

Colmore Junior School

Colmore Road, Kings Heath, Birmingham West Midlands B14 6AJ

Inspection dates

20–21 June 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The strong sense of shared values that exists in the school means that Colmore Junior School is a happy and safe place to be, where pupils enjoy learning.
- The committed leadership team work well together and are passionate about providing high-quality learning opportunities for the pupils. All staff are enthusiastic and dedicated to the school.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers demonstrate a strong knowledge of their subject. This is evident not only with their own classes, but in the support given to other teachers to consolidate effective classroom practice.
- Pupils behave extremely well, both in lessons and around the school. They are courteous, respectful and show care and consideration for others. There is a strong sense of mutual respect between staff and pupils, and relationships are excellent.
- Pupils' attainment and progress in reading is a strength, and at the end of key stage 2 in 2016 were above levels found nationally.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is a key strength of the school and the breadth of opportunity is reflected in the 'OWL' (our wider learning) portfolio in every class. Pupils' learning is further enriched through a wide range of additional curriculum activities.
- Provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is very strong and parents speak highly of the support their child receives. Teaching assistants provide effective interventions to help pupils make better progress.
- Leaders have addressed the recent drop in outcomes in writing to good effect. However, the improved standards in writing are not yet reflected in pupils' topic work, particularly in history and geography.
- Leaders' work to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils is having a positive impact. Although the difference is diminishing, there is still a gap in performance between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils.
- In some lessons, pupils' work is not sufficiently challenging to help them accelerate their progress. Sometimes, teachers do not question pupils rigorously enough to allow them to develop their answers or ideas in greater depth.
- Information governors receive from leaders is not always detailed enough to enable them to check the school's progress against priorities for improvement or ensure that they provide value for money.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by making sure that leaders provide governors with specific information about actions and interventions that are costed and measurable, enabling governors to hold leaders to account more effectively.
- Strengthen teaching, learning and assessment further so that:
 - the high expectations in literacy and numeracy work are reflected in pupils' topic work
 - work is well matched to pupils' abilities so that pupils are sufficiently challenged
 - teachers' questioning allows pupils to deepen their learning.
- Improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils by continuing to reduce the gap in performance compared to that of their non-disadvantaged peers.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The executive headteacher, head of school, and other senior leaders are dedicated to ensuring that pupils receive an engaging education of high quality. This commitment is reflected in the work of all staff. As a result, there is a strong team ethos and energy in the school.
- Parents hold the school in high regard. Every parent who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, said that their child was happy and safe at school. This view was also reflected in conversations inspectors held with parents on the school playground. Comments such as 'The staff go beyond what I would expect' and 'They can't do enough for you' reflected the satisfaction expressed by many parents.
- Leaders are swift to respond to areas which require improvement, such as the recent dip in standards in writing. They closely monitor the actions taken to ensure that they have the desired impact. Due to the positive impact of this approach, leaders plan to use similar methods to further improve the quality of teaching in mathematics.
- Leaders and teachers meet regularly to check on pupils' progress and identify any additional interventions that may be required. Meetings also take account of pupils' overall health and well-being, and additional support is sought for pupils where necessary.
- Senior leaders have ensured that subject leaders and other middle leaders receive the right support to help them develop their roles. Subject and middle leaders are enthusiastic, strongly motivated and have high expectations. They recognise their strengths and where they can make further improvements in their work. They are keen to take on wider responsibilities, such as more formal monitoring of the quality of teaching. Subject leaders have developed action plans for their subjects, but senior leaders have not yet ensured that all plans are fully costed and improvements can be measured.
- The curriculum provides rich and varied opportunities for pupils to participate in engaging activities through a thematic approach. These themes fire pupils' imaginations and the 'big question' at the beginning of a unit of work motivates pupils to find out more. The curriculum is further enriched through a range of high-quality experiences, such as music lessons, school choir and orchestra, art, drama and other performance activities. Pupils were inspired to produce some high-quality artwork following a visit to an art gallery to see the work of Rowland Emett. Pupils' work was subsequently displayed proudly in the school. Additionally, pupils can access a range of clubs including gardening club, debating club, Formula 1 club and sewing club.
- The provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is very strong. Leaders work closely with the federated infant school to ensure seamless transition and provision for pupils who have additional needs. They know the pupils very well and understand their needs. Leaders ensure that appropriate provision is put in place and monitor this support on a regular basis. The skilled and well-trained team of teaching assistants who carry out this work make a significant difference to this group of pupils. Some of the assistants take on additional responsibilities for specific

areas such as phonics or medical needs, and all staff value their work. Funding is used well to support these pupils and provide any additional resources or support they may need.

