levels of attendance. Pupils' behaviour during the assembly was consistently good and all pupils showed pride in the achievements of their schoolmates. One pupil's comment of 'If we don't come to school regularly, we won't learn as well' was typical of the views of the very large majority of pupils.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Outcomes require improvement as pupils do not make consistently good progress across all classes. Consequently, for some pupils there are gaps in their learning. These gaps then have to be addressed as pupils move into a new class, before they can progress on to the level of challenge and content of work that is appropriate for their age and ability.
- Evidence gathered during the inspection, including through scrutiny of pupils' work, observation in lessons and the school's own assessment information, indicates that, while these inconsistencies in outcomes are being reduced, there are still too many variances across the school.
- Outcomes for the most able pupils across the school are not sufficiently high. Too many of the most able pupils undertake work that is not sufficiently demanding and, as a result, their progress is not as rapid as it could be. Provisional data for Year 6 pupils in 2016 showed that, while the proportion that reached the expected standard was in line with the national figure in reading, writing and mathematics, the proportion working at the higher level was below national in both reading and writing, with no pupils identified as working at greater depth in writing.
- In 2015 the proportion of pupils who made expected progress from key stage 1 to the end of key stage 2 was broadly in line with national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion making better-than-expected progress was below national averages in writing, with the most able pupils in school not making the expected progress. School leaders recognise that outcomes for the most able pupils need to improve.
- Pupils in key stage 1 in 2016 attained standards that were in line with the national figures in all subjects. This had also been the case in 2015 and indicates an ongoing improvement over the past three years.
- In 2014 and 2015, outcomes in the national phonics screening check for pupils in Year 1 were below the expected standard, but the gap against the national average has been narrowing. This improvement continued in 2016 and, while the proportion attaining the expected standard is still slightly below that seen nationally, there is an ongoing trend of improvement that reflects the priority that the school places on

ensuring that pupils develop good reading skills.

- Disadvantaged pupils make progress that is at least in line with other pupils nationally. This is a result of the careful use that the school makes of the pupil premium funding, with additional support matched well to the different needs of the pupils.
- There are no marked differences in outcomes between boys and girls across the school, or between pupils from the range of minority ethnic groups within school. Pupils who join the school speaking English as an additional language are well supported, and the strong focus that is placed on developing their spoken language allows them to attain standards similar to other pupils in the school.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points. Their specific needs are identified well and support is provided, both from within school by teachers and other staff, and through the use of external expertise if appropriate.

Early years provision

Good

- Leadership of the early years is good. The leader has high expectations of what the children can and should achieve and her unswerving drive to further improve provision is shared by other staff across both the Nursery and Reception classes. As a result, children settle confidently into school when they arrive and make good progress.
- Children enter Nursery with skills and knowledge that are below those that are typical for their age. Teachers and other staff quickly and sensitively settle children into the established routines and make clear the expectations to them. An example of this was seen during the inspection when children were quietly but firmly reminded of the rules for taking turns when talking, and the need to listen to what other people were saying. This helps to establish a calm and productive working atmosphere where children are encouraged to work alongside and cooperate with each other.
- The recent introduction of provision for two-year-old children as part of the work of the school has added to the effectiveness of the early years provision. Children are able to attend over a flexible pattern of sessions and this supports them in developing social skills and becoming used to the school environment. The early years leader has placed the successful development of this aspect of the provision as the main priority and is successfully ensuring that the quality of teaching and learning is of the same high standard as seen in the Nursery and Reception classes.
- Teachers and other staff have high expectations of behaviour and outcomes and ensure that the activities that the children undertake are engaging and purposeful. Both the indoor and outdoor classrooms are bright, lively and well-resourced places, with different areas well set up to support all aspects of learning.
- From their starting points in school, children make good progress as they move through the early years provision. By the time they leave at the end of their Reception Year, the majority of children are well prepared for their move to Year 1. The proportion of children who achieve a good level of development has steadily risen over the past three years. In 2016, while the proportion reaching a good level of development was still slightly below the national average, the gap has narrowed year

on year and is now just below the national average. Children attain slightly lower standards in reading, writing and mathematics than in other areas of learning, but due to a high focus on developing communication skills, their progress in these areas is strong.

- Assessment processes are highly effective across the early years provision. Teachers and other staff make accurate and detailed assessments as children start in school, and use information from parents well to inform their assessments. They subsequently use observation and recording effectively to track progress and to then match activities to the children's specific needs.
- Parents spoken to during the inspection, and those who responded to the online Parent View survey, were extremely positive about the support and encouragement that their children receive in the early years provision. One parent commented that: 'My three-year-old daughter has settled really well and looks forward to going to school every day. The staff and environment are warm and welcoming to parents and children. I couldn't have hoped for a better start to my child's education.' This was typical of the views of other parents.
- Children's safety and well-being are placed centrally at the work of the early years provision. As a result, children feel safe, behave well and thrive. All statutory safeguarding and welfare requirements are fully met.
- On a few occasions, staff do not always swiftly recognise when children need to move on to a more demanding activity and, as a result, some of the most able children are not provided with sufficiently demanding activities.

School details

Unique reference number	103976
Local authority	Sandwell
Inspection number	10020011

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	457
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lee Maskell
Headteacher	Liz Hart
Telephone number	0121 422 5336
Website	www.brandhall.sandwell.sch.uk/
Email address	liz.hart@brandhall.sandwell.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	6–7 November 2014

Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about the accessibility plan for disabled pupils and the government's school performance tables. This information was uploaded to the website during the inspection.
- Brandhall Primary School is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, those who are supported by the pupil premium funding, is above average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is above that in most schools. The largest minority group are of Black Caribbean heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average
- The school runs a breakfast club and an after-school club for its pupils.
- There have been a number of changes of leadership since the last inspection. The

headteacher and deputy headteacher took up their posts in January 2016.

- In 2015, the school took over responsibility for the education of two-year-old children from the Children's Centre that is based on the site.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics for pupils by the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed pupils' learning in 33 lessons or parts of lesson. A number of these observations were undertaken with the headteacher and the deputy headteacher.
- The inspectors looked at work in pupils' books and listened to pupils read. They met with groups of pupils, including members of the school council. The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at breaktime, lunchtime and at the end of the school day, as well as in lessons.
- 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 of how teaching is managed and the school improvement plans.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteacher, two middle leaders and the family support worker. The lead inspector met with three members of the governing body, including the chair and vice-chair of the governing body, and with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors took account of the 16 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and considered the 11 free text responses from parents. They also talked to parents at the start and end of the school day. They considered the three responses to the staff questionnaire and the one response to the pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

Adam Hewett, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Ann Pritchard	Her Majesty's Inspector
Gail Peyton	Ofsted Inspector
Rowena Green	Ofsted Inspector

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