

Oasis Academy Blakenhale Infants

Blakenhale Road, Garretts Green, Birmingham, West Midlands B33 0XD

Inspection dates

13–14 December 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 executive principal works closely with the deputy principal to provide strong leadership. They are well supported by committed local academy councillors and skilled multi-academy leaders.
- Close collaboration between middle leaders in this school and the next-door junior school has also helped to sustain significant improvement since the previous inspection.
- All pupils respond enthusiastically to good teaching and excellent care and behave well.
- All staff and most parents recognise substantial improvements in teaching and pupils' behaviour and learning in recent years. They rightly identify that pupils enjoy their time at the school and feel very safe.
- Pupils show much improved and securely good attitudes to their work, and by the time they leave they are well prepared for future learning.
- Pupils make good progress from their different starting points. Standards across the school are typically average and improving quickly.
- Provision for sport is very strong. As a result, pupils make particularly rapid progress in physical education. In response to good teaching, they also develop their phonic understanding very effectively.
- At times, teachers do not deepen pupils' understanding by setting appropriately challenging work, especially for the most able pupils.
- Pupils' handwriting, and the knowledge of basic numeracy facts of some lower attaining pupils, are not developed as well as other skills.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make the same fast progress as their classmates. Past differences between disadvantaged pupils and others in the school and nationally have been significantly diminished.
- The early years provision is good. As a result, children in the Nursery and Reception classes typically make rapid progress in all aspects of their learning.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and pupils' progress and build on the best practice already in the school by teachers:
 - making sure that all pupils are consistently challenged at a suitable level in their learning, especially the most able pupils
 - more consistently developing pupils' handwriting skills, especially their ability to form letters accurately, and by the end of Year 2, to join them legibly
 - ensuring that pupils from lower starting points develop their knowledge of basic number facts more effectively.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The executive principal, well supported by the deputy principal, leads by example through a determined approach that has brought rapid improvements in the school. Together, senior leaders have supported and enthused a dedicated team of staff to establish a strong commitment to continued improvement.
- The school has continued to work productively with the next-door junior school. Staff join together in effective training. The very supportive sharing of expertise has helped to improve the accuracy of assessments of pupils' progress as well as improving middle leadership skills.
- In addition, by sharing specialist knowledge and skills, leaders across both schools have significantly enriched the learning experiences provided for the pupils. This has been a noteworthy feature in improving the pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning. These developments show the school's strong capacity to bring about further improvements.
- Middle leaders have been appointed and their roles have been made clearer since the previous inspection. They are playing an increasingly effective role in bringing about improvement. Middle leaders have contributed well, for example in securing consistently good practice across early years classes and in securing good teaching of phonics. Some other leaders have not been in post long enough to see the full impact of their work. Even so, their efforts are quickening pupils' progress.
- Leaders have sustained a rigorous focus on rectifying weaknesses in teaching and in pupils' knowledge and understanding, especially in writing and mathematics. Leaders check rigorously and frequently to ensure that actions taken produce the desired improvement. This has resulted in some notable improvements, including, for example, teachers in all classes ensuring that pupils know what they have to do to improve.
- Leaders and staff ensure that all pupils have an equal opportunity to enjoy all the school has to offer and to learn and make good progress. Additional funding is now well used to secure the rapid personal and academic progress of disadvantaged pupils and to close any differences in achievement with other pupils.
- The school's unwavering commitment to equality is also seen in the way leaders plan and tailor arrangements to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders and staff ensure that the pupils' individual needs are met effectively in and out of classrooms. Staff are equally successful in making sure that discrimination of any kind is not tolerated and that pupils are protected from extremism and radicalisation.

