

Far Forest Lea Memorial CofE Primary School

New Road, Far Forest, Rock, Kidderminster, Worcestershire DY14 9TQ

Inspection dates

8–9 February 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders have not made sure that the school's previously good performance has been maintained. Systems to check the school's effectiveness and promote improvement in teaching are not rigorous or sharp enough.
- Information about pupils' performance is not given to governors in a way that enables them to spot strengths and weaknesses quickly.
- Middle leaders do not make a strong contribution to school improvement. The leader of provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has limited time to carry out the role.
- Teaching is more effective in some year groups than others. Consequently, pupils do not make consistently strong progress in English and mathematics.
- Lower-attaining pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities do not make progress at a fast enough rate to help them catch up with the standards expected for their age.
- Pupils are now making better progress in writing as a result of the school's recent efforts, but there is still ground to make up, particularly in the middle years of the school.

The school has the following strengths

- The school has a positive and inclusive ethos, underpinned by a strong set of values.
- The early years gives children a good start to school life. Teaching is strong and children thrive.
- Effective teaching in Year 6 boosts pupils' progress.
- Pupils are well behaved and keen to learn. They receive good support for their personal development.
- The arrangements for safeguarding pupils are effective.
- Governors offer a good balance of challenge and support to leaders.

Full report

- Leaders, managers and governors should review and strengthen the school's systems for evaluating performance and driving improvement. They should:
 - make sure that information about pupils' attainment and progress is analysed, evaluated and pulled together into a succinct overview that helps identify areas of strength and where improvements are needed
 - make sure that activities to monitor and evaluate performance are organised systematically, carried out regularly and linked to the school's priorities
 - give feedback to teachers, including as part of their performance management, that helps them to understand what they need to do to improve their practice
 - ensure that middle leaders evaluate provision and outcomes in their area of responsibility and contribute to improvement
 - ensure that the coordinator of provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has the time and resources to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions, to check that teaching assistants have the necessary skills to teach them, and provide additional training where necessary.
- Ensure that pupils make consistently strong progress across the school in English and mathematics from their different starting points by:
 - continuing with the steps already started to improve pupils' progress in writing
 - using the findings of monitoring activities to inform adjustments to the teaching of reading and mathematics, where necessary
 - supporting teachers to use their knowledge of what pupils can do already and need to do next to make sure that tasks are suitably challenging and not too hard or too easy
 - ensuring that those pupils whose attainment is well below that of others in the class have the support they need to understand the work and to begin to catch up
 - evaluating the effectiveness of the strategies used to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and making adjustments where necessary
 - sharing more widely the good practice that already exists in school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders have not made sure that the school has built upon the good performance that was highlighted at the last inspection. Leaders are not driving improvement strongly. There are weaknesses in the systems that are used to monitor and evaluate aspects of its work, in particular the impact of teaching on pupils' learning. As a result, areas that need to be improved are not quickly identified and acted upon.
- The school has a great deal of information about the pupils' attainment. The information about individual pupils is discussed regularly at meetings of leaders and teachers. However, the action that has been taken following these meetings has not resulted in faster progress for pupils, especially those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The assessment information is not analysed or organised into a succinct overview of strengths and areas for development for the whole school or for groups of pupils. It is not presented to governors in a way that helps them get quickly to the heart of the matter.
- Monitoring activities are not carried out systematically or regularly. Observations of teaching and learning in classrooms are infrequent. Records of observations show that they are not linked to aspects that the school is working on, and that teachers are not given any points for improving their practice. Consequently, there is no clear view of what works well in teaching, or what areas need to be improved.
- Arrangements for the performance management of teachers lack rigour. Teachers' personal targets are not linked to aspects they need to improve, or to their career progression, for example. However, teachers appreciate the professional development opportunities that they have.
- There is limited opportunity for middle leaders to carry out tasks related to their areas of responsibility. This restricts the impact they have on school improvement. In particular, the recently appointed coordinator of provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has no designated time to carry out the duties that are associated with that role.
- The staff group is a close-knit team. Many staff members who completed questionnaires said how much they valued the strong teamwork and the way staff support one another.
- Leaders and governors have been successful in maintaining the school's positive and inclusive ethos. The school's twelve values underpin all aspects of its work, and especially pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school is a happy and welcoming place.
- Pupil premium funding is used to help eligible pupils participate in school life and to boost their progress. The outcomes for disadvantaged pupils match and in some instances exceed those of their classmates. Sports funding has been used well. Pupils take part in frequent physical activity. In addition, pupils benefit from specific activities such as lessons in balance and coordination.

