

Inspection of Harper Bell Seventh-day Adventist School

29 Ravenhurst Street, Camp Hill, Birmingham, West Midlands B12 0EJ

Inspection dates: 11 and 12 February 2025

The quality of education	Inadequate
Behaviour and attitudes	Requires improvement
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Inadequate
Early years provision	Inadequate
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are not benefitting from an acceptable quality of education at this school. There are ongoing significant staffing changes in several classes. This affects how well pupils behave and achieve. Pupils do not enjoy having different class teachers on a regular basis. Low-level disruption is evident when lessons fail to interest pupils and when teachers' expectations are too low. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are not consistently well supported.

Outcomes in external tests in 2024, done at the end of Year 6, were well below the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. Weaknesses remain in several year groups, particularly in reading and writing.

Pupils are happy and have fun at playtimes with their friends. They understand the difference between occasional squabbles and bullying. They are adamant that bullying is not tolerated in school and that staff quickly resolve minor incidents. Pupils feel safe at school. They understand how to keep themselves safe, including online, because they learn about personal safety in lessons.

Most pupils attend school regularly. The school is rigorous in following up on all absences to ensure that pupils are safe and come to school daily. Pupils enjoy the visits and clubs that staff arrange. These include exciting trips for those with 'perfect' attendance, as well as clubs including chess, choir and drumming.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

There has been significant staff and leadership turbulence in the previous 12 months at the school. This has affected pupils' achievement and attitudes to learning. There has not been an effective enough approach between the governing body, the local authority and the board of the North England Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (the NEC board) to work collectively to address these weaknesses in a timely or sustained way.

Overall, the curriculum is coherent and well designed. It provides a solid structure in all subjects for staff to follow. It defines what pupils need to learn and when. However, the delivery of most subjects is variable. Too often, teaching does not follow the curriculum as intended and gaps exist in the coverage of content. Lessons do not build systematically on what pupils know and can do. Staff changes have led to a lack of continuity and too few checks on pupils' learning.

The early years curriculum, including phonics, is not implemented well. Some staff do not have sufficient subject knowledge to teach phonics effectively. There is often no recap or revisiting of prior learning. Consequently, children get off to a poor start in early reading. Other activities often lack a clear learning focus and children do not build on what they can already do.

As a result of the low expectations of teaching and behaviour within some lessons, including in the early years, many children and pupils struggle to focus. This frequently leads to incidents of off-task behaviour.

Reading cafés and daily story time are offered to encourage a culture of reading in the school. Phonic books are appropriately matched to pupils' abilities. The school provides additional support for pupils who struggle with reading. However, staff do not adapt teaching sufficiently for pupils with SEND. As a result, these pupils are not fully included in phonics and reading lessons. This hinders their ability to become fluent and confident readers.

The school has effective systems in place to identify pupils with SEND. However, this provision is not well developed. Despite some recent training, pupils are not well supported by staff to access the content of lessons successfully. This includes pupils with the most complex learning difficulties, who learn in the school's 'hub'. These pupils do not access the same curriculum as their peers. They do not make the progress they should.

In contrast to the weaknesses elsewhere, the school promotes pupils' personal development well. It provides effective pastoral support to ensure that pupils feel safe. Pupils speak highly of the adults who provide this support. They have a good appreciation of the diverse society in which they live. Pupils know the importance of treating others equally and upholding fundamental British values in everyday life. Pupils with SEND are better supported in this area of learning.

Senior leaders have recently prioritised attendance and safeguarding. They manage these areas well to help ensure the safety and well-being of pupils. However, leaders' oversight of individual subjects is weak due to the lack of permanent and experienced staff. Monitoring of pupils' learning across different subjects is, therefore, a challenge. Consequently, the school is unable to provide the support that staff need to develop their expertise.

Governors and the NEC board understand that the school needs to improve. They have recently engaged with some external support to strengthen the leadership and management of the school and have reviewed the strategic direction needed. However, this has not yet had the necessary impact on achievement and attitudes to learning. As a result, pupils are not receiving the education they need to achieve their full potential.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school has not been rigorous enough in its appraisal of the curriculum, the provision for pupils with SEND, or the standards of behaviour and achievement. Changes are not being made quickly enough to bring about the rapid improvements needed. School leaders, governors, the local authority and the NEC board need to work as a collective body to ensure that there is a well-considered, structured approach to addressing these inadequacies.
- Lessons do not follow the intended curriculum. Staff do not revisit prior learning, or support pupils to build on what they know and can do. As a result, pupils are unable to remember or use much of what they are taught. The school should ensure that staff, including temporary staff, follow the curriculum as intended, identify and address gaps in learning and support pupils to build on from their current knowledge and understanding.
- The school does not have sufficient staff capacity and expertise to provide leadership across the full range of subjects taught. As such, there is limited oversight of the curriculum and its impact on pupil achievement, and staff do not receive the support needed to improve their practice. The school should ensure that it builds the capacity to develop subject leadership as part of its work to improve the quality of education offered.
- The early years curriculum, including phonics, is not implemented well. Teachers' subject knowledge is weak and activities during continuous provision lack a clear learning focus. The school should ensure that staff are provided with the support needed to deliver the curriculum effectively, including with phonics, so that children are well prepared for Year 1.
- The school has not considered carefully enough how to support pupils with SEND, so that they can access the curriculum and are fully included in lessons. Staff do not have sufficient knowledge to be able to assist these pupils as well as they should. The school should support all staff to make the adaptations needed for pupils with SEND, so that they access the full curriculum and are successful in their learning.
- As a result of weaknesses in the school's quality of education, low-level disruption in lessons occurs too frequently. This creates a further barrier to pupils succeeding. The school should ensure that expectations from staff are heightened.
- The school may not appoint early career teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the definition of children in need of help and protection; pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's pupil premium funding (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	136440
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10382301
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	171
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Co-Chairs of governing body	Elizabeth Walsh-Iheoma David Colledge
Headteacher	Mary Collette Woodburn
Website	www.harperbellsdaschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	16 and 17 July 2019 under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Harper Bell Seventh-day Adventist School is a voluntary aided school operated by the North England Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (NEC).
- The school's most recent section 48 inspection took place in July 2022. The next inspection is due by 2030.
- The headteacher was not in school during the inspection. At the time of the inspection, an education consultant was supporting the deputy headteacher in leading and managing the school.
- There has been a high turnover of staff since the previous inspection.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development;

and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2025, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors met with the deputy headteacher, an independent education consultant commissioned by the school and the school's special educational needs coordinator. They also met with members of the governing body, including the co-chairs of governors, and a representative from the North England Conference (NEC). They also spoke to two representatives from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in art, modern foreign languages and science and looked at pupils' work.
- The inspectors considered a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan.
- Inspectors looked at records of attendance and behaviour. They observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at breaktimes, and talked to them informally about behaviour, bullying and welfare.
- The inspectors talked to parents at the end of the school day. They also reviewed the small number of responses to Ofsted's Parent Text and responses to the staff survey. The inspectors gathered the views of staff and pupils on site through discussion.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: checked the school's single central record; spoke to senior leaders about safeguarding procedures; took account of the views of staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

Inspection team

Heather Simpson, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Diana Pearce

Ofsted Inspector

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 <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

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 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2025