

Highfield Junior and Infant School

Highfield Road, Saltley, Birmingham, B8 3QF

Inspection dates 05–06 June 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Teaching is not yet good enough to make sure that pupils in each class achieve equally well. Progress is more variable in Years 3 to 6 than in earlier year groups.
- Not all teaching engages pupils actively or offers appropriate challenge for pupils at different levels of attainment.
- Pupils do not continue to improve their spoken English enough as they get older. Many of them speak in incomplete sentences with incorrect grammar.
- The pupils' difficulties with spoken English hamper their progress in mathematics because they cannot explain clearly to themselves and others how they solve problems.
- Older pupils do not make enough effort to find out the meaning of new words when they are reading. As a result, they do not always understand what they read.

The school has the following strengths

- The large majority of pupils reach the standards expected for 11-year olds in English and mathematics by the time they leave the school.
- Standards in writing have improved considerably since the previous inspection and are now as good as in reading.
- Relationships are good throughout the school. Pupils feel very safe in school and behave well.
- Most parents are very supportive of the school and say that their children are safe and well looked after.
- The headteacher sets high expectations for all staff and supports them to do the best job they can. As a result, teaching and achievement are strongly improving and inadequate teaching has been eliminated.
- The leadership team know what is needed to make the school good and are progressing well towards this target.
- Governors know the school well. They challenge the headteacher to demonstrate that the school is improving and that staff merit pay increments.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 29 lessons. They saw all of the teachers and many of the teaching assistants working with pupils. They also observed pupils' behaviour at playtimes and lunchtimes, talked to them about their views and looked at samples of their work.
- Discussions were held with governors, the headteacher, senior leaders, teachers and teaching assistants, lunchtime supervisors and a representative of the local education authority.
- In addition to observing the school's work, the inspectors looked at the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning, information about pupils' attainment and progress and documents relating to their safety and behaviour.
- The inspectors took into account the views expressed in the 16 completed online Parent View questionnaires and the school's own questionnaire that had 316 returns. They also spoke with a number of parents after school.
- Forty-six staff questionnaire returns were also taken into account.

