

Bridgtown Primary School

North Street, Bridgtown, Cannock, WS11 0AZ

Inspection dates 9–10 July 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	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

- The quality of teaching is improving rapidly but not enough is consistently good or outstanding to enable pupils to make good progress in every class.
- Achievement in writing requires improvement, particularly that of boys, because it is not yet good. This is because the quality of teaching over time has been inconsistent. Boys do not find some of the writing activities presented to them interesting or motivating.
- Some teachers plan lessons which do not focus sharply enough on the needs of all pupils, particularly the most able learners.
- Teachers do not always make best use of the information the school has about pupils' progress to plan challenging enough work.
- Opportunities for pupils to question, invent, discover and work things out for themselves are too few.
- In planning for different subjects, not enough consideration is given to promoting pupils' enjoyment through stimulating, creative and purposeful activities.

The school has the following strengths

- The leadership team and the governing body have a common purpose in putting pupils and their achievement first. Moving teaching to good in order to raise standards is their number one priority. They check the quality of teaching and how well pupils are learning rigorously and set high expectations for improvement.
- An extensive range of special programmes and packages is provided for pupils who are most at risk of underachievement, so they make as much progress as others.
- Behaviour in the school is much better than it used to be, and is now good.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 14 lessons or part of lessons taught by 11 different teachers. Four of these lessons were seen jointly with the headteacher.
- Both inspectors carried out walks around the school to look at aspects of its work.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils and talked to other pupils in lessons, in the playground and as they moved through the school.
- Inspectors looked at books during lessons and carried out more detailed work scrutinies in classrooms.
- Inspectors heard pupils read in Key Stage 1 and talked to other pupils about their reading.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, other school staff and four members of the governing body. A telephone conversation was held with the school's improvement adviser from the local authority.
- The inspection team reviewed a wide range of school documentation and data relating to teaching and learning, behaviour and safeguarding, and leadership and management.
- There were no responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). Inspectors spoke informally to a number of parents as they brought their children to school at the start of the day.

Inspection team

Paul Weston, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Michael Onyon

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Information about this school

- Bridgtown is smaller than the average-sized primary school. The number of pupils has reduced since the last inspection.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs who are supported at school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is higher than the national average. These pupils' needs relate mainly to speech, language and communication and behaviour, emotional and social difficulties.
- Nearly all pupils (94%) are White British. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and in the early stages of learning English is lower than that found nationally.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (extra funding provided from the government for certain groups) has risen over the past three years and is higher than that found nationally.
- In 2012 the school did not meet government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching so that pupils make consistently good progress, particularly more-able pupils and boys in writing, by making sure that teachers:
 - use progress information to plan challenging work at the right level for every pupil
 - plan interesting and motivating tasks that actively involve all pupils in their learning
 - provide more opportunities for pupils to write at length
 - make full use of every opportunity to develop pupils' vocabulary and spoken language skills
 - question pupils carefully throughout lessons to check their understanding, and use the results to adjust teaching where needed.
- Build on the school's initial work to develop a rich and dynamic curriculum that:
 - enables pupils to build their skills systematically across the full range of subjects
 - introduces pupils to a wider range of skills and approaches to learning
 - increases pupils' enjoyment in learning through stimulating, purposeful activities.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement varies too much between different classes, subjects and year groups. While pupils' progress over time has improved in reading and mathematics it remains uneven in writing, ranging from good to requiring improvement.
- Boys do less well than girls in writing. The quality and volume of their work are below those expected because some themes do not inspire them. Weaknesses in pupils' presentation, punctuation and spelling impede their progress in writing. Pupils are also provided with insufficient opportunities to write at length.
- Pupils are not always developing speaking skills well enough. Although they are shown how to say difficult words correctly, sometimes they are not given chance to practise saying the words for themselves. Pupils are learning a wider range of interesting words to use in their writing as a result of the school's structured, systematic approach. In some classes they apply this more varied vocabulary to their work but in others they do not have enough opportunity to do so.
- Children join the Nursery with skills and knowledge that are well below those expected for their age. Other children join the school in the Reception class with skills that are generally below those expected for their age group. Children settle in well and make good progress. They quickly develop their social skills. Children listen well and cooperate with each other.
- Pupils in Years 1 and 2 make good progress in their reading and mathematics. Standards in reading, writing and mathematics are now average at the end of Key Stage 1 although few pupils attain the higher National Curriculum levels. Most pupils use their knowledge of the sounds that letters make (phonics) to spell or read new words. The school has worked hard to encourage pupils to read more. Pupils say they enjoy reading. Strategies such as the 'Bug Club' ensure that older pupils are reading more at home than before.
- The unvalidated Year 6 tests show that standards at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2013 are now at the expected level in reading, writing and mathematics. More pupils are exceeding nationally expected levels, but the proportion remains below average. Most pupils have made expected progress from their starting points in Year 2 but this does not tell the full story. Rapid improvement made by different groups of pupils this year has closed the gaps caused by previous inadequate teaching.
- The progress made by disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and minority ethnic pupils mirrors that of their classmates. Those who receive support from the extra government funding were a long way behind other pupils in the school in reading, writing and mathematics. The gap is now beginning to close because the school has invested wisely in staffing to provide extra support. However, they are still about a year behind other pupils in reading, writing and mathematics.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Although teaching has many strengths, not enough is consistently good or better to enable pupils, especially the most able, to make as much progress as they could. This is because teachers do not routinely use information about what pupils can do to plan lessons and pitch the work at the right levels for all pupils.