- Senior leaders ensure that the curriculum places a strong and effective emphasis on developing the pupils' speaking and listening, and reading, literacy and numeracy skills. Leaders have improved the curriculum since the previous inspection to make sure that the pupils' interest in learning is stimulated by exciting and motivating experiences. This has led to a vibrant, broad and well-balanced curriculum that is increasingly helping pupils to deepen their knowledge, skills and understanding. The curriculum is enriched further by a range of clubs and activities, such as those for gardening and poultry-keeping, that captures pupils' interest and inspires them to give of their best.
- Parents welcome the improving opportunities they are given to contribute to their children's learning at home and to know more about the school. One parent reflected the views of others when writing, 'Children really like coming to school.'
- All staff strongly promote school values such as understanding, respect and empathy for others. Staff also use assembly themes and create displays to promote the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. Pupils take part in elections to the school council. Pupils from a wide range of cultural backgrounds share excellent relationships. This helps them to develop a good understanding of life in modern Britain.
- The school uses the physical education and sport premium creatively and very effectively. Funds have been used purposefully to ensure that the pupils' health and fitness support their readiness to learn. The school employs specialist coaches to enrich the skills of staff and pupils and to widen the range of sporting opportunities provided. For example, pupils now enjoy and participate well in sports such as golf and boxing, and in yoga.

Governance of the school

- The governance of the school is very effective.
- Local academy councillors have continued to work closely with senior leaders of the multi-academy trust and with senior school staff to bring significant improvement since the previous inspection.
- As a united team, trust leaders fully meet their statutory responsibilities and continue to play a key role in further developing the quality of the education the school provides.
- Academy councillors possess a wealth of local knowledge and a wide range of expertise. They make frequent visits to the school and receive detailed reports from the regional director of the multi-academy trust and from senior school staff. Consequently, they know the school very well and use this knowledge to challenge and support staff leaders in identifying and rectifying the right priorities for improvement.
- Local councillors robustly hold staff leaders to account and have played a strong role, for example in making sure that additional funding is used effectively to quicken the progress of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The steps taken by staff to keep pupils safe are strengths throughout the school. Leaders in the school and across the multi-academy trust ensure that safeguarding and welfare procedures are kept up to date. They check to make sure that staff fully understand these procedures and implement them consistently. Staff know the pupils well and, for example, are clear about their 'Prevent' duty to protect them from discrimination and extremism.
- Leaders complete rigorous and comprehensive checks before employing staff and welcoming volunteers to work with pupils. Senior leaders also work closely with parents and outside agencies to make sure that pupils considered vulnerable are kept as safe as possible from potential risks.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching, assessment and learning are good across the early years and key stage 1 classes.
- Leaders have taken advantage of a period of staffing stability to determinedly improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school since the previous inspection. They have accomplished this by making effective use of staff skills within the school and the adjacent junior school.
- Staff from the multi-academy trust have also been used well to lead professional development and training to promote improvement. In recent years, for example, improved identification and assessment of pupils' different starting points and better teaching of phonics have brought consistently good and better progress for pupils.
- The staff's earlier and more accurate targeting of pupils' different needs has also brought better use of additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils. For example, funds are not only used well to provide extra teaching of literacy and numeracy, but are also supporting activities such as sports and the before-school Breakfast Café. These experiences are successfully lifting pupils' confidence and readiness for learning.
- Teachers have improved the way they plan pupils' learning so that it extends previous skills and knowledge. For example, extra adult help, in and out of classrooms, is helping pupils from the range of starting points, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities to quicken their progress.
- Teachers are currently targeting the needs of the most able pupils with increasing success. For example, during the inspection, pupils in Year 1 deepened their understanding of phonics when challenged to explain their understanding of the sound that the letters a, i and r represent.
- Very occasionally, when it is clear that a very small number of pupils find tasks too easy or too hard, staff do not adjust the work quickly enough to improve their learning. For example, at times, pupils' responses in class and their work in books show that they are not challenged to make faster progress.

