

Water Mill Primary School

Water Mill Close, Selly Oak, Birmingham, West Midlands B29 6TS

Inspection dates

10–11 July 2018

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

- The school, over time, has experienced a lack of stability across all aspects of leadership. The headteacher is a relatively recent appointment. The impact of the positive actions she has taken has yet to be sustained.
- The quality of teaching, although improving, is not yet consistently good throughout the school.
- Systems used to check the progress of pupils across the school are not fully developed.
- Governors have not ensured that actions they discuss are routinely followed up. They have not consistently held leaders to account for school improvement.
- Leaders have very recently introduced a new curriculum. Although pupils learn a wide range of subjects they are not all as well established as English and mathematics. Consequently, pupils do not develop a deep enough understanding in these subjects.
- Pupils' writing is too variable in quality and presentation in different subjects of the curriculum.

The school has the following strengths

- The new leadership team is tackling the school's weaknesses with determination, and there are clear signs of improvement in pupils' progress. Staff are well supported and feel valued. The school is improving.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. Pupils say that they are happy and feel safe in school.
- Children get off to a good start to their time at school because the effective provision in the early years helps them to make good progress.
- Newly appointed middle leaders have made a promising start. They have accurately identified the strengths and areas for improvement.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that pupils' progress is consistently good across a range of subjects, by ensuring that all teachers and staff:
 - use assessment information more precisely to enable pupils to make at least good progress in different subjects
 - improve the quality of writing in all subjects by continuing to insist and check that pupils regularly produce work that has accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, by ensuring that:
 - senior leaders develop the school's assessment systems so that leaders, at all levels, can analyse pupils' progress and attainment more effectively
 - teachers adapt their plans for different subjects to challenge pupils to develop appropriate subject-specific knowledge and skills
 - they develop ways to check on pupils' progress in a range of subjects so that teachers are able to design learning activities that are well matched to pupils' needs
 - governors follow up on actions leaders have taken and hold them to account more rigorously for pupils' achievement.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because leaders have not yet done enough to make sure teaching is securely good. As a result, pupils do not make consistently good progress across the school. Since the previous inspection, leaders' and governors' efforts to drive improvements have been hindered by an instability in staffing, particularly at senior leadership level.
- Since the headteacher joined the school, she has provided a sense of direction and purpose. As yet, the actions introduced to improve the school have not had sufficient time to embed and sustain good teaching.
- The school's assessment system does not provide leaders with the information they need to make their work more effective. Their assessment information does not give them enough detail to know if some pupils may need additional support. Not all teachers use the school's feedback policy consistently.
- The headteacher has an accurate and realistic view of the school and its current strengths and weaknesses. This is shared with other leaders, who have a good understanding of their subjects and the key priorities for school improvement. Together, leaders are beginning to tackle the improvements that are needed.
- Leaders, including subject leaders, have identified the need to improve the curriculum and plans are in place to do this. However, teachers do not consistently adapt their planning to make sure that pupils are effectively challenged. The previous curriculum offered limited opportunities for pupils to apply their literacy and numeracy skills in subjects other than English and mathematics.
- Middle leaders responsible for English and mathematics are developing their knowledge and skills in checking and improving the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects. They are also supporting teachers to ensure that expectations are consistent from class to class. However, they have not been in post long enough to make a sustained difference on the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes.
- Leadership of the provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is effective. Resources are of a good standard and staff have a good understanding of pupils' learning, personal and welfare needs. Every effort is made to remove any barriers to learning. Checks on the impact of actions take place regularly. This ensures that pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good gains in their learning from their starting points.
- Leaders have established a distinctive ethos where pupils show very high levels of courtesy and consideration. Pupils are tolerant and respectful of each other and of adults. They talk with understanding about the need to respect other cultures and viewpoints. Leaders equip pupils with a strong sense of values that prepares them very well for life in modern Britain.
- The physical education and sport premium funding is used to good effect. Specialist teaching and coaching are helping to develop pupils' skills in a range of sports across the school.

- The school manages the high mobility of pupils very effectively. Leaders have developed systems that make sure that pupils new to the school, including those who arrive speaking very little English and/or with little information about their previous education, are made welcome and get off to a good start.
- The primary school physical education and sport funding is used well. Pupils said how much they enjoy sport and find lessons fun. Older pupils were observed enthusiastically working with sports coaches to improve their ball skills. Pupils recognise the value of physical activity as a part of being healthy.
- The leadership and management of the use of the pupil premium funding are effective. The plans for the use of this funding have recently been reviewed. They are now more precise because they are informed by an analysis of pupils' needs and barriers to learning. The impact of last year's work in this area was evaluated and consequently some less effective interventions were stopped and more effective ones extended.