- Time is wasted in some lessons. Sometimes teachers do not manage the change from one activity to another efficiently so pupils do not settle quickly to their work. Pupils especially like it when they work in groups. Some teachers do not have high enough expectations for what pupils can achieve, and accept work that is not completed or presented to the required standard.
- In some lessons teachers do not make frequent checks on pupils' progress and so do not make sure tasks are right for them. Where teaching is good, but not outstanding, learning is adjusted immediately when pupils show that they have understood and are ready to move on. Expectations for pupils to work hard are high and a range of lively and interesting activities captures their interest. Even so, the most able work through the same steps as others when they are capable of striding ahead.
- The marking of pupils' work is not always as helpful as it could be in some classes. Teachers sometimes write questions for pupils but these are not always answered by the pupil or checked by the teacher. The most effective marking, for example in Year 6 literacy books, provides pupils with clear guidance about how to improve future pieces of work. This helps these pupils make rapid progress.
- Teaching assistants play a valuable part in promoting pupils' learning. They use questions to check on pupils' learning. They adjust activities to help pupils understand better or to move on to new learning when ready. In some lessons, pupils' progress slows down because teachers do not ask the right questions to deepen their understanding or to challenge them.
- Teachers in the Early Years Foundation Stage provide a wide range of interesting activities that make learning fun. There is a good balance between adult-led and child-selected activities. When children chose activities for themselves there is usually an adult on hand to talk to about what they are doing or to ask questions. This helps them to learn well.
- A few teachers are experimenting with more daring teaching that makes learning enjoyable, but this is not yet established. The Year 6 class had great fun making bread linked to their visit to Boscobel House. They developed their skills of halving the recipe, measuring and mixing ingredients to make a Tudor loaf. A Year 5 class had great enjoyment making potions by combining carefully measured and weighed ingredients such as swamp water, worms and scorpion tongues to exorcise the ghost of Thomas Kempe.
- Teachers are sensitive to pupils' personal needs and so relationships are strong. Pupils feel able to learn and enjoy being challenged. Pupils say that teaching has improved over the last year. They now feel that they are taught well although they say the work they are given is usually about right, but this is not always the case. Parents and carers, too, say that teaching has improved.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils have good attitudes to their learning. They respond well in lessons and show respect for each other and adults. In lessons, most pupils are good listeners and willing learners. They commented that they prefer it when the teacher sets 'challenging work'.
- The school records incidents of unacceptable behaviour methodically and uses the information to improve behaviour. For example, 'assertive mentoring' and 'positive play' systems have been successfully introduced. Consistent application of these policies by all staff has helped reduce instances of unacceptable behaviour considerably.

