

Stowlawn Primary School

Green Park Avenue, Stowlawn, Bilston, WV14 6EH

Inspection dates 15–16 January 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils achieve well because teaching is typically good and some is outstanding.
- Year 6 test results have risen and pupils make good progress across the school from very low starting points.
- All staff work together well to give good support to pupils, personally, and in their learning.
- Pupils who find learning difficult receive well-targeted support so they make good progress and achieve well.
- Pupils are polite and behaviour in lessons and around school is good.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and are enthusiastic about their lessons.
- The school's leaders have successfully improved teaching and learning, particularly in mathematics, since the last inspection.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher work together well. Together with all staff they form a strong team with the drive and skills to make the school even better.
- Governance is good because the governing body has a good grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses and holds it accountable for pupils' achievement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils' progress in writing, particularly in Key Stage 1, is not consistently good because they are not always given enough opportunities to practise their writing in different lessons or check the spelling of words.
- Work is sometimes too easy for more-able pupils.
- Pupils are not always given opportunities to follow up teachers' marking to improve their work.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out with one day’s notice.
- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classes. They visited 17 lessons, one of which was observed jointly with the headteacher. Playtimes and lunchtimes were also observed.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, other staff, pupils, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- The views expressed in the 19 questionnaires completed by staff were taken into account.
- Inspectors took account of 3 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and 85 responses to the school’s own survey of the views of parents. Inspectors also sought the views of parents through informal discussions at the start of the school day.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of documents, including: the school’s improvement plan and self-evaluation; information on pupils’ progress and attainment; school policies; records relating to safeguarding, attendance and behaviour; teachers’ plans and work in pupils’ books.

Inspection team

Helen Morrison, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Faheem Chishti

Additional Inspector

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Full report

Information about this school

- Stowlawn is an average-sized primary school.
- It is located in accommodation which is shared by a special school.
- The proportions of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who are supported at school action is above average across the school. It is high in Years 5 and 6 where around a third of the pupils are supported at school action, the majority of whom have moderate learning difficulties. The proportion of pupils at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is average, and a few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding for those eligible for free school meals, in local authority care, or with a parent in the armed services) is much higher than average.
- The school meets the government's floor standards – the minimum standards set for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Children attend the Nursery class in the mornings only.
- On one afternoon each week the school operates 'Little Learners' sessions for children preparing to join the Nursery class.
- The special school onsite is reported upon separately.
- The school does not provide alternative provision offsite.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment and improve progress in writing, particularly in Key Stage 1, by:
 - sharing outstanding ways of teaching so all teachers have consistently high expectations of what pupils can achieve and the speed at which they can progress
 - providing pupils with more opportunities to practise their writing skills in other subjects
 - making sure that pupils across the school learn how to check their spelling is accurate.
- Improve teaching so that more is outstanding, and speed up even more the progress pupils make, by:
 - always giving the more-able pupils harder work so that they reach the high standards of which they are capable in every lesson
 - making sure pupils are given enough time to act on the good advice they are given by teachers so they can improve their work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils' achievement has improved since the last inspection as a result of leaders' strong and successful focus on improving teaching. However, although pupils make good progress in writing in Key Stage 2, pupils in Key Stage 1 make slower progress. This is because pupils are not regularly given enough opportunities to use their writing skills in other subjects and, although pupils learn the sounds letters make, they are not taught spelling skills well enough.
- Children enter the Nursery with knowledge, understanding and skills that are well below those typical for their age. They settle quickly and make good progress because they learn to follow clear routines and enjoy exciting activities that capture their interest.
- Adults in the Early Years Foundation Stage use every opportunity to extend children's speaking and listening skills by showing children how to speak in complete sentences and use accurate vocabulary. For example, Nursery children talked about their 'forest walk' and were helped to name the things they saw. However, children enter Year 1 with skills and abilities that are lower than those expected for their age.
- Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 1, except in writing where improvement is required. Progress in reading has improved since the last inspection and is good. A regular programme for the teaching of the sounds letters make ensures that pupils gain essential reading skills quickly. Progress in mathematics is, generally, good and work in pupils' books shows they have begun to make faster progress as a result of the introduction of a daily programme for the teaching of mathematical skills.
- Progress in Key Stage 2 is good. Attainment at the end of Year 6 has improved and is now average in both English and mathematics. However, attainment in writing is still behind that in reading because more-able pupils are not given hard enough work to do. Although pupils know the sounds letters make they do not always check their spelling to make sure it is accurate.
- Pupils eligible for the pupil premium are given extra teaching individually or in small groups and, consequently, make good progress with the extra help. Although the pupils eligible for free school meals do not attain as well as pupils in other schools who do not receive the extra funding, the gap between their performance and that of other pupils is closing, and they do reach the same standards as similar pupils across the country.
- Extra help for pupils for whom English is an additional language and those who are disabled or have special educational needs is well directed. Results and observation of learning during the inspection show these pupils make good progress because they are very well supported by skilled and experienced teaching assistants. For example, pupils receive individual tuition to make sure they are given work well matched to their understanding and skills.

The quality of teaching is good

- Since the last inspection teaching has improved and is now at least good, and some is outstanding. Lessons are carefully planned and are usually pitched at the right level for the range of pupils' abilities. Consequently, all pupils make good gains in their knowledge and understanding. However, teachers' expectations of what more-able pupils can achieve are not always high enough. Consequently, the more able sometimes find work too easy in some lessons and, occasionally, they do not make as much progress as they should.