Inspection team

Peter Kerr, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jenny Edginton

Additional Inspector

Suha Ahmad

Additional Inspector

Edgar Hastings

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Highfields is a very large primary school serving an inner-city area.
- Nearly all pupils are from minority ethnic groups, mostly of Pakistani heritage. Most pupils speak English as an additional language and many are at the early stages of learning to speak English when they start at the school.
- Six out of 10 pupils are known to be eligible for the pupil premium (which provides additional funding for children in local authority care, pupils with a parent in the armed forces and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals). This is a very high proportion of eligible pupils compared to most primary schools.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who are supported through school action is broadly average. A higher-than-average proportion of pupils are supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs. Most of these pupils have learning difficulties or speech, language and communication needs. Most of the statements of special educational needs are for physical disabilities.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- An independently managed nursery unit operates on the school site.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- To improve teaching so that it is either good or outstanding in all parts of the school, make sure that all teachers:
 - make sure that the quality of teaching is as good in Years 3 to 6 as it is in Years 1 and 2 so that pupils make consistently good progress throughout the school
 - plan and adjust work in lessons so that it is at the right level for all pupils
 - spend minimum time explaining things to large groups and maximum time supporting pupils as they work
 - always give pupils time and support to fully explain their thinking in mathematics lessons.
- To raise standards in spoken English and reading, make sure that staff:
 - correct errors in spoken English and help pupils to speak clearly and in full sentences
 - always question pupils about the meaning of words when they hear them read
 - help pupils to develop the habit of finding out the meaning of new words
 - keep records of how well pupils' spoken English is improving.
- To raise standards in mathematics further, make sure that all staff:
 - give pupils time and support in lessons to fully explain how they get their answers to sums
 - observe and listen to pupils carefully as they work and adjust tasks as needed to help correct misunderstandings or add more challenge.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Pupils do not keep improving their spoken English fast enough in Years 3 to 6 to help them learn as well as they can in all subjects. In mathematics, pupils sometimes struggle to explain their thinking clearly because of weaknesses in their spoken English.
- Reading is held back for some pupils because they are not in the habit of looking up words as they read. As a result, even the most-able readers sometimes do not know the meaning of key words in the texts they are reading.
- Progress in mathematics is sometimes hampered because pupils cannot fully explain how they get the answers to sums. This makes it harder for them to master the skills they are learning so that they can use them later on to solve harder problems.
- Children join the Reception classes with skills and abilities below those typical for their age. They make good progress, but their attainment is still below average at the end of Reception.
- Progress is currently good in Years 1 and 2. Attainment is only slightly below average by the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. Progress is good in Year 2 because most lessons are pitched at the right level to help pupils improve their English as well as develop their skills in different subjects.
- Pupils have had good support to improve their writing in recent years. There is little difference across their literacy skills and much improvement in writing, especially in Key Stage 1.
- Following significant improvements to provision for information and communication technology, pupils are now making good progress in this subject. They use computers confidently in a variety of ways, including for research in subjects, such as in science and history, and to support their learning in mathematics and art.
- Learning is good in some guided reading sessions because staff engage the pupils in discussion about what they are reading, check their understanding and help the pupils to improve. When there is less discussion, learning slows, particularly for pupils for whom English is an additional language, who sometimes lack enough support to make sure they understand new words.
- Disabled pupils learn well because individual provision is made for them to take a full part in lessons when they are in school and for them to catch up on any work missed due to hospital appointments. Other pupils who have special educational needs in learning and those with speech, language and communication needs learn well in small groups because work is pitched at just the right level for them. This helps them to get the most from lessons when they return to mainstream classes.
- The gap in attainment between pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium and other pupils is closing and eligible pupils are now only about one term behind, on average, by the age of 11, compared to more than two terms behind for the same pupils at the age of 7. The gap narrowed most significantly in reading in Years 3 to 6 because of a special initiative to enhance these pupils' reading skills. The gaps in attainment in writing and mathematics were less than in reading at the age of 7 but narrowed more slowly leaving a similar gap in all three skills.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching is mostly good in Reception, Year 2, Year 4 and Year 6, with only a small proportion of lessons requiring improvement. In other year groups, there is less good teaching and more requiring improvement. This slows down progress, particularly in Key Stage 2.
- In mathematics lessons, teachers do not always support pupils enough to fully explain their own methods. This sometimes leads to pupils being able to get sums right without knowing why and limits their mathematical development.
- Some teachers continually help pupils to improve their spoken English by providing good examples and correcting errors. Even when practice is helpful, however, opportunities are often missed to help the pupils to say more and improve their skills more quickly.
- Where practice is good, teachers engage the pupils from the start through interesting activities and set tasks that are pitched at the right level for all ability groups. Where teaching is less effective, teachers spend too long explaining things to large groups and work is not pitched at the right level for some pupils.
- Good examples were seen of teachers responding to what they had seen and heard as pupils worked by changing the tasks to correct misunderstandings or add more challenge. In some lessons, teachers overlook opportunities to do this.
- The quality of teachers' marking in English and mathematics is much improved. Teachers in all classes give pupils suggestions for improvement and give them time to respond, which they enjoy doing. This approach has more impact in some classes than in others because of the quality of the teachers' comments.
- Teachers keep good records of pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics and use these to plan lessons and activities to build on pupils' existing knowledge and skills. They do not keep such a close track of pupils' progress in spoken English, so progress in this area is less well supported by planning how to enhance pupils' skills.
- Good teaching of letters and the sounds that they make (phonics) in Reception and Years 1 and 2 ensure that pupils have a good grounding in the basic skills of reading and spelling. Pupils use these skills to read new words, but they are not always prompted enough to find out the meaning of new words for themselves – especially in Years 3 to 6.
- Teaching is good in the lessons in which disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs receive tuition outside the classroom. Teachers and teaching assistants know the pupils' needs well and make sure that lessons continually build on what the pupils have previously learned.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils generally behave well. They like school and are friendly and confident with each other and with adults. They have good attitudes to learning and only become restless in class when lessons do not engage their attention. Pupils say that behaviour rarely disrupts lessons and inspectors agree with them.