- Teachers manage pupils' behaviour very effectively. All pupils are applying themselves much more eagerly in their work. They sustain concentration well to improve learning. These qualities reflect the very supportive and encouraging relationships promoted by all staff.
- The pupils' much improved attitudes to learning also reflect the diligence of teachers in presenting work that stimulates and interests the pupils. These are clearly evident, for example, in pupils' enthusiasm for sports, especially the start the day 'Wake up and Shake up' sessions. Pupils' spirited Christmas performances and, for example, thoughtful writing about 'The Toy Maker' in their topic books, also show the renewed commitment in learning.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work well together. They value pupils' contributions and use questioning well to extend pupils' thinking. This was seen during mathematics in Year 2, for example, where the teacher challenged the pupils to explain how they interpreted pictograms.
- Teachers give good guidance to pupils about how to improve their work. From an early age, pupils particularly enjoy sharing their ideas and learn well with and from each other. Pupils also respond well to teachers' prompting. They use resources such as word lists and the displayed literacy and numeracy information effectively to support their learning. Although pupils present their work neatly in books, teachers do not develop their handwriting skills well enough. This limits pupils' ability to write more fluently and confidently.
- The large majority of pupils quicken their progress well in response to the advice they receive from adults. Occasionally, pupils from lower starting points are not given enough help to learn basic number facts and skills quickly enough. This weakens their ability to tackle mathematical problems.
- When questioned, pupils said, 'Teachers are really nice and help us to learn.' Pupils also commented that, 'We are getting to learn a lot more about new things now.'
- The majority of parents who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire or spoke to an inspector also praised the work of the teachers. They appreciate the staff's increasing efforts to work more closely with them.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- The school is a very welcoming and inclusive community where staff know the children well and value their ideas and contributions.
- The efforts of leaders and staff to improve pupils' attitudes to their learning have proved very successful since the previous inspection. They now provide a more stimulating range of learning experiences, especially in physical education and sports, to raise pupils' interest and enjoyment in learning.
- Pupils' good, and at times excellent, engagement in learning, is a key element in their improved progress and achievements.

- Pupils enjoy excellent relationships with each other and with adults. Pupils show resilience in learning and persevere with tasks. They respond well to challenges and teachers' questions. They listen carefully and respect the views of others.
- Pupils in all classes enjoy sharing ideas and at times show equal pride in the contributions of others as they do in their achievements. For example, these qualities are notable features within phonics and physical education lessons that are quickening pupils' progress.
- Pupils are proud of their school and everything it represents. When questioned, pupils readily expressed views such as, 'We enjoy our work and like being challenged,' that clearly reflect the views of others across the school.
- Pupils respond diligently to rules and well-established routines. They take pride in upholding school values and helping others. Pupils show good understanding and empathy to others.
- Pupils know about bullying and the different forms it can take, for example verbal abuse and cyber-bullying when using computers. Pupils say that bullying rarely happens and that teachers would sort it out quickly if it did occur.
- Pupils swiftly point out that if they have any problems they would go straight to a teacher who would 'put it right'.
- Pupils questioned said that they feel very safe because, 'We know everyone and all the teachers keep us safe.' The large majority of parents who responded to Parent View agree. One parent wrote, reflecting the views of others, 'I have no issues or concerns, but know that if they did happen they would be dealt with straight away.'
- All staff provide high-quality care and welfare. Leaders ensure that staff receive regular training to keep their knowledge of safeguarding policies up to date. Staff know what to do and implement agreed procedures very effectively in all parts of the school.
- Staff ensure that the personal needs of pupils who are considered vulnerable are carefully considered. Any actions taken by staff are fully recorded and checked to ensure that pupils' needs are sensitively and effectively met.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave well when moving around the school and at break- and lunchtimes. Pupils behave well in class and most sustain a good focus on their work. Often pupils' behaviour is outstanding, especially in early years classes and when learning phonics and enjoying stories.
- Pupils who spoke to inspectors confidently indicated their respect for adults when saying, 'Teachers and dinner ladies help us to do good work and to play nicely.'
- A small minority of pupils need reminders from adults not to chatter and to concentrate more on their work. Even so, they respond well and there is no disturbance to the learning of others.
- Pupils are kind to each other and to adults. They enjoy school activities and each other's company.

