

Benson Community School

Benson Road, Hockley, Birmingham, West Midlands B18 5TD

Inspection dates

1–2 May 2018

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	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- From their individual starting points, the majority of pupils make good progress in their learning in reading, writing and mathematics.
- While the overall quality of teaching is good, a small number of inconsistencies remain. Some teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve, especially the most able pupils. As a result, these pupils do not make as much progress as they should.
- Overall, leaders are improving the quality of teaching, learning, assessment and pupils' achievement well. However, leaders' checks carried out on learning occasionally lack sufficient precision. This does not help teachers to improve their teaching even further.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher form a formidable leadership duo which is improving the school effectively.
- The curriculum is rich, diverse and well designed to meet the needs of all pupils. It develops pupils' understanding of British values effectively and supports their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. However, on occasion, teachers do not insist that pupils apply their literacy skills in all subject areas as well as they should.
- Middle leaders have a good understanding of strengths and areas for development in their subjects. They have robust plans in place to tackle these development areas.
- Pupils behave well around school. However, a small minority of pupils occasionally disrupt the learning of others.
- Pupils' personal development and welfare is exceptionally well catered for in school. Pupils feel safe and learn how to keep themselves safe. Nevertheless, a few pupils have an inaccurate perception of what bullying is.
- Provision in the early years helps children to make good progress in their learning and development from their starting points. However, some children are not prepared well enough for the challenges of Year 1.
- Governors hold school leaders to account well. They provide effective challenge in response to the information they receive about pupils' outcomes.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Eliminate the remaining inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
 - all teachers have sufficiently high expectations of what pupils can achieve, especially the most able
 - teachers insist that pupils apply the same level of literacy skills across the wider curriculum as they do in their English lessons.
- Strengthen the impact of leaders, including in the early years, on pupils' achievement and behaviour by:
 - ensuring that leaders provide greater precision in feedback to teachers following learning walks so they know exactly what to do to improve further
 - further accelerating children's progress in the early years so more are well prepared to begin learning in Year 1
 - eliminating the very small number of disruptions in some lessons
 - further developing pupils' understanding of what bullying is.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The leadership team is successfully led by the highly efficient and inspirational headteacher and deputy headteacher. Since this relatively new leadership team was formed, the school has improved well.
- Senior leaders have a clear vision based on high expectations for all pupils. This is evidenced by the aspirational school motto, 'There are no limits to what you can achieve'.
- Leaders new to their roles are well supported through an effective coaching programme which enables them to begin taking on whole-school responsibilities. Middle leaders with responsibility for leading subjects are effective in their roles. Consequently, improvements can be seen in all areas of the school's performance.
- Leaders ensure that additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils is used carefully to meet the needs of these pupils. As a result, pupils' books and the latest school performance information show disadvantaged pupils' achievement is improving. Likewise, additional sports funding is used successfully to improve pupils' life skills.
- Special educational needs is successfully led. This helps those pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities to make fast progress in their learning.
- The '3B' curriculum, based on 'Benson, Birmingham and Britain', is highly stimulating, rich and creative. It successfully underpins pupils' acquisition of knowledge. The curriculum is skilfully based on personal, social, health and economic education, British values and religious education, which creates a set of shared core values effectively among pupils.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strongly promoted throughout the school.
- Parents who have been associated with the school for a long time report significant improvements in behaviour and the development of a school community.
- The breakfast club is run effectively. Currently, only a small number of pupils attend the club.
- The school is seen by Birmingham Education Partnership as not requiring support, because it provides a high quality of education for pupils.
- The leadership team continues to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement and has clear plans in place to improve the school further. However, feedback provided for teachers following monitoring activities is not always precise enough to explain exactly what they must do next to improve further.

Governance of the school

- Governors take decisive strategic decisions, when required, to improve education in the school. They previously decided to move key senior leaders into class teaching roles to improve pupils' achievement. This initiative is working. They are now reviewing this strategy to maximise leadership time to bring about further improvement.

- Governors ask challenging questions of senior leaders to check on how well pupils are progressing in their learning. They do this to ensure that pupils are making fast enough progress.
- The chair of governors and fellow members of the governing body are highly aspirational for the school. They desire the best teaching for all pupils. Together with senior leaders, they have worked tirelessly to bring about improvements in teaching, but acknowledge there remain some inconsistencies which are hindering learning, especially for the most able.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Comprehensive records of safeguarding training completed are kept, so leaders can check that all training is up to date. Governors undertake regular safeguarding training. All staff undertake training to prevent radicalisation. Leaders undertake detailed checks on all staff who work in the school to ensure that they pose no risk to pupils.
- Leaders work closely with parents and carers and a wide range of external partners to ensure that pupils are kept safe.
- The school site is secure. Gates are locked as soon as all pupils are in school to help keep them safe. When issues around the site, such as crumbling steps, are identified, the headteacher takes decisive action to minimise the risk of harm to pupils.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Improvements in the quality of teaching are leading to pupils' faster progress and improved achievement in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Many teachers use information and communication technology effectively in lessons to develop pupils' learning further. For example, in a Year 2 lesson, some pupils were observed discussing feeling the warmth from the images of amber embers from a fire relayed digitally into the classroom to support their learning about the use of nouns in sentences. Other pupils in Year 2 were taught skilfully about poems related to fire as part of the topic on the Great Fire of London.
- In mathematics lessons, teachers give pupils many opportunities to explain their reasoning about how they approach solving problems. This helps pupils to make good progress in mathematics.
- Many teachers have a sound knowledge of the subjects they teach. Teachers reinforce technical vocabulary well during lessons. This helps pupils to make good progress in subjects across the curriculum.
- Teachers encourage pupils to expand their use of a wider range of vocabulary. This further supports their progress in writing. For example, older pupils were observed using words such as 'culpable' and 'clandestine' accurately and skilfully in their stories.
- Teachers develop pupils' reading skills effectively across the school. Pupils identify their favourite authors, such as Michael Morpurgo and David Walliams. They speak excitedly about their love of reading.

