

Palfrey Junior School

Dale Street, Walsall, West Midlands WS1 4AH

Inspection dates

14–15 December 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Teaching is not yet consistently good across all year groups. Teachers do not ensure that learning activities are accurately matched to the needs of all pupils. As a result, they do not make good progress.
- Pupils rely on help and support from adults when they get stuck and do not demonstrate self-reliance to move their learning on. On many occasions, the activities teachers set do not allow pupils to demonstrate their true capability, which impedes their progress.
- Teachers and other adults often ask closed questions which do not allow pupils to explain their thinking.
- Standards and progress in both reading and mathematics were well below the national average in 2017.
- Pupils' progress across the school varies. Most pupils are not making enough progress in reading and mathematics to fill the gaps in their knowledge and understanding and catch up with other pupils nationally.
- Middle leaders, many of whom are relatively new to their posts, are not closely tracking the impact of interventions to ensure that all pupils make rapid progress.
- Leaders do not use assessment and other information strategically to ensure that interventions have a rapid enough impact on attainment and progress.

The school has the following strengths

- Senior leaders and governors have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and have identified specific priorities and actions to improve outcomes for pupils.
- Pupils are well behaved and respectful towards each other and to staff. Senior leaders have introduced more robust procedures for behaviour and safeguarding.
- The quality of teaching is beginning to improve as a result of support from other schools across the federation.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. They are confident their children are safe and receiving a good education.
- Rates of progress and standards of attainment are starting to improve.
- Pupils enjoy a wide range of exciting activities beyond the classroom, which broaden their horizons and prepare them well for life in modern Britain.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - middle leaders receive ongoing support to develop their skills and make a full contribution to improving the school
 - support provided by the federation continues to strengthen the rigour of monitoring and evaluation, focusing on the impact of specific interventions
 - all assessment and other information is analysed rigorously to identify patterns and trends to inform future priorities
 - improvement activities are focused on the right things.
- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good and raise outcomes in reading and mathematics so that they are at least in line with national figures by:
 - extending opportunities for teachers to observe and learn from the good practice that exists within the school and the federation of schools
 - ensuring that teachers use all available assessment information to design tasks that are well matched to pupils' ability and address identified gaps in their knowledge and skills
 - providing teachers and support staff with specific strategies, particularly in questioning, to support pupils effectively so that they are less reliant on adult support
 - embedding and extending the recently introduced strategies to develop pupils' reading comprehension skills, particularly in relation to inference and deduction
 - providing further opportunities for pupils to apply their skills of reasoning and problem-solving in mathematics.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders and governors have established an ambitious culture of improvement in school. Since the last inspection, leadership has been strengthened by the federation with the Cadmus Family of Schools. The executive headteacher is also the executive headteacher of another school in the federation. The school benefits from support from the federation executive headteacher who is a national leader of education.
- Teachers share leaders' ambition and say that the school has improved significantly since the last inspection. They value opportunities for joint professional development with teachers from across the federation, as well as opportunities to visit other schools to observe good practice. This support is already having an impact on improving the quality of teaching in the school.
- Behaviour management has been strengthened. The behaviour policy is implemented consistently across the school. Teachers report that behaviour has improved considerably since the school joined the federation. They say that 'the pupils are a joy to teach'.
- Senior leaders use performance management targets well to motivate staff and drive improvement. All staff targets relate to improving outcomes for pupils and there is now no inadequate teaching. However, teaching is not yet consistently good. Governors are aware of the performance management decisions and the rationale behind them.
- Middle leaders are keen to contribute to improving the school and they receive support to develop in their role. However, their analysis of assessment and other information is not yet sufficiently focused on the right interventions to improve outcomes for pupils.
- Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. They have a good understanding of democracy and fairness. During a recent poetry event with Birmingham's poet laureate, each class created a rap on the theme of democracy. The poems demonstrate pupils' understanding of what fairness means, why democracy is important and what it means to be respectful of others' views and faiths.
- Pupils' awareness of British values is well developed. They talk proudly about a display of hundreds of poppies in the school corridor, each poppy handmade individually by pupils, to commemorate fallen soldiers. Pupils understand Britain's democratic parliamentary system through learning about elections for Walsall council.
- Leaders ensure that the curriculum is broad and balanced. On a geography topic day, each class researched the geography, population, art, culture and faith of a country. Pupils' work and class displays demonstrate high-quality learning and in-depth understanding of different countries and their people.
- Parents are positive about the recent improvements to the school. They like the fact that their children have clear targets. Parents enjoy helping their children with 'Talk Homework' projects and working with their children in school on 'wow' days.
- Pupil premium funding is used well to ensure that outcomes for disadvantaged pupils improve. One-to-one reading interventions have increased disadvantaged pupils' reading ages. Disadvantaged pupils also benefit from the wide range of activities and

