

# Far Forest Lea Memorial CofE Primary School

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

## Inspection dates

15–16 May 2019

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	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders have not fully addressed the issues identified at the last inspection. In particular, the quality of teaching in Years 3, 4 and 5 requires improvement.
- Curriculum planning does not ensure that teaching in foundation subjects extends pupils' existing knowledge and understanding.
- Staffing changes have disrupted the leadership of foundation subjects. The school has yet to establish new arrangements and expectations.
- Leaders have not ensured that the strong practice evident in Reception is replicated in the pre-school provision. In particular, the use of assessment needs to improve. The move up from pre-school is not made as easy as it should be.
- In 2018, Year 6 pupils left the school having made weak progress from their key stage 1 starting points in writing. Pupils' attainment at key stage 1 was below the national average.
- Some current pupils' progress has not been strong over time, reflecting the variable quality of teaching.
- Teachers often take answers only from volunteers. Questioning does not establish how well pupils understand new ideas.
- Teachers sometimes do not plan the work of teaching assistants with enough care. As a result, their impact on learning is variable.
- Good teaching in computing is impeded by limited resources.

### The school has the following strengths

- The interim headteacher understands the school very well. She has acted rapidly and effectively to challenge weaker teaching and raise expectations. Teaching in English and mathematics is improving.
- The teaching of phonics is effective. In the last two years, the proportion of pupils who have met the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check has been above the national average.
- Governors have acted decisively to define the future of the school.
- Staff have embraced the interim headteacher's clear purpose. There is a strong sense of teamwork in the school.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and at social times. They have good opportunities to take responsibility and help others. Safeguarding is effective.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching across the school by ensuring that:
  - teachers' questioning is effective in checking pupils' progress while they are learning, thus enabling teachers to adjust their teaching if necessary
  - making sure that leaders and teachers plan the work of teaching assistants effectively so that the skills of teaching assistants have the maximum impact on pupils' learning.
- Embed recent improvements in the quality of teaching for pupils in Years 3, 4 and 5 so that pupils' progress is consistently strong across key stage 2.
- Deepen the impact of leadership and management on pupils' achievement by:
  - refining teachers' planning so that pupils' work in foundation subjects builds effectively on the knowledge and skills that they already have
  - ensuring that staff receive the training and the time that they need to be effective leaders of foundation subjects
  - making sure that pupils have the resources to cover the full computing curriculum
  - ensuring that the leadership of the early years foundation stage secures a consistently good quality of teaching and assessment.
- Improve the quality of provision in the early years foundation stage by:
  - developing the use of assessment in the pre-school to record children's achievements and plan their next steps
  - ensuring that children benefit from a smoother transition from the pre-school to the Reception Year.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- Until very recently, leaders had made limited progress in tackling the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. Inconsistencies in the quality of teaching remained, and as a result, some pupils were not making the progress in English and mathematics that they should have done. Although there was very good practice in the school, leaders had not drawn upon it effectively to improve weaker teaching. Middle leaders were not confident in evaluating the areas for which they were responsible.
- The interim headteacher's evaluation of the school's current position is insightful, detailed and balanced. She has rapidly identified and implemented her plans for improvement. These are well-judged, and in less than three months, their impact is already evident. New teaching appointments and clear expectations have led to an improvement in the quality of teaching. The format of the school development plan helps governors to judge the effectiveness of leaders' actions.
- The interim headteacher has quickly secured the support of the school community. Staff have a renewed enthusiasm and confidence, and a willingness to exercise leadership when required. During the inspection, a large majority of parents and carers expressed their strong support for the school.
- Staff are now benefiting from effective professional development. Leaders have explained clearly how teachers should plan the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics and offered their guidance. They have drawn effectively on the strengths of a number of other schools, and staff have learned from best practice. Teachers compare their judgements about the standards that pupils have achieved with those made by teachers elsewhere.
- Although leaders are committed to a broad curriculum, they have not ensured that many pupils gain the knowledge and understanding in all the foundation subjects that they should. Recent staffing changes mean that some subjects lack an identified leader to provide guidance for their colleagues and to check on standards. Limited hardware restricts the teaching of computing.
- The curriculum develops pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural attitudes effectively. Older pupils explained to the inspector how studying different faiths in religious education had helped them to respect those from cultures other than their own. Pupils are thoughtful and articulate. They treat each other and adults with courtesy.
- Leaders have made some progress with improving the arrangements for teaching those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Teachers receive a profile of each pupil explaining how teaching should be adapted to meet their educational needs. Leaders check on the progress of each pupil with SEND. However, they have not evaluated the effectiveness of particular programmes and strategies and discovered whether they represent good value for money.
- The pupil premium has been spent effectively. In addition to academic support, leaders have invested well in pupils' emotional well-being. Leaders also spend the physical education (PE) and sports premium effectively. Pupils greatly appreciate the opportunity to take part in inter-school competitions and after-school clubs. They spoke

with excitement about the variety of sports they had tackled in PE lessons.