Governance of the school

- Since the previous inspection, the governing body has not been effective enough in challenging leaders. Consequently, governors have not made sure that a good quality of education has been maintained and improved.
- The governing body has very recently made changes to how it operates. Governors make more frequent, regular, focused visits to school to dig deeper and check the quality of education. Governors record their findings but do not use the information well enough to provide robust challenge to senior leaders.
- The governing body is now a cohesive group which works closely with the school's leaders. Governors have a range of relevant skills and understand their statutory roles and responsibilities. They have recently attended suitable training to update their skills, and this is enabling them to fulfil their responsibilities more effectively.
- The governing body ensures that additional funding, including the pupil premium funding, is deployed appropriately.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. All staff receive relevant training and take appropriate action when required. Training is thorough and up to date, including any additions to statutory requirements.
- Absences are followed up with the educational welfare officer to ensure that absent pupils are encouraged to come to school. Leaders and staff know where the absent pupils are during the school day. These strategies have raised overall attendance in the current year.
- Groups of pupils who spoke with inspectors said that they feel safe in the school and that they know staff care for them. They have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe both inside and outside school. They are able to describe how the school has helped them to know how to stay safe online.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment remains too varied across year groups, and requires further improvement. Pupils are not consistently provided with enough opportunities to learn well in different subjects. The level of challenge demonstrated in pupils' writing in subjects such as geography and history shows that teachers do not have a sufficiently robust understanding of what constitutes learning at greater depth.
- Recently introduced assessment systems do not give a clear picture of pupils' progress. Therefore, teachers are not planning work which builds progressively on what pupils can already do. This results in work being too hard or too easy.
- Teachers do not use the school's chosen marking and feedback policy consistently well. In several classes, teachers provide general affirmation or recommendations, but do not check that pupils' work has improved as a result.
- Leaders have recently introduced a phonics programme that is helping teachers to effectively model sounds and develop pupils' abilities to recognise the links between letters and sounds. These changes to the teaching of phonics are strengthening what the school offers in this area. The school's assessments indicate that better teaching is having a positive impact on pupils' phonic skills.
- Reading is well promoted throughout the school. There are engaging displays, challenges and initiatives to inspire pupils' interest and enthusiasm. A well-equipped library along with inviting and imaginative classroom reading areas encourage pupils to learn about authors and read for pleasure.
- The teaching of mathematics provides pupils with a range of problem-solving and reasoning activities. However, most-able pupils are not always challenged sufficiently because there is an emphasis on practising skills rather than focusing on activities that will develop their knowledge and understanding.
- Work in books shows that teachers' expectations in writing are not as high in other subjects as they are in English. Work is not matched to pupils' needs, and pupils complete the same tasks, regardless of their ability. As a result, some pupils find the work too hard or too easy. Pupils have fewer opportunities to write at length in subjects other than literacy.
- Strong relationships are evident throughout the school, as reflected in pupils' behaviour in lessons. Where teaching is strong, pupils listen carefully and respond well. They work together cooperatively and help each other.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- There is a strong emphasis on values and respect that permeates through the school's work. These values are reinforced during assemblies and lessons which specifically develop pupils' personal and social skills. Assemblies, in particular, focus on moral development.

- The school council plays an active role in the school.
- The breakfast and after-school clubs are well run with well-established routines. They provide a wide range of activities for the pupils, and the pupils mix and play together harmoniously.
- Pupils are a credit to the school. They treat each other the utmost consideration and ensure that the school makes everyone feel welcome and valued. Pupils new to the school, including international new arrivals and those new to speaking English, are made very welcome and settle quickly. One child remarked, 'We are all unique and great friends from different countries. We are like the united nations here'.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils often display exemplary behaviour. During playtimes and lunchtimes, they behave well. They socialise sensibly and take part in lively, friendly activities. Pupils move around school in an orderly fashion and demonstrate good manners. However, some parents are concerned about behaviour, despite the school's efforts and the fact that pupils say that behaviour is not an issue.
- The school looks at patterns in pupils' attendance. Attendance issues are addressed on a case-by-case basis. School leaders have used this information to identify those families that require support to ensure that their children attend regularly. As a result, attendance has been generally in line with the national average for several years.
- Historically a high number of pupils have been given fixed-term exclusions. This figure has been successfully reduced in recent years. To reduce these exclusions, leaders and other staff effectively support pupils who find it difficult to manage their own behaviour, and the school's positive behaviour management system is used consistently. As a result, the school's rates of exclusion are now significantly below the national figure.
- Pupils display positive attitudes to learning. They listen well and settle quickly to the work that teachers set them. They are keen to answer questions and offer ideas in class.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Outcomes across the school have risen in 2018 at the end of Reception, Year 2 and Year 6. The progress of current pupils is uneven because the quality of teaching is not yet securely good. Work in pupils' books and visits to lessons confirm that the progress of pupils in mathematics, particularly in key stage 2, is improving more strongly than in reading and writing.
- The inconsistencies in teaching over time have led to pupils' progress being variable in a range of subjects. While the work in pupils' books shows that they study a range of subjects, pupils are not challenged sufficiently. As a result, they do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Leaders have responded to low outcomes in the past at the end of Year 2 with more demanding curriculum content at key stage 1 and new teaching approaches in mathematics and reading. This contributed to much stronger outcomes at the end of

Year 2 in 2018, with the proportions of pupils achieving the expected standard in reading and mathematics improving. However, standards in writing remain significantly below previous national averages.