trips on offer, such as visiting the Thinktank Science Museum in Birmingham and the National Memorial Arboretum. The impact on pupils' learning is clearly shown in high-quality wall displays around the school.

- Physical education (PE) and sport premium funding is used effectively to encourage physical well-being. Many pupils attend sports clubs run by the sports coach at lunchtimes and after school. The school is proud of its success in local sports tournaments, which help pupils to experience life outside their immediate community.

Governance of the school

- Governors have a realistic view of the school, how far it has improved and what still needs to be done. Governors carry out regular visits to school, which ensures that they know first-hand about what happens in school. As a result, governors provide effective support and challenge to leaders to bring about continued improvements.
- Governance has been strengthened considerably since the last inspection. Despite the fact that the school is now part of a federation, the local governing body retains accountability for standards and performance in the school. The chair is a national leader of governance who provides training and support for governors. He has been proactive in carrying out a skills audit and recruiting members of the school community who bring the necessary skills onto the governing body.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Clear systems and procedures ensure that pupils are safe. All staff receive regular training and updates on keeping children safe, including bespoke training on the specific risks children may be exposed to in the local area.
- Staff at all levels are aware of the processes to follow should they have a concern about a pupil. Highly visible posters remind staff what to do if they need to raise a concern about an adult.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching and learning is not yet consistently good across all year groups, in all subjects and in all classes. Teachers often ask closed questions which do not allow pupils to demonstrate their understanding fully. As a result, pupils do not make as much progress as they should.
- Teachers do not consistently plan tasks to meet the needs of all pupils. Consequently, the most able pupils are not challenged effectively and less-able pupils are not adequately supported.
- Many pupils who get stuck do not have strategies to help themselves and instead wait for an adult to help them. This slows their learning down. When adults come to help, they frequently answer the questions themselves rather than prompting pupils to find solutions. As a result, pupils have become over-reliant on adult support.

- Teaching assistants lead a wide range of interventions with small groups of pupils withdrawn from lessons. They were unable to explain how they feed back to teachers to inform next steps in teaching and learning.
- In most small-group interventions adults do not allow pupils time to digest information, reflect on the questions and formulate their responses. As a result, pupils' progress is limited. Although teaching assistants have received recent training to improve this aspect of their work, this has yet to be embedded.
- Resources are not used consistently well to support pupils' learning. This is particularly true in mathematics, where less-able pupils are unable to access physical resources to help them learn.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is secure. They use subject-specific vocabulary well so that pupils are familiar with these terms and use them confidently in their verbal and written responses.
- In some intervention groups, pupils are supported well. They discuss tasks together and think about what they want to say before starting to write. The teaching assistant prompts pupils to use clues from the text as well as dictionaries to understand unfamiliar words. This is particularly helpful for pupils who speak English as an additional language.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Most pupils are confident, self-assured and articulate. They answer questions and talk confidently about their learning. They take on responsibilities by acting as 'playground pals' to help pupils to play well together or make new friends, or by acting as mediators to help pupils resolve issues between themselves.
- During an assembly about raising money for charity, pupils reflected on their own good fortune compared with children who live in poverty. While pupils listened attentively to the choir singing, their behaviour was exemplary.
- The school council makes a positive contribution to the life of the school. As a result of the school council's work, the school recently purchased a trim trail for the playground to improve levels of fitness and provide constructive activity for breaktimes.
- Interactive displays around the school remind pupils of how to stay safe online. Pupils talk knowledgably about age restrictions on social media and how they should not share personal information online. Pupils act as digital leaders carrying out surveys of pupils' use of the internet and social media. They analyse the results and create campaigns to raise awareness of the dangers and how to stay safe online.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Rewards for good behaviour motivate pupils to do well and there is effective support for those who find it harder to concentrate and behave

well. The parent support adviser works effectively with parents who need support to manage their child's behaviour, linking with outside agencies where appropriate.