- The local authority has supported the school well. Officers worked effectively with the governors to tackle weaknesses in the leadership of the school. They have advised current leaders on where they can find best practice.

### **Governance of the school**

- The governors provide effective oversight of the school. They took appropriate action once weaknesses in the leadership of the school had been identified. Governors have worked well with the interim headteacher. They have now made sure that the information that they receive about pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching enables them to challenge school leaders on the effectiveness of their actions. They have made sure that they are well trained to carry out the full breadth of their responsibilities.
- Following detailed discussion, the governing body has taken a prompt decision about the future governance of the school. It has successfully approached a multi-academy trust (MAT) with a view to the school becoming an associate member of the trust from September 2019.
- Governors ensure that the school's arrangements keep pupils safe. They check that all staff receive the relevant safeguarding training, and that staff take appropriate action to protect any pupils at risk. They have recently taken a number of steps to improve the physical safety of the site.
- The school is currently in deficit, and governors have agreed measures with the local authority to resolve the issue in the medium term. They are aware of how leaders spend the pupil premium and additional money provided for pupils with SEND. However, they recognise that they have not yet considered sufficiently carefully the impact of this expenditure.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff are aware of how to identify and report any concerns. Training is up-to-date, and staff told the inspector how helpful they found the interim headteacher's weekly briefings, which updated them on different aspects of safeguarding.
- In this relatively small school, staff know individual pupils and their families very well, and use this knowledge effectively to help to keep them safe. On her arrival, the interim headteacher ensured that pupils' records were tidy and stored securely. Leaders work effectively with parents and other agencies to support those pupils whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

### **Requires improvement**

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement because it is not consistent across the school. Leaders' records and pupils' workbooks show clearly that, until very recently, teachers' expectations for pupils in Years 3, 4 and 5 have not

been sufficiently high. As at the last inspection, work was commonly not well matched to pupils' abilities. New appointments and leaders' clear guidance about how to plan work in English and mathematics have already led to signs of improvement. Pupils have more reliable guidance on how to improve their work. It is too early, however, to see much of an impact on pupils' achievement.

- When teachers question pupils, they usually accept the answer from among the enthusiastic volunteers. They rarely probe the understanding of the class, so they are not routinely aware of how well pupils have grasped new ideas.
- During the inspection, teaching assistants in the classroom sometimes provided valuable assistance to pupils or groups of pupils. In a few cases, they drew well on their detailed knowledge of individual pupils with significant additional needs to enable them to complete their work. However, in other instances, teachers had not planned teaching assistants' work so carefully, and they had less impact on pupils' learning.
- Pupils are encouraged to use their learning about particular features of punctuation and grammar in their longer pieces of writing. They produce a first draft of their ideas, before checking and redrafting it to improve its accuracy and how closely it matches its intended purpose. Pupils write for a variety of purposes and in different subject areas. Pupils' handwriting is generally neat and well formed.
- In the teaching of mathematics, teachers balance the practising of calculations with the development of pupils' ability to solve problems. Pupils demonstrate that they can reason mathematically both in their books and aloud in class. Teachers use mathematical terms accurately, and expect pupils to do the same. For example, in a lesson for pupils in Years 1 and 2, the teacher encouraged pupils to refer to the corners of solids as vertices, and pupils accurately referred to tetrahedrons and pyramids.
- The teaching of phonics is effective. Teachers introduce pupils to letters and sounds in a planned sequence so that they increase the range of what younger pupils are able to read and write. Staff are alert to those who might fall behind, and address their misconceptions. Older pupils are able to use their phonic knowledge reliably to identify unfamiliar words.
- When teaching is at its best, it is lively and well-paced. Teachers combine ideas from different areas of the curriculum in imaginative ways. For example, key stage 1 pupils had learned about China as a country, practised Chinese calligraphy and painted in a Chinese style. Older pupils told the inspector that homework makes a useful contribution to their studies.

## **Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

**Good**

### **Personal development and welfare**

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Staff look after pupils well, and ensure that they have constructive attitudes towards their work. Leaders have recently taken steps to enhance the emotional well-being of a small number of pupils whose circumstances occasion them stress. They report that techniques such as hand massage have helped pupils to approach school in a much

calmer manner. There was evidence of this during the inspection.