- Pupils have a very good understanding of different types of bullying, such as racist, cyber and physical bullying. They understand the impact bullying has on individuals. They say there is some bullying in school, but not as much now as there was previously. They say that staff deal with any bullying incidents well.
- The school ensures that pupils learn how to keep themselves safe in a wide variety of situations. Pupils are able to explain how activities such as 'bikeability' and awareness of 'stranger danger' help keep them safe. They recognise potential dangers and who to turn to if they should feel anxious or upset.
- Pupils enjoy taking responsibility. The school council contributes to decisions about how to improve the school, such as organising signs and benches to help promote a calm and friendly environment in the school playground.
- Attendance, which was a prime area for improvement in the last inspection, has improved significantly. Parents and carers have been helped to understand that regular attendance leads to children's better achievement.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and her deputy are clearly focused on improving the quality of teaching and raising standards. Since the previous inspection, they have forged a strong and effective team who all understand the school's strengths and weaknesses well. The staff share their high aspirations for improving the quality of teaching and learning.
- Plans for improvement focus very strongly on improving outcomes for the pupils through better teaching. They outline what is to be done and who is responsible for ensuring each action takes place. Current improvement plans are short term and have served their purpose. The school's leaders are in the early stages of developing a longer-term view of its priorities and future direction, particularly in terms of developing the curriculum to consolidate and build on pupils' key skills and fire their enthusiasm.
- Many aspects of the school have improved considerably since the last inspection. For example, the leaders responsible for English and mathematics, special educational needs and the Early Years Foundation Stage provide good leadership and have helped drive up standards.
- Leaders are quickly improving the quality of teaching, with teachers receiving support and guidance tailored to their individual needs. Leaders and managers do not shy away from tough decisions. Inadequate teaching has been eradicated. This has led to acceleration in the progress pupils make and a marked rise in the standards pupils achieve. Pupils' progress in reading is improving particularly quickly as a result of the school's focus on the teaching of letters and the sounds they make.
- Leaders seek to ensure everyone has an equal chance to succeed. They use assessment information to identify pupils who are not doing as well as they should. Additional support is then provided to help them catch up, although this has been faster in reading and mathematics than in writing. Leaders know this and are planning to provide more effective support in writing.
- Parents and carers are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and feel it is well led. Those spoken to recognised and valued the improvements in teaching and learning. One parent said, 'My child has come on in leaps and bounds in the past few months.' Parents and carers regularly attend literacy and numeracy workshops where teachers explain how children are taught.

- Staff plan a range of experiences to interest pupils. Pupils say that they like the visitors and visits to places of interest planned into topics. Pupils' personal skills are promoted well. This encourages good behaviour and contributes well to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

- The local authority knows this school well. It has provided a good range of support for the school since the previous inspection. Regular 'Core Group' meetings have held the school's leaders to account. In addition, a 'local leader of education' has provided valuable support and guidance for the school's leaders.

- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body provides effective support and challenge to the school. The governors are well informed about the school's current priorities, the quality of teaching and the way the headteacher sets targets for teachers. They are routinely involved in reviewing the progress pupils make and are quick to question leaders if they feel it is not as it should be. Governors are aware of where teaching is strong and where it requires improvement. They understand how the performance of staff, including the headteacher, links to increases in salary. They hold the school to account for efficient financial management, including the spending of pupil premium funding. Governors ensure they carry out statutory responsibilities effectively. All national requirements for securing pupils' safety and well-being are met diligently.

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	124067
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	420578

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	201
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mike Mellor
Headteacher	Joanne Raybould
Date of previous school inspection	25 January 2012
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