- Most parents think their children are taught well and pupils agree that teachers make learning fun. Inspection evidence supports these views.
- Pupils' work is regularly marked. Although teachers often identify the next steps pupils should take in their learning, sometimes learners are not given enough time to act on the advice they are given or try out the additional questions teachers pose. As a result, pupils do not always make as much progress as they should.
- Pupils' communication, literacy and numeracy skills are well promoted through the school, although in Key Stage 1, teachers sometimes do not give pupils enough opportunity to practise writing skills across different subjects. However, much teaching of literacy is very helpful to pupils' learning. For example, in a Year 3 lesson, adults' skilful questioning successfully extended pupils' vocabulary as they learned to use adverbs to improve their writing. Even here, pupils were not given opportunities to check their spelling was accurate, nor was some of the work hard enough for the more able.
- Teachers' classroom management and relationships with their pupils are excellent. Teachers are skilled, enthusiastic and encouraging, so pupils are confident to contribute their ideas. Pupils are encouraged to persevere with tasks, help one another, and listen to different viewpoints. These helpful learning situations contribute effectively to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Effective use is made of a variety of objects, materials and real-life experiences to stimulate pupils' curiosity and creativity. For example, pupils in Year 1 were enthralled to receive a letter from 'the giant' and enthusiastically made 'lost' posters and searched for his missing golden eggs. Pupils in Year 5 enjoyed searching a data base, filtering information in order to identify 'suspects' who had been seen at crime scenes.
- Teaching assistants are skilled and work in close partnership with class teachers. Work is carefully matched to the individual learning needs of pupils with disabilities and those with special educational needs. Pupils for whom English is an additional language also receive help based on a careful analysis of what they need to learn. Arrangements are successful because staff commitment and care are well directed to help these pupils make good progress.
- The pupil premium funding is used well to give additional teaching to particular pupils either individually or in small groups. Carefully planned teaching based on detailed analysis of the learning difficulties these pupils face ensures they are well supported and make good progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Parents who responded to the online questionnaire and responses given to the school's own questionnaire show they hold positive views about the behaviour and safety of pupils. Inspection findings support these views.
 - Staff manage pupils' behaviour well in and out of classrooms. Consequently, pupils behave well in lessons and around school.
 - Pupils are polite to visitors and courteous to each other and to adults. The school's records show that behaviour seen during the inspection is typical of that found every day. Pupils enjoy school and this, together with the school's strong action to reduce absence, has led to a significant
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improvement in attendance, and most pupils attend school regularly.

- Pupils have a good understanding of different types of bullying, such as persistent name-calling, relating to gender, race, disability or special educational needs, and cyber-bullying. They say bullying is rare and any instances are dealt with well, so they feel safe in school.
- The school ensures all pupils are included in its activities and has suitable policies and procedures for tackling discrimination should it arise. The school's records of the very few instances of racist name-calling show it takes firm action to deal with it.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to be safe and look after themselves out of school, particularly with regard to road safety, gang crime and when using the internet.
- Concern for pupils' welfare is a strength of the school. Sensitive support is provided for pupils whose family circumstances make them vulnerable. The school provides high levels of care and support for pupils with social and emotional difficulties so they are able to learn alongside other pupils.
- Children who attend 'Little Learners' enjoy stimulating and interesting activities.

The leadership and management are good

- Senior leaders and governors work together well and have a good understanding of the needs of the community. All staff share a determination to move the school forward, and this demonstrates the school's strong capacity for more improvement.
 - School self-evaluation is rigorous and accurate. Comprehensive analysis of information on pupils' attainment is used as the basis for school improvement planning. This, together with effective local authority support, has resulted in direct action which has improved teaching and raised standards.
 - Senior staff check the quality of teaching thoroughly and follow up any weaknesses. Teachers' individual targets which are set to improve their practice, and decisions made about increases in their salaries, are linked carefully to the quality of their teaching and evidence of the progress made by pupils in their classes. As a result, teachers are held accountable for pupils' achievement.
 - Training is carefully linked to the school's priorities and newly qualified teachers are supported well so they gain confidence and develop their skills. However, the outstanding teaching found in the school is not always shared with other teachers as well as it should be. Consequently, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not always high enough.
 - Work in the arts is a strength of the school and sculptures produced by pupils working with professional artists are featured in the building. Pupils receive specialist music tuition, such as that seen in an outstanding Year 6 lesson, where pupils enjoyed creating music using drums and glockenspiels. Close links with the special school enable pupils to benefit from its specialist facilities, for example, in swimming and the use of the soft-play room.
 - Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. The school provides pupils with a clear moral and social framework and promotes their understanding of cultural
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diversity well through assemblies, charity work and visits to a range of places of worship.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors use their skills, knowledge and experience to hold senior leaders to account for the quality of teaching and pupils' progress and have an accurate understanding of these aspects. Governors undertake training to enhance the skills relevant to their responsibilities. They accurately analyse a wealth of data about the school's performance to inform themselves of pupils' standards and progress achieved. They are very thorough in ensuring that promotion up the salary scale is justified by staff performance and results. Members of the governing body consider carefully how best to use the pupil premium funding. They check regularly that use of this extra spending is justified by the results arising from the work of the additional staff employed with this money, and that the pupils are making the progress intended.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	104317
Local authority	Wolverhampton
Inspection number	400704

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	226
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Marie Samuels
Headteacher	Susan Vaughan
Date of previous school inspection	30 June 2010
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