- Leaders have used the PE and sport premium to great effect and pupils not only develop their physical skills but are able to participate in a wide range of sporting activities and clubs. Leaders ensure that pupils develop their resilience through participation in inter-school tournaments, where they are very successful. Pupils have the opportunity to work with local professional sports coaches from Warwickshire County Cricket Club and West Bromwich Albion Football Club. In recognition of its breadth of sporting opportunities, Colmore Junior School received the Sainsbury's Gold sports award.
- The well-documented work to develop pupils' spiritual moral, social and cultural education is a particular strength of the school. Pupils talk maturely about the importance of the Colmore Values, which incorporate all aspects of fundamental British values. Characters such as 'Respectful Rabbit' and 'Rule of Law Lion' reinforce these messages. Pupils told inspectors, 'Values are important because they help you to make the right choices. Be respectful and follow the law. You should never give up.'
- Leaders use additional funding for disadvantaged pupils effectively to provide a wide range of interventions and activities for pupils. Teachers' performance targets include a focus on raising the attainment of this group of pupils. As a result, these strategies are making a difference to pupils as the previous gap in performance between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils nationally is now reducing. However, leaders do not yet evaluate fully the impact of specific interventions. This means that they are not yet able to see which interventions make the greatest difference to pupils' outcomes.

Governance of the school

- Governors are regular visitors to the school and this enables them to have an understanding of its strengths and areas for development. They are committed to the school and want the very best for the pupils. Governors:
 - check that they have a range of skills so that they can provide effective support for the school
 - recognise where the school's strengths are, as well as areas for improvement
 - provide a level of challenge to leaders which is more evident in the teaching, learning and assessment committee than in the main governing body meetings
 - know that they do not always receive enough information from leaders to help them carry out their role even more effectively.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders make sure that strong and effective safeguarding practices thread through all aspects of the school's work. The secure site, adults' understanding of their core

responsibilities, the curriculum and pupils' understanding of how they are kept safe, all reflect the embedded culture of safeguarding at Colmore Junior School.

- Pupils, staff and parents are unanimous, and rightly so, that pupils are safe in this school. The link governor for safeguarding carries out regular safeguarding audits with leaders to check that statutory duties are carried out and that safe practices for recruitment are followed rigorously.
- All staff, including the designated safeguarding lead and her deputies, receive regular training and updates in all aspects of safeguarding, including the 'Prevent' duty, child sexual exploitation and sexting. Staff have a clear understanding of procedures which they should follow if they have concerns about a pupil, and leaders work effectively with external agencies when additional support is needed.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Pupils enjoy their learning because teachers make lessons interesting and fun. Teachers meet regularly within their year groups to plan lessons and are supported by specialist subject teachers. This results in well-planned and focused lessons. Adults foster a love of learning in the school and this is evident in the way pupils engage with their work.
- Teachers enjoy working at the school and those to whom inspectors spoke valued the training opportunities they are given and the support they receive from senior leaders. Regardless of their roles, staff feel that they are encouraged to develop their skills and work as a team.
- The focus on writing over the last year has meant that pupils' writing has improved significantly. Progress over time is evident in pupils' books and the school's progress information shows that pupils are likely to achieve better outcomes in writing this year. Inspectors saw improvements in pupils' books, where greater detail had been added to create tension, such as, 'Approaching the island, all Odysseus could see was darkness. It was suffocating the island.' Pupils commented that when they looked back at their writing, they could see how much it had improved.
- The school's system for analysing assessment information is becoming more embedded and allows teachers to check pupils' progress during regular meetings throughout the year. Leaders are developing the system further so that they will be able to track pupils' progress in the foundation subjects more clearly. A recent external check of how well teachers moderate work confirmed that they are making accurate judgements about the standards of pupils' work.
- Progress in reading is strong because leaders have taken steps to raise the profile and foster a love of reading. Pupils are able to read for pleasure during focused reading sessions and are provided with a wide range of reading materials. Pupils particularly enjoy the child-friendly newspaper they are able to read and were able to talk about current affairs topics with interest. Pupils are provided with reading materials in lessons that often challenge them, and they use dictionaries confidently to check meanings of words and improve their vocabulary. Less-able pupils read confidently and use their phonic skills to decode unfamiliar words. Additional interventions are provided for pupils who need extra support with their reading and phonic skills.