- While the majority of teaching is good across the school, the most able pupils do not make as much progress as they could. This is because teachers do not consistently provide these pupils with sufficient challenge.
- Pupils make good progress in reading and writing. However, teachers do not insist that pupils apply their literacy skills in subjects across the curriculum as well as they do in their English lessons.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- The large proportion of pupils who arrive from many different countries and cultures from around the world during each school year are exceptionally well supported. Many of these pupils do not speak English but learn basic literacy skills rapidly because of the highly effective support they receive.
- Pupils are very confident. A culture of care and nurture pervades school life, which is highly supportive. This helps pupils settle rapidly into school and learn effectively.
- Pupils report they feel safe in school. They are taught well about how to keep themselves safe on the internet.
- The group of pupils called friends against bullying (FAB) support other pupils effectively to behave appropriately on the playground. However, a small minority of pupils do not have a clear understanding of what bullying is.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are polite and well mannered.
- The proportion of pupils who are regularly absent from school has decreased this year because of the effective work of staff with a wide range of local authority support services. The achievement of these pupils has not suffered because of their previous absence compared to others who attended regularly.
- Pupils' attendance is improving. School leaders place high importance on pupils being in school regularly and successfully explain this to parents.
- Most teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and manage it effectively in lessons. However, a small minority of pupils do not behave appropriately in some lessons, which disrupts the learning of their peers.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- From their individual starting points, pupils are making faster progress in reading, writing and mathematics, because of improvements in the quality of teaching.
- Reading is taught well in the school. The proportion of pupils who achieve the required standard in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 has risen for the last three years, but is below the national average. Leaders predict that this proportion will

continue to rise this year.

- Attainment at the end of key stage 2 is rising. Pupils' books and the latest school performance information show that pupils' progress is accelerating in reading, writing and mathematics.
- By the end of Year 6 in 2017, disadvantaged pupils made similar progress to other pupils in school and nationally in their writing. The progress of disadvantaged pupils continues to accelerate.
- The majority of pupils are currently making good progress in a wide range of subjects across the curriculum.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are making fast progress in their learning, because of effective support provided by skilled teaching assistants who work with them in lessons and in small groups.
- Most-able pupils are not currently reaching the higher standards of which they are capable, because teachers do not consistently provide them with enough challenge.

Early years provision

Good

- Staff work diligently on improving children's communication and language skills. The teaching of early literacy skills is effective. This is an important cornerstone of the curriculum which supports children's learning well.
- Staff teach phonics well. This helps children to use the sounds which letters make to begin to write simple words. In addition to this, staff support children effectively to develop their letter formation. For example, pupils applied their phonic skills and showed their improving letter formation skills in their stories about Denis the robot.
- Staff provide children with stimulating learning experiences. As a result, children participate enthusiastically in learning and development opportunities, so much so that there is a palpable hum to learning in the classroom.
- Arrangements to keep pupils safe are secure.
- Children behave well. They are happy to take turns and share. For example, children were happy to wait for their turn to use the big spade in the sand tray.
- Parents report they are happy with arrangements for children starting school. They feel well supported by the skilled early years team.
- Leadership of early years is effective. The curriculum is well designed to meet children's interests. However, the leader recognises that further work is required to ensure that there is a consistently high standard of teaching across the early years.
- From starting school with knowledge and skills which are below those typical for their age, particularly in communication and their use of language, children progress well in their learning and development. However, while the majority of children make good progress, some children are not prepared well enough for the challenges of Year 1.

School details

Unique reference number	103362
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10042887

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	550
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sue Beardsmore
Headteacher	Bridget Dennis
Telephone number	01215544913
Website	www.bensonschool.co.uk
Email address	enquiry@benson.bham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	12–13 February 2015

Information about this school

- This primary school is larger than average.
- Almost all pupils come from a wide range of minority ethnic groups.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium funding is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is below average.
- The school met the government's floor standards in 2017, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school does not meet the Department for Education's definition of a coasting

school based on Key Stage 2 academic performance results in 2017.

- Early years provision is full time in the Reception class.
- The school runs a breakfast club, which is managed by the governing body.
- The headteacher took up post in September 2016 and was joined by the new deputy headteacher in September 2017.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in lessons and parts of lessons. Some of these were observed jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, middle leaders and school staff. The lead inspector spoke with the chair of the governing body, four other governors and a representative from the Birmingham Education Partnership.
- Inspectors spoke informally to pupils in lessons, during breaks and at lunchtimes. They also spoke with a large proportion of parents at the end of the school day.
- Inspectors scrutinised the pupils' work during lessons and work produced over time in a range of their books. They also listened to a few pupils from Year 1, Year 2 and Year 6 reading.
- Inspectors observed the work of the school and looked at the latest school performance information showing the progress pupils currently in school are making.
- Other documentation scrutinised included plans for school improvement, safeguarding information, behaviour/medical incident logs, attendance records and minutes of governing body meetings.
- Inspectors took account of five responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). Inspectors considered two free-text responses from parents and 17 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Declan McCauley, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Stephen Cox	Ofsted Inspector
Susan Helps	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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