- Parents who spoke to an inspector and most of those who responded to the questionnaire reported that their children are happy at the school and behave well.
- Leaders check absence rigorously and strongly promote good attendance. They work closely with parents and outside agencies. Leaders, with good support from parents, have significantly reduced persistent absence in recent years to secure a rate of attendance that now matches the national average.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- The school has built well on children's good learning during their time in the Nursery class to secure good achievement now through Reception and Years 1 and 2 classes. The pupils' much improved attitudes to learning evident in their responses in class and in their work in books continue to quicken their progress.
- Checks of children's progress and achievement through the Nursery and Reception classes show significant improvement over the past two years. Improved progress is evident in the average proportion of children reaching a good level of development in all areas of learning by the end of Reception. This represents good progress by the children from their different, but mostly lower than typical skills on entry.
- School and inspection checks of pupils' learning in Years 1 and 2 show most pupils working at expected levels of attainment for their age. This reflects the positive impact of pupils' improved engagement in learning in promoting faster progress.
- Current checks of pupils' developing skills this term also show a significantly increased number of children working at a greater depth. These show that strengthened teaching and raised expectations are promoting better progress by the most able pupils. Occasionally, in a minority of classes, the level of challenge in the work given to some of the most able pupils is not demanding enough and does not promote their best progress.
- Even so, pupils' improved learning and now rapid progress are especially seen in the development of their phonic skills. This is evident in the consistently above-average proportions of pupils achieving national expectations in the Years 1 and 2 phonic screening checks. The pupils' lively and capable responses in class and when heard reading to the inspectors clearly showed their deepened understanding of the sounds that letters represent. Most pupils read with increasing expression and talked with understanding about their stories.
- Closer links between teachers and parents are also helping to quicken pupils' progress in learning to read. This is seen, for example, in the increasing numbers of pupils frequently enjoying books at home as well as in the school.
- Most pupils make good progress in developing their writing and mathematical skills. This is seen in their answers to teachers' questions in class and in their well-presented work in books. For example, pupils in Year 1 used an impressive range of vocabulary when writing about the seasons of the year. Most pupils in Year 2 also showed good addition and subtraction skills when solving problems.

- Although pupils take pride in their work and set it out neatly, their handwriting skills, especially in forming and joining letters accurately, are not developed as well as other skills. As a result, some pupils lack confidence in writing more fluently.
- A minority of pupils from lower starting points have difficulty in recalling basic number facts and this too reduces their confidence, for example in tackling mathematical problems.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported and make good progress in relation to their needs and starting points. Leaders and staff across both schools cooperate effectively and are well supported by specialists across the multi-academy trust. Staff assess pupils' needs and developing skills from an early age. They work closely with parents, get to know the pupils very well and provide effective additional adult support and guidance. The school's strong emphasis on developing the pupils' health and fitness plays a key role in raising pupils' confidence and readiness to learn.
- Leaders ensure that disadvantaged pupils also have their needs supported and self-confidence in learning boosted well from an early age. Staff frequently check pupils' learning and adjust the different types of adult help and carefully planned work they are given to sustain good progress. As a result, pupils progress at least as well and increasingly better than other pupils in the school and nationally.

Early years provision

Good

- Improved and now strong team leadership across the Nursery and Reception classes ensures that well-established routines and good teaching are sustained across all early years classes. Children respond very positively to consistently effective provision and high expectations of staff to make good progress from their different starting points.
- Teachers and support staff work well together to check the children's learning. They keep detailed records of the children's developing skills. Teachers use these assessments well to provide experiences that stimulate the children's interest in learning and meet their needs.
- Staff keep parents fully informed and encourage them to continue their children's learning at home. Parents respond well and provide examples of children's positive 'Wow' learning experiences at home. These are celebrated and displayed in classes and make a valued contribution in helping to boost children's self-confidence and enjoyment in learning.
- Leaders have greatly improved the indoor and outdoor learning facilities since the previous inspection. Staff use these imaginatively to encourage children to actively explore their ideas. For example, children in Nursery busily operated as elves and wrapped presents and wrote Christmas cards in 'Santa's Workshop'.
- Nursery and Reception staff work supportively together. They share the well-equipped outdoor areas and stimulate children's interest by developing some learning activities from the children's own ideas. Children benefit from having a wide range of resources to choose from. For example, children use large wheeled toys confidently to develop their gross motor and physical skills effectively.