- In mathematics, pupils' work shows progress over time. On some occasions, pupils spend too long on activities which they can already do, rather than being challenged to complete a harder task. Pupils are able to solve a range of mathematical problems, but they have fewer opportunities to develop mathematical reasoning. The new subject leader for mathematics has identified mathematical reasoning as a focus for further development in the coming year.
- In some lessons, pupils are not challenged to deepen their learning. Sometimes, teachers do not use questioning sufficiently well to probe pupils' responses and get them to develop their ideas. Progress in topic work is not as good as in other subjects because pupils are provided with the same tasks to complete, regardless of their ability. This means that pupils of lower ability are supported less well and higher ability pupils are not stretched or challenged enough. Inspectors saw activities in topic books which did not reflect the same high expectations for writing seen in English books. This limited the opportunities for extended writing for some pupils. As a result, improved standards in writing are not yet being seen in topic work. There are also fewer opportunities for pupils to use their numeracy skills in topic work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- The shared culture described by several pupils, staff and parents as 'one big family' permeates through the daily practice of the school. Pupils and staff are proud of their school and parents talk about the school in glowing terms.
- Pupils place a strong emphasis on the importance of the Colmore Values, and these shared values are evident in the way pupils behave towards each other. Learning mentors play an important role in nurturing pupils and provide positive role models for pupils. The lunchtime friendship club helps pupils to develop good relationships with each other. Pupils recognise the importance of tolerance as a value which is important in the wider society. Pupils agreed, 'Just because you're different, you deserve the same respect. Everyone's the same no matter what they look like and everyone should care for each other.'
- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural education opportunities provided to pupils are a real strength of the school and are woven seamlessly through the OWL work in school. They have regular opportunities to visit different places of worship and teachers promote fundamental British values in the learning activities in which pupils participate.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and they feel safe in school. Pupils have a clear understanding of how to stay safe on the internet and they have been taught to understand the risks associated with social media and mobile technology. Pupils spoke articulately about how they had learned about geo-tagging in assembly – where someone can see where you are if you are online – and how to switch this off on their mobile device.