- Relationships between pupils are good. Older pupils help younger ones. For example Year 4 pupils read with Reception children once a week. Both groups enjoy and benefit from this arrangement which has a very warm family feel about it.
- Pupils feel safe in school. They understand what bullying is and the different forms it can take. They know how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet. They say that bullying rarely occurs in school but that when it does the staff deal with it quickly and effectively.
- Attendance is average, having steadily improved. Persistent absences are reducing because of the efforts made by the school. Pupils are always punctual for lessons once in school, but a small minority do not arrive at school on time in the morning. The school continues to try to improve punctuality by persuading parents of the importance of their children attending regularly.
- Nearly all the parents responding to the school's questionnaire agreed that behaviour is good in the school and inspectors agree with them. A minority of the very few parents and carers who used Parent View thought that the school did not deal effectively with bullying. The inspection found that procedures for reporting and dealing with bullying are robust and effective.
- Permanent exclusion from the school is rare. Records show that the school does all it can to keep pupils at school, but ultimately it will exclude when other pupils are put at risk.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has brought about many improvements to the school and has made sure that the school has successfully addressed the issues raised at the previous inspection. The leadership team, comprised of some long-standing and some recently appointed staff, all make a good contribution to school improvement. Consequently, pupils are achieving more and teaching has improved. The improvements already gained indicate strong capacity for the school to go further forward.
 - Senior leaders work closely with all staff to help them improve their performance and make sure that everyone is accountable for their contribution to the pupils' progress. They check the quality of teaching regularly and insist on improvements being made where necessary. As a result, inadequate teaching has been eliminated and the proportion of good and better teaching is steadily increasing.
 - Since the previous inspection, the headteacher and senior leaders have brought cohesion to the planning of the curriculum. Topics often start with a visit or other first-hand experience. This motivates pupils to produce good work in many subjects. For example a range of work on dinosaurs in Year 2 included computer-generated images, finely detailed art work, historical research and symmetrical drawings
 - Provision for information and communication technology is much improved. The school is now well equipped with computers and pupils use technology competently for a range of purposes.
 - Detailed checks are made to make sure that the pupil premium is helping those pupils for whom it is intended. The overall gap between the attainment of eligible pupils and others in the school is narrowing and recent support for individuals, through a reading initiative funded by the pupil premium, has significantly narrowed the gap in reading attainment for these pupils.
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- Assemblies in different parts of the school help the pupils to feel part of a community and encourage them to reflect on personal values. The school ensures that pupils learn about all religions and older pupils could explain connections between them, for example the prophets that Islam and Christianity both revere.
 - The local authority has not had much involvement with the school since the previous inspection. Instead, help has been sought from independent agencies to help improve systems for checking the school's performance. However, a local authority adviser is now working closely with the school on its action plan for improvement.
 - Workshops and other organised events for parents are well attended, but there are few parent volunteers in the school. A small minority of parents feel that their views are not taken into account. Their concerns have been brought to the attention of the headteacher and governors.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors know what the quality of teaching is and what the school is doing to tackle any underperformance. They are also well informed about pupils' overall attainment and progress and how this compares with other schools nationally. They know what the pupil premium is being spent on and of the checks that are made on how effective it has been. Governors are involved in setting targets for the headteacher and are kept informed of how the performance and pay scales of other staff are managed. Governors make sure safeguarding arrangements meet all requirements. They keep themselves up to date with regular training, so that they can hold the school to account for its performance.
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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	103215
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	400597

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	835
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rosemary Tedds
Headteacher	Ruby Kundi
Date of previous school inspection	18 Nov 2009
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