- The additional funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is spent on a number of interventions and activities designed to help pupils make progress. There are some successes, overall, but spending is not effective in enabling this group of pupils to make sufficient progress to begin to catch up with the standards expected for their age.
- The curriculum links subjects together in an imaginative way. Pupils who spoke to inspectors said that they enjoy the topics they are studying. They mentioned experiences that brought learning to life for them. They mentioned trying out survival skills in a forest and looking carefully at a pig's heart and lungs as part of a science project. Pupils also mentioned the visit to France that older pupils experience, linked to their learning of French. A wide range of clubs and activities, including sports, a choir and guitar tuition enrich the curriculum.
- The curriculum and the school's values teach the pupils the attributes they need to become responsible citizens. Pupils understand that the democratic process gives them a vote, for example. The school also takes care to broaden pupils' horizons and to teach them about the diverse range of cultures and faiths in Britain today.

Governance of the school

- Governors provide a good balance of challenge and support to the school's leaders.
- There have been recent changes to the composition of the governing body and there are vacancies. Nevertheless, the chair and other governors have made sure that the governing body continues to meet its obligations and fulfil its statutory duties. Safeguarding is a standing item on every meeting agenda.
- Governors fully support the school's values and ethos, and recognise the many strengths in this area. They know the school well and carry out visits, linked to the school's priorities, that help deepen their understanding. Minutes of meetings show that they do not take the information they are presented at face value, and they question the rationale behind decisions. However, the information they receive from the school's leaders about pupils' performance is not analysed or presented succinctly. It does not enable them to gauge quickly what is working well and what needs to be improved.
- The governing body has made sure that performance management arrangements for the headteacher are in place and that members understand how the performance of teachers is assessed. Governors review and evaluate the impact of spending decisions, including the pupil premium funding.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders, governors and staff take their responsibilities for safeguarding pupils seriously. Thorough and comprehensive training and clear procedures ensure that staff know exactly what to do should they have a concern about a pupil's safety or well-being. Training also includes important aspects of safeguarding, such as child sexual exploitation and the dangers of radicalisation and extremism. Staff receive regular

updates.

- Records of concerns and referrals to social services are carefully kept. Every scrap of information about a vulnerable child is kept in order to build a picture to inform future action. The headteacher and staff know pupils and their families well, and liaise closely with outside agencies to meet their needs. The school's checks on people who visit or take up post at the school are thorough, and safer recruitment guidance is followed.
- Pupils are taught to keep themselves safe in lessons as part of the personal, social and health curriculum and one-off activities and days, such as for e-safety and anti-bullying. Police officers visit to talk to pupils about aspects of personal safety. Pupils say that they feel safe in school and know that the staff look after them. Parents raised no concerns about their children's safety at school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The impact of teaching on pupils' learning and progress across the school is variable. This is because teachers do not consistently use their assessments of what pupils know and can do already to plan tasks that are suitable and that help pupils to learn well.
- Pupils whose attainment is low, or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities sometimes struggle because the work is too hard for them or they are expected to read text that is too demanding. In contrast, lower-attaining pupils are sometimes given work that they are able to complete easily. This is the case in both English and mathematics. Pupils' progress slows in these instances.
- There are also occasions when work is insufficiently challenging for those pupils who are capable of achieving highly. Sometimes they have to wait for others to finish before moving on.
- Not all teachers are equally skilled at using questions to deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding. Teachers typically ask questions to check that pupils have understood the tasks and to gauge how well they are working towards the lesson's criteria for success. In some classes, the teacher's questions probe pupils' understanding further, promote lively debate and discussion or require pupils to think long and hard.
- Teaching assistants work closely with teachers. They support pupils in class and withdraw groups of pupils for targeted interventions, including for their learning and for their personal development. They have good relationships with the pupils and give support and encouragement. The interventions, however, do not have a consistently positive impact on pupils' progress over time.
- There is a positive climate for learning in lessons. Teachers expect pupils to have positive attitudes and to try their best. As a result, pupils are interested in learning and get on readily with their tasks. They concentrate well, especially when the content has captured their interest and enthusiasm. A few switch off, however, when the lesson's content has not motivated them, or when they are struggling with a task.
- The school's approach to teaching phonics in the early years and key stage 1 is effective. Pupils respond enthusiastically to stories that they enjoy, but that also deepen their understanding of letters, sounds and spelling patterns. Pupils develop a love of books and enjoy reading. Pupils' reading diaries and book reviews show that

pupils read regularly and that younger pupils are supported at home.