- Pupils are polite and respectful of each other and adults at all times, in lessons and at breaktimes. They move about the school in a calm and orderly fashion and in many cases show maturity beyond their years. This was particularly evident during the inspection when pupils were unable to go outside to play because of the weather. Pupils kept themselves occupied indoors with board games and other activities and settled back to work quickly for afternoon lessons.
- Pupils say that bullying is rare and all pupils know that unkind words are not acceptable. They know that the teachers will sort out any issues promptly.
- Pupils come to school enthusiastically and attendance has improved recently so that it is now above the national average. Leaders and governors have made it clear to parents that poor attendance and holidays in term time are not acceptable. As a result, persistent absence is now below the national average.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Standards at the end of key stage 2 in 2017 were well below the national average in reading and mathematics, despite the fact that pupils enter the school with above-average prior attainment.
- In 2017, outcomes at the end of key stage 2 for disadvantaged pupils were close to, and in some cases above, that of other pupils.
- Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities do not make as much progress as other pupils. However, the school's own baseline data and observations indicate that a proportion of pupils had previously unidentified SEN. Once identified, interventions are put in place to begin to address the needs of these pupils.
- Attainment in mathematics improved in 2017 compared with 2016, but progress did not improve sufficiently. Work in pupils' books shows that reasoning and problem-solving skills are still underdeveloped.
- Current assessment information shows that most pupils are making reasonable progress in reading and mathematics. However, many pupils need to make faster progress to ensure that gaps in their knowledge and understanding caused by previous poor teaching are closed, before they move onto secondary school.
- Reading comprehension, particularly inference and deduction, is a key focus for the school. Leaders have put in place an intensive programme of teaching to address this, which shows some impact. The number of pupils reaching the expected standard in reading in each year group is increasing.
- Outcomes for writing improved significantly in 2017 compared with 2016. Attainment at the expected standard in writing at the end of key stage 2 was at or above the national average for all pupils. The proportion of pupils achieving greater depth in writing in 2017 was above the national average for all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils.

- Outcomes for grammar, punctuation and spelling were above national averages in 2017 overall, including for disadvantaged pupils. Current assessment information and work in pupils' books show that pupils are on track to maintain this high standard.

School details

Unique reference number	104160
Local authority	Walsall
Inspection number	10042855

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

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	361
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Roland Roberts
Headteacher	Mrs Angela Hill
Telephone number	01922 721 092
Website	www.palfrey-j.walsall.sch.uk
Email address	postbox@palfrey-j.walsall.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	1–2 December 2015

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- Palfrey Junior School is a larger than average primary phase school in Walsall.
- The majority of pupils are from the local community of Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritage families. The large majority of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is higher than average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is broadly in line with the national average.
- The school meets the current floor standard for progress.

- The school meets the Department for Education's definition of a coasting school based on key stage 2 academic performance results in 2014, 2015 and 2016.
- The school federated with the Cadmus Family of Schools in July 2016.

Information about this inspection

- During the two days, inspectors observed learning in lessons and intervention groups. The majority of the observations were carried out jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors looked at work in pupils' books and spoke to pupils about their learning. An inspector also listened to a small group of pupils read.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of governors, the federation executive headteacher, a group of staff and the school improvement adviser.
- Inspectors looked at parents' responses to the school's own questionnaire as there were insufficient responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. There were no staff or pupil responses to the online questionnaires.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents provided by the school including: the school improvement plan, the school self-evaluation, the single central record, internal assessment information, published assessment outcomes and governing body minutes. The school website was assessed for compliance.

Inspection team

Jane Spilsbury, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Linda Brown	Ofsted Inspector
Chris Minton	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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