- Pupils dress smartly, and very much enjoy school. They now almost always take a pride in their work and present it neatly. Older pupils have a mature understanding of why they come to school, reflecting, for example, on the importance of achievement in English and mathematics for their later lives. Year 6 pupils told the inspector that they believed that the more challenging work that had been set prepared them well for secondary school.
- Pupils are safe in school, and feel safe. They learn how to stay safe online, and learn about fire and road safety. The school gives pupils every chance to learn to swim, and all current Year 6 pupils can do so. Pupils showed a strong commitment to healthy eating, with most eating fruit at break time.
- Pupils say that bullying is rare, and the school's records confirmed this. They know that they should talk to an adult if they receive any unwelcome attention, and they trust that the member of staff would resolve any issues promptly.
- Pupils have good opportunities to take up positions of responsibility, for example acting as prefects or school councillors. During an assembly, older pupils supported Year 2 pupils in leading worship with commendable sensitivity and skill.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave well in class. From the early years onwards, teachers establish routines that pupils are happy to follow. For example, during the inspection, pupils tidied up practical equipment and moved around the classroom without fuss. Where new teachers have raised expectations about the quality and quantity of pupils' work, there was evidence that pupils have rapidly begun to meet them.
- Pupils sustain their concentration well during their lessons. They settle to their individual work quickly. When asked to work with their peers, they collaborate well. Just occasionally, pupils' attention drifts, but even in these circumstances, they rarely disrupt the learning of others.
- Leaders work patiently and effectively with the parents of the few pupils who present challenging behaviour. They adopt new strategies and approaches to help them to settle and to learn. Since the last inspection, the school has not made use of fixed-term or permanent exclusion.
- The playground has a good range of equipment, and during the inspection, pupils played well together at social times. There were no instances of aggressive behaviour.
- Pupils' attendance has risen over recent years, and now stands above the national average. No groups of pupils are disadvantaged by low attendance.

### Outcomes for pupils

### Requires improvement

- Outcomes require improvement because the progress in English and mathematics of current pupils in some parts of the school has not been good enough. In the same classes, pupils' work in foundation subjects has often been poorly planned. Teachers

have had low expectations of the quality of pupils' work, which has frequently been untidy or unfinished. For example, Year 4 pupils had described and sketched the wrappers for chocolate bars with no evidence of success criteria or evaluation.

- Pupils told the inspector that work in Year 6 was a real 'step up', and that they enjoyed the additional challenges it brought. Their workbooks confirmed that pupils make very strong progress in Year 6. Over recent years, Year 6 pupils have, to an extent, recovered some of the ground that they had lost earlier in key stage 2. However, this has also masked their previous underachievement.
- In 2018, pupils left Year 6 with attainment broadly in line with the national average, but having made weak progress from their high key stage 1 starting points in writing. The proportion of Year 2 pupils who attained the expected standard in their end-of-key-stage tests was below the national average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Until recently, the progress of pupils with SEND has often been weak. However, inspection evidence showed that, while their progress remains variable, it is beginning to improve. Some pupils with SEND now make strong progress. Leaders have undertaken to review the impact of additional teaching for these pupils outside the classroom with a view to boosting their progress further.
- Historically, the achievement of the small proportion of disadvantaged pupils across the school has been disappointing. However, academic support and a stronger focus on pupils' emotional health and well-being are now paying dividends. Several disadvantaged pupils are making stronger progress, and some are achieving well.
- Since the last inspection, the proportion of Year 1 pupils attaining the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check has been above the national average, reflecting the effective teaching of phonics. Older pupils read aloud fluently, and most, but not all, expressed enthusiasm for the reading of fiction. The school is in the process of relocating the school library to make it more accessible.
- Inspection evidence showed that current key stage 1 pupils are achieving well. Pupils in Years 3, 4 and 5 have responded positively to the higher expectations of school leaders and their new teachers, and there are some early signs of improvement. Pupils present their work better, write at greater length and respond better to the feedback that teachers give them.
- Where teaching is stronger, pupils acquire good knowledge and skills in some foundation subjects. For example, Year 6 pupils demonstrated a good understanding of scientific method and historical investigation.