- Pupils' books show that, until recently, they completed frequent tasks designed to teach them correct grammar, punctuation and spelling. However, they did not have the chance to apply this learning in different contexts, and this had an impact on their attainment and progress in writing. Teachers have adopted a new, structured approach to teaching writing, and improvements are beginning to show in pupils' work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The school's values make a good contribution to pupils' personal development. Pupils speak of the need for tolerance and respect for difference, including for different faiths and beliefs. Displays around the school show that pupils have thought about how the values affect them, highlighting their understanding of right and wrong, and how the law keeps them safe.
- The strength of the relationships between adults and pupils helps pupils to grow into mature and thoughtful individuals. Staff take pupils seriously and give them the space and time to express any worries or concerns. Pupils were confident that they could turn to a member of staff with a problem and it would be sorted out. Staff know pupils and their particular circumstances well, and do what they can to support those who are troubled or potentially vulnerable.
- Pupils understand that bullying comes in different forms and speak confidently about what they would do if they were bullied. They say that bullying is a rare occurrence and that they have confidence that it would be dealt with robustly.
- The school's strong emphasis on physical activity helps pupils from the youngest upwards to develop their coordination and skills. Many sporting activities encourage pupils to be active, lead healthy lifestyles and take part in competitions. Pupils are proud of their sporting achievements.
- Pupils have the chance to contribute to school life by carrying out important roles such as being sports leaders and prefects, as well as helping with jobs in class.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils understand how they should behave in different situations. They typically behave well in lessons and they walk around the school calmly. In assembly, they listen well and are pleased to celebrate the achievements of their classmates. At breaktimes they are lively and energetic.
- Occasionally, a few pupils lose focus in lessons and their attention drifts. This is usually because they are not enthused by their work or cannot understand exactly what they need to do. However, they do not interfere with the learning of others.
- Pupils draw up rules for their class and they understand that they are expected to live up to the 'three cs' of courtesy, care and consideration. Pupils have good relationships

with one another and they readily cooperate and collaborate in lessons. They said that there are occasions when friends have disagreements, but that this is quickly sorted out. Pupils and their parents did not raise concerns about behaviour.

- Current attendance figures match those seen nationally, overall. Last year, the attendance of some pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities fell below that of other pupils. The school makes every effort to work with pupils and their families to encourage good attendance. So far this year, the number of pupils who are away from school too often has reduced, and the attendance of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has improved.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils are not making consistently strong progress across the school in English and mathematics. The good start that pupils experience in the early years is not always sustained, and, while pupils continue to make progress, in some year groups it is steady rather than swift. Higher-attaining pupils typically build well on their prior attainment. Those whose attainment is lower do not make progress at the same rate.
- Progress accelerates in Year 6. Work in books in this year group shows that pupils are rapidly making up ground. Pupils' responsible and mature attitudes and their good application to work, together with faster progress, mean that they are suitably prepared for the next steps at secondary school.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make progress as a result of interventions and targeted teaching. However, it is not at the pace that is needed to help them keep up with other pupils with the same starting points and to come closer to the standards expected for their age.
- There are no marked differences in the progress of disadvantaged pupils and others. In some instances, disadvantaged pupils do better. In national tests and assessments in 2016, for example, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils who reached the standard expected of 11-year-olds in reading and writing was above the national figure.
- In last year's national tests and assessments, the proportion of pupils who reached the standard expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics was smaller than that seen nationally. This was the case at both key stage 1 and key stage 2. Pupils' progress across key stage 2 was broadly average. Middle- and higher-attaining pupils largely made good progress across key stage 1, but a number of lower-attaining pupils did not.
- The proportion of pupils who reached the expected standard in the phonics screening check in Year 1 improved on the previous year, but was below the national figure. Almost all of the pupils in Year 2 who had not reached the standard when they were in Year 1 were successful at the second attempt. Pupils who read to inspectors used their phonics knowledge effectively to help them work out words they did not know.
- Work in pupils' topic books and displays around the school show that pupils achieve well in subjects such as science, geography and history. Older pupils speak knowledgeably and enthusiastically about what they have learned about the first world war, or the need for fair testing in science, for example.
- The school's leaders are taking steps to improve the teaching of writing and a new

approach is being implemented. This is starting to have a positive impact, and work in pupils' books showed some improvements in pupils' writing skills.