- The most able children, in particular, relish opportunities to learn by using their imagination. Children become engrossed in learning when experimenting with bucket scales and when investigating how water flows. Staff question and encourage children effectively during such activities to develop basic speaking and listening skills.
- Teachers provide regular and effective, adult-led guidance to develop the children's writing and numeracy skills. Teachers continue a strong emphasis on developing the children's counting skills well during their freely chosen activities. Staff also provide a good range of craft and modelling activities to develop the children's fine motor skills.
- At times, in some classes, there are fewer opportunities, including when children choose their own experiences, to develop early writing skills. This leads to some children not holding and using pencils to form letters as correctly as they should.
- Children in Nursery and increasingly in Reception classes demonstrate very positive attitudes to learning and behave extremely well. These positive attitudes strongly support the children's good progress. For example, children particularly enjoy and learn well during phonics sessions and when listening to favourite stories such as 'What Small Rabbit Heard'.
- Children enjoy very supportive relationships with each other and with adults, and genuinely take pride in their work and try to help each other to learn.
- All staff implement the school's safeguarding and welfare procedures very effectively. Parents agree that children are extremely well cared for. The children's joyful and confident engagement in learning and in communicating with staff also show that they feel very safe in school.
- Staff liaise very effectively with parents. For example, staff in the on-site 'Community Hub', which also hosts mother and toddler groups, assist in identifying children's individual needs at an early stage. Staff carefully use the information collected to support children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. In recent years, staff have also improved the learning of disadvantaged children by providing activities and guidance that build more precisely on their different starting points.
- Improved provision across all areas of learning in recent years has substantially increased the proportion of children reaching a good level of development.
- By the end of the Reception class, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development now matches the national average. This represents good progress by the children from their lower than typical skills on entry. When combined with their very positive attitudes, children's achievements show that they are well prepared for the next stage of learning in Year 1.

School details

Unique reference number	139120
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10020041

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	291
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair of local academy council	Christine Spence
Regional academy director	Chris Edwards
Executive principal	Clare Hoods-Truman
Telephone number	0121 7833960
Website	www.oasisacademyblakenhaleinfants.org
Email address	info@oasisblakenhaleinfants.org
Date of previous inspection	2–3 October 2014

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- Oasis Academy Blakenhale Infants is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds and an above-average proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is well above average.

- Children experience early years provision in a Nursery class and three Reception classes. The other pupils across the school are taught in six single-year group classes across Years 1 and 2.
- Oasis Academy Blakenhale Infants is a member of the Oasis Community Learning Multi Academy Trust. It works closely with the adjacent Blakenhale Junior Academy, which is also a member of the multi-academy trust.
- The executive principal also fulfils this role within Blakenhale Junior Academy. She is supported by a deputy principal who assists in managing the day-to-day running of both schools.
- The academy council provides local oversight of the school under the guidance and strategic leadership of the multi-academy trust.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 23 lessons and saw the work of 11 teachers.
- The inspectors were accompanied by the executive principal and the deputy principal during some of these visits to lessons.
- A wide range of documents was scrutinised, including records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance, safeguarding procedures and the school's self-evaluation.
- The inspectors examined the school's systems for monitoring progress and records of checks on the quality of teaching.
- The inspectors talked to individual pupils and a representative group of pupils about the school and their work. They listened to individual pupils reading and briefly observed some of the pupils' Christmas performances. The inspectors also looked at samples of pupils' work across a range of subjects and classes.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of the local academy council and the regional director of the multi-academy trust. He also visited the school's 'Community Hub', where he talked to staff and several parents and grandparents.
- Members of the inspection team also held meetings with the executive principal and deputy principal, and with other school staff, mainly senior and middle leaders.
- The views expressed in the 38 online responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire and nine staff questionnaires were considered. In addition, the inspectors also gathered the views of several parents during informal meetings at the school.
- The inspectors evaluated the school's use of the primary physical education and sport funding and the pupil premium.

Inspection team

Alexander Baxter, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Rebecca Nash	Ofsted Inspector
Jeannette Mackinney	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
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Manchester
M1 2WD

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