### Early years provision

### Requires improvement

- The early years provision requires improvement because of inconsistencies between the Reception Year and the pre-school provision. Although the pre-school has been part of the school since the last inspection, leaders have not ensured that there is one set of expectations and procedures for all the children. Leaders have encouraged staff in the pre-school to develop the teaching of phonics, but liaison between Reception and pre-school is at a relatively early stage.
- The school's records show that assessment at the pre-school is fairly rudimentary. They do not identify the evidence that points to children's mastery of a particular skill.

In 2018, leaders found that children entering Reception did not have all the skills that had been recorded in the pre-school. Differences in expectations and inaccuracies in assessment have meant that children have not benefited from a smooth transition from one year to the next.

- Children start the Reception Year with skills and abilities that are typical for their age. They make good progress, and those who need to catch up a little with their peers do so. In the last two years, the proportion of children who have attained a good level of development has been above the national average. Staff check these judgements about children's skills against those made by staff in other schools. Children are well prepared to start key stage 1.
- During the inspection, there was a little variation in the precision with which staff planned children's next steps. In some cases, staff paid close attention to what children were doing and what they might do next. Sometimes, although activities for children were suitable and engaging, they were only linked in a general way to what they had previously learned. There was variation too in the effectiveness with which staff questioned pupils and encouraged them to develop their thinking.
- Children across the early years behave well. Staff establish clear routines, so that children know what to expect. For example, during the inspection, pre-school children sat sensibly and politely as they ate their mid-morning snack. Children treat each other, adults, and the environment with respect.
- Staff work effectively with parents. In weekly newsletters, staff give details of the curriculum in the Reception class, and regularly explain to parents how they can help their children to learn at home. The school holds workshops, at which they explain the approach to an aspect of children's learning, such as phonics. Staff work with parents to identify at an early stage any additional needs that a child may have.
- Both indoor and outdoor learning environments are attractive and stimulating. They present children with plenty of opportunities to try different things. However, outdoor areas do not give children the same encouragement to think about letters, words and numbers as the classrooms do. The setting is safe, and all welfare requirements are met, including those for two-year-olds.



## School details

Unique reference number	135034
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	10088491

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	121
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Stacey Carter
Interim headteacher	Nikki Selby
Telephone number	01299 266316
Website	<a href="http://www.farforestlea.worcs.sch.uk">http://www.farforestlea.worcs.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:office@farforestlea.worcs.sch.uk">office@farforestlea.worcs.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	8–9 February 2017

## Information about this school

- Far Forest Lea Memorial CofE Primary School is smaller than the average-sized primary school. Pupils are taught in mixed-age classes, other than in Year 6.
- Children attend full-time in the Reception Year, and part-time in the pre-school. The school admits two-year-olds. Most pupils in the pre-school are aged three, but at any one time, a very few children are aged between two-and-a-half and three years. In recent years, all children in Reception have previously attended the pre-school provision.
- The school runs a before-and-after school club, for which it charges parents.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged is below average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is average. The report does not comment on disadvantaged pupils or pupils with SEND in any one year group because numbers are very small and to do so would risk identifying individual pupils.

- The interim headteacher took up her post in February 2019, when the previous headteacher left the school. Two new teachers joined the school at the start of the summer term.
- By arrangement with the MAT that has agreed to accept the school as an associate member, an executive headteacher will lead the school from September 2019. The interim headteacher will therefore leave the school at the end of the summer term.
- Far Forest Lea Memorial CofE Primary School is a voluntary controlled Church of England school. Its religious character was last inspected in July 2014.

## Information about this inspection

- Year 6 pupils were sitting their end-of-key-stage tests during the inspection.
- The inspector observed learning in all year groups except Year 6. Two observations were conducted jointly with the interim headteacher. The inspector also observed an assembly and pupils' conduct at social times.
- The inspector held discussions with the headteacher, other leaders, staff, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- A group of older pupils, chosen at random, met with the inspector. He also spoke to many other pupils informally. The inspector listened to pupils in Years 2, 4 and 5 read.
- The inspector scrutinised, in depth, work produced by a number of pupils in Years 2, 4 and 6. His sample included the work of some disadvantaged pupils, and some pupils with SEND. The inspector considered information about pupils' current performance.
- The inspector looked at a wide range of documents, both electronically and on paper. These included: development plans and evaluations of the school's progress; records of how leaders check on teaching; details of pupils' attendance and behaviour; records of visits made by officers of the local authority; minutes of governing body meetings; policies; and records showing how the school supports vulnerable pupils.
- The inspector took into account the 31 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the 26 comments made using the free-text facility. He spoke to several parents bringing their children to school on the first day of the inspection. He also considered the 11 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

## Inspection team

Martin Spoor, lead inspector

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](http://www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings).

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