- Over the last three years, the results of the national phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 have been improving. As a result, pupils are well prepared to develop good early reading skills.
- Standards of writing are variable across the school. Some pupils write with stylistic maturity and technical accuracy. However, some work is poorly presented or unfinished. There are still weaknesses in spelling, grammar and punctuation. Pupils' attainment in writing has been below the national average for pupils in key stage 2 for the past three years, and well below the national average in key stage 1 last year.
- In the past, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities have not always reached the potential they are capable of. Although very recent, the school's assessment information indicates that these pupils are now making secure progress from their starting points.
- A significant majority of pupils start school with low levels of skill and knowledge. In addition, a significant number of pupils join or leave the school at different times of the year. Many who join at short notice speak little English. The school works very effectively with these pupils and as a result, these pupils make good progress.
- Historically, disadvantaged pupils have not made the same progress as other pupils in the school. The school's assessment system and an analysis of pupils' books indicate that disadvantaged pupils currently in the school are now making similar progress to others in the school and that difference between their achievement and that of other pupils is diminishing.

Early years provision

Good

- From starting points that are below those typical for their age, children in the early years make good progress overall.
- Outcomes at the end of the Reception Year have improved since the last inspection. Between 2015 and 2017, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development was below the national level. Assessments in 2018 suggest that results will be in line or above last year's national averages. Children are well prepared to start Year 1.
- The early years leader knows the children well. She monitors children's achievements rigorously. Their progress is checked and their learning needs identified so that appropriate support can be provided when necessary. Individual folders of work are used effectively to provide evidence of progress and the development of new skills.
- Children settle quickly into Reception and are confident to talk to adults. Warm, nurturing relationships between children and adults are clear to see.
- The early years leader is effective and has a good understanding of the strengths of the provision and areas for development. She has taken care to develop the early years environment so that it supports children's learning. In addition to the well-organised main classrooms, there is a well-resourced outdoor learning area. Children

enthusiastically make use of this area to develop their physical, social and communication skills and aptitudes.

- The Reception classroom is bright and attractive. It offers a broad range of resources that children are able to access independently.
- Leaders have ensured that safeguarding arrangements in the early years are effective and children are cared for well.

School details

Unique reference number	103326
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10042886

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	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	204
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Taylor
Headteacher	Paula Rudd
Telephone number	01214 647 769
Website	www.watermill.bham.sch.uk
Email address	enquiry@watermill.bham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	28–29 November 2013

Information about this school

- Water Mill is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- An above-average proportion of pupils are disadvantaged. An increasing proportion of pupils come from minority ethnic groups.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is below average.
- A higher than usual number of pupils join and leave the school at different times throughout each school year.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards.
- Since the last inspection, there has been much change, including the appointment of a new headteacher. A new deputy headteacher took up his post during 2018. In September 2017, a new assistant headteacher took up her post.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed learning in 36 lessons. Inspectors conducted some lesson observations jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors observed pupils at other times during the school day at playtimes, lunchtimes and assemblies.
- The inspectors held discussions with senior leaders, other leaders and newly qualified teachers. Inspectors also spoke to staff informally during the inspection. The lead inspector met with representatives of the governing body and spoke on the phone to the local authority adviser who acts as the school improvement partner.
- Inspectors met with pupils and held informal discussions with them throughout the inspection.
- The inspection team looked at examples of pupils' work in their visits to classrooms. They also scrutinised samples of work from a wide range of subjects for some pupils in Years 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6.
- An inspector listened to some pupils from Years 1 read.
- The inspectors considered a wide range of documents. These included the school's development plans and evaluations of the school's progress.
- Inspectors also considered minutes of governors' meetings, school policies, local authority reports on the performance of the school and assessment information. Inspectors scrutinised detailed records showing how the school supports vulnerable pupils.
- The inspection team took account of 13 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 12 comments made using Ofsted's free-text service. Inspectors also took account of the school's staff survey. No Ofsted pupil surveys were available for inspectors to consider during the inspection.

Max Vlahakis, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Tracy Stone

Ofsted Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

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.

You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2018