- Pupils are able to participate in the Children’s University programme, in conjunction with Aston University, which enables them to accrue credits for their participation in wider curricular activities. Almost 100 children are due to ‘graduate’ at the university because of their achievements. A high number of disadvantaged pupils are able to take part in this programme.
- Leaders recognise the importance of pupils keeping fit and healthy. Throughout the year, pupils have been taking part in a ‘Marathon Kids’ challenge to run a distance equivalent to a marathon. Pupils have been inspired to take part in this and will be celebrating their marathon achievements at a ceremony in the near future.
- Pupils are well prepared for transition into Colmore Junior School, and then into the next phase of their education at secondary school. Pupils from the federated infant school attend assemblies and events, and are ‘buddied’ with other pupils. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are provided with additional transition experiences suited to their needs, and important information is shared between professionals. Leaders make sure that they follow up each pupil in the autumn term to see how they have settled and offer any further guidance or support to staff in the new school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils’ behaviour in lessons and around school is excellent and they show genuine care and respect for others. Pupils play cooperatively on the playground and look out for each other. Pupils told inspectors that pupils treat each other fairly and make sure that people are not left out of games at playtimes. Some Year 6 pupils have been trained as play leaders and provide a different activity every week in which pupils can participate, such as hula hooping. These Year 6 pupils are currently training Year 5 pupils to take on their play leader responsibilities when they leave.
- Pupils are supported to develop the skills which enable them to solve their own problems. Several pupils told inspectors that if there was a problem, they would try and sort it out before going to a teacher for help. Incidents of inappropriate behaviour are infrequent and when they happen they are dealt with swiftly and effectively.
- Pupils told inspectors that bullying was rare, but if it did happen, they would try and sort it out or go to a teacher for help. Pupils say that the teachers are quick to sort out issues with bullying. Bullying incidents, including any racist or homophobic bullying are followed up with parent meetings, mentor sessions and individual work with pupils. Fixed-term exclusions are below the national average for all schools.
- Attendance at Colmore Junior School is consistently above the national average, year on year. In spite of this, leaders are not complacent and continue to work to improve attendance further, because they recognise that some disadvantaged learners do not attend as often as they should. This work is having a positive impact and the number of pupils who are persistently absent this year has reduced significantly.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Outcomes for Year 6 pupils in 2016 in reading, writing and mathematics were above the national average, but the progress pupils made in writing was below the national average. Leaders recognised the need to take steps to improve writing throughout the school and introduced a comprehensive approach to develop writing skills. It is clear from pupils' work and the school's current progress information that this has had a significant impact on raising standards in writing for all pupils this year.
- In 2016, disadvantaged pupils in all year groups did not achieve similar rates of progress and attainment as their non-disadvantaged peers. Attainment for this group of pupils was below the national average for reading, writing and mathematics and progress was below the national average in reading and writing. Again, leaders have worked hard to address this gap and there are definite signs of improvement for this group of pupils. Leaders recognise that while the difference is diminishing, it is not yet closed, and more work needs to be done to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.
- Pupils' progress this year has improved and a greater number of pupils are on track to achieve age-related expectations, as well as higher standards in their learning. Standards in reading remain high due to the continued focus by staff on this area.
- In 2016, Year 6 girls and boys performed at similar levels in all subjects, with boys performing significantly better than other boys nationally. Also, the most able Year 6 pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, achieved greater depth in their learning, which was higher than the national average.
- Progress in science is improving this year because leaders have revised their curriculum model to ensure that it maximises pupils' progress. The science subject leader is able to support the planning of science lessons to ensure a high-quality learning experience for pupils. The improved reading skills of pupils has enabled them to access the science curriculum more readily.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making better progress this year because they are receiving good support to help them with their learning. Teachers and teaching assistants meet regularly to check the progress of this group of pupils and are not afraid to intervene if a particular strategy is not working well.
- Though progress is improving across a number of subjects, leaders are not yet able to track progress in all the foundation subjects sufficiently. The lower standards in topic work shows that progress is not as good in this area. Leaders accept that this is an area for improvement.

School details

Unique reference number	103188
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10032629

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	Junior
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	480
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gareth Iley
Executive Headteacher	Jon Gale
Telephone number	0121 464 2843
Website	www.colmorej.co.uk
Email address	enquiry@colmorej.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	3 October 2007

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- Colmore Junior School is a larger than average-sized primary school. It was awarded national teaching school status in 2013. The Colmore Partnership Teaching School Alliance consists of 28 schools.
- Colmore Junior School is federated with Colmore Infant School. Both schools share the same governing body.
- The number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than average. The school's deprivation indicator is below average.

- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is above average. The majority of pupils are White British. The remainder come from a variety of backgrounds, the largest being Pakistani heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities for whom the school provides support is average. The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan is above average.
- Very few pupils join or leave the school during the year.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 following a risk assessment of the school. The lead inspector met with the executive headteacher, head of school and other leaders on the first day of the inspection to set out key lines of enquiry. These focused specifically on disadvantaged pupils' achievement, and progress and attainment in writing. Subsequently, the inspection was deemed a section 5 inspection.
- Inspectors observed 32 lessons or parts of lessons. Nearly all lessons were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors met with senior, subject and middle leaders and a group of staff. They talked to other members of staff during the inspection.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' work in lessons and carried out a separate scrutiny of work with senior leaders. They listened to a group of pupils read.
- Inspectors talked to pupils about all aspects of their education throughout both days. They observed pupils in breakfast club, at breaktime and at lunchtime.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of school documentation including the school improvement plan, self-evaluation, action plans, assessment information, attendance information, safeguarding records, the single central record, child protection files, risk assessments, monitoring files and minutes of governing body meetings. Inspectors looked at the school's website before and during the inspection.
- The lead inspector met with two members of the governing body including the vice-chair.
- The lead inspector talked to a representative from the Birmingham Education Partnership by telephone.
- The lead inspector met with parents at the start of the school day and took account of the 53 responses on Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire.

Inspection team

Deb Jenkins, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Sian Williams	Ofsted Inspector
Benjamin Taylor	Ofsted Inspector
Amarjit Cheema	Ofsted Inspector
Steve Nelson	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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