Early years provision

Good

- The pre-school has enhanced early years provision at Far Forest. The pre-school is very much a part of the whole school. The youngest children are included in occasions such as merit assemblies, and they join in with whole-school projects. The warm and supportive relationships that staff build with the children allow them to settle well and grow in confidence and independence. Pre-school staff have a good understanding of the particular needs of very young children and work well with them to help develop their confidence, independence and communication skills.
- Transition from pre-school to Reception is carefully managed and successfully achieved. Children start in Reception with skills and abilities that are largely typical for their age. There is a good exchange of information from pre-school and positive relationships with parents that help ensure staff quickly get to know children's interests, needs and dispositions.
- Children make strong progress across the areas of learning from their starting points. At the end of last year, the proportion of children who attained a good level of development was above local and national figures. These children were well prepared to start Year 1. Early years premium funding is being used to make sure that the achievement of the small number of disadvantaged children matches that of others.
- Teaching is imaginative and skilled. Activities are carefully planned to capture children's interest and enthusiasm, and to build on what they already know and can do. During this inspection, children excitedly looked for hidden sentences in the outdoor area and were delighted when they realised they had read the sentences correctly. Children have the scope to follow their own ideas and interests and to take part in activities with adults, indoors and in the inviting outdoor area.
- Children behave very well. They cooperate and are friendly to one another, and respond quickly to requests from adults. They are keen to learn and explore the world around them. Children in pre-school concentrated well in the role play area when pretending to be doctors tending sick toys. Children in Reception tried very hard to write Chinese characters after they had learned to count from one to ten in Mandarin.
- Staff in both settings work closely with outside agencies, such as speech and language therapists, to make sure that particular needs are met.
- The early years leader is an effective practitioner. She has good relationships with the pre-school staff and works closely with them, including making sure that assessment judgements are consistent across both settings. The early years leader has a good understanding of the next steps that would improve provision further. She intends to share expertise, for example in the teaching of phonics, with the pre-school staff.
- Staff follow the school's procedures for protecting children and keeping them safe, and understand what to look out for when working with very young children. Any concerns are reported to the designated person in a timely way. The environment is safe and children are well supervised. Statutory welfare requirements are met.

School details

Unique reference number	135034
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	10025334

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	136
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Stacey Carter
Headteacher	Tara Collins-Bullock
Telephone number	01299 266 316
Website	www.farforestlea.worcs.sch.uk/
Email address	office@farforestlea.worcs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	10–11 July 2012

Information about this school

- Far Forest is smaller than the average primary school. Most of its pupils are White British. The proportion who are disadvantaged is broadly in line with that seen nationally. In some year groups the number of disadvantaged pupils is small. There are many more boys than girls.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is greater than that seen nationally.
- Since the last inspection, the governing body has taken over the running of the pre-school that is located in the school building. The pre-school admits children from the age of two. Pupils join the main school in the Reception Year. Pupils are taught in mixed-age classes, apart from in Year 6.

- The results of national tests and assessments taken by pupils in Year 6 meet the government's expected minimum standards for attainment and progress (the floor standard).
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors looked at teaching and learning in all classes and in the pre-school. They looked at pupils' work in their books and spoke informally to pupils about the work they were doing. One inspector carried out a detailed scrutiny of samples of pupils' work in conjunction with a senior leader. Inspectors observed and spoke to pupils in informal situations such as lunchtime, and met a group of pupils to talk about their experiences of school.
- Inspectors met senior and middle leaders to talk about aspects of the school's work and the arrangements for safeguarding pupils. The lead inspector met the chair of governors and two other governors, and spoke with a representative of the local authority by telephone.
- The inspectors examined a wide range of the school's documents. These included the self-evaluation and the school development plan, records of monitoring and evaluation activities and the performance management of teachers, information about pupils' current attainment, progress and attendance and records relating to safeguarding and child protection. The lead inspector also read policies and other information that is posted on the school's website.
- The inspection team took account of the views expressed by 18 pupils and 15 staff members in the online questionnaires that they completed. Inspectors also considered the responses of 36 parents on the Parent View website and spoke informally to parents in the school playground at the start of the day.

Inspection team

Linda McGill, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Matt Meckin

Her Majesty's Inspector

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