

Ladypool Primary School

Stratford Road, Sparkbrook, Birmingham, B11 1QT

Inspection dates 14–15 January 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Constant changes of leadership and a high turnover of staff have slowed improvement since the previous inspection.
- Too few pupils make the good progress needed to raise standards in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Phonics skills (sounds and the letters that make them) have not been taught systematically in the past. Therefore, there are also weaknesses in reading.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics is limited by under-developed number skills and a lack of opportunity to solve mathematical problems.
- Pupils' grammar, punctuation and spelling skills are weak.
- Teachers do not make enough use of information about pupils' attainment and progress when planning their lessons. Their marking does not often enough show pupils how to improve.
- Behaviour requires improvement. Pupils sometimes doodle or chat socially instead of getting on with their tasks.
- Some of the staff responsible for different aspects of leadership are new to their posts and have not yet got to grips fully with their roles.

The school has the following strengths

- Improvements in teaching and the faster progress pupils are now making are the direct result of actions taken by the headteacher, senior staff and governors.
- Pupils behave well as they move around the school. They are polite and courteous to adults and each other.
- New, robust assessment systems are ensuring pupils' progress is measured accurately and teachers are made accountable for how well their pupils are doing.
- Governors understand data and are now constantly checking that what the school does is increasing the rate of pupils' progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 35 lessons. These included two that were observed jointly with the headteacher. They also observed play and lunchtimes, and visited the breakfast club.
- Discussions were held with pupils, governors, staff, and a representative of the local authority.
- There were too few responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, to be analysed but inspectors took account of the responses to the school’s own parent questionnaires and the views expressed by parents in informal discussions at the start of the school day.
- The team also took account of the 37 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- A wide range of documents was scrutinised, including information about pupils’ progress and attendance, the school improvement plan, the school’s self-evaluation document and records and policies about safeguarding.
- Inspectors also examined the work in pupils’ books, sampled sessions where pupils were learning phonics, and listened to pupils in different year groups read.

Inspection team

| | |
|----------------------------|----------------------|
| Doris Bell, Lead inspector | Additional Inspector |
| Margaret Dutton | Additional Inspector |
| Michael Appleby | Additional Inspector |

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Almost all pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and almost all speak English as an additional language. These proportions are therefore well above average.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives additional funding, known as the pupil premium, is well above average. This funding is, for example, for children in local authority care and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who are supported through school action is average, as is the proportion supported at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs.
- The school has its own breakfast club.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has experienced a great deal of turbulence in staffing, including at leadership level, with periods of temporary leadership, and high staff absence.
- The present headteacher took up her post in September 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Establish consistently good or better teaching throughout the school by raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can do and:
 - making sure teachers use assessment information well to plan work at the right level for different groups of pupils
 - improving teachers' marking so that it shows pupils what they need to do to improve their work
 - making learning more exciting for pupils and helping teachers to manage pupils' behaviour equally well in all lessons so that learning is not interrupted.
- Raise achievement in reading, writing and mathematics by:
 - in reading, improving the teaching of phonics up to Year 2 and providing relevant support to pupils in Years 3 to 6 who missed out on phonics teaching in earlier year groups
 - in writing, improving pupils' grammar, spelling and punctuation skills, including when they write in different subjects
 - in mathematics, sharpening pupils' number skills and introducing more practical and investigative work so that pupils can use those skills to solve real-life mathematical problems, including across different subjects.
- Improve the impact of leadership and management on the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - giving those new to their management roles the skills to carry them out effectively
 - ensuring all teachers fully understand their individual and collective responsibility for what happens in Year 6
 - making better use of the pupil-premium funding to have the most impact on outcomes for eligible pupils.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement, though broadly as expected, is not good enough to raise standards rapidly. Too many pupils in the middle ability range did not make the two levels of progress expected between Year 2 and Year 6.
- Attainment was well below average in reading and mathematics in Year 6 in 2013, as it was when those same pupils were in Year 2. This is because the many changes in staffing meant that learning was being constantly disrupted. Standards have risen in Year 2 and were broadly average in 2013.
- Speaking skills are developed consistently from an early age. Across the school, pupils readily discuss answers before sharing them with the class. This further enhances their speaking skills.
- The new approaches to reading, such as guided reading and story sessions, and the systematic teaching of phonics, have led to pupils now enjoying reading. They talk eagerly about their choices, different authors, and how books can help them understand and learn new things. Younger pupils' phonics skills are improving with new resources to aid teaching, and by being taught in ability groups. Pupils use their reading and writing skills appropriately in different subjects.
- Throughout the school, pupils' books show good progress in writing since September. Writing becomes more fluent in Years 5 and 6 as pupils understand how best to write formally and/or informally depending on who it is they are writing to or for. Nevertheless, frequent errors persist in spelling, grammar and punctuation that are not corrected when work is marked.
- Progress is more limited in mathematics because pupils do not know number facts well enough to be able to work quickly, or to solve mathematical problems. In some classes, there is not enough mathematics work in books because much is done on whiteboards and not recorded. Pupils do not practise their mathematical skills enough in other subjects.
- Children start school with skills lower than what is typical for their age, significantly so in English language and communication. The progress they make in Nursery and Reception brings them closer to the national average by the end of Reception, at which point, most have made good progress in learning to speak English.
- The gaps in attainment and in progress between pupils eligible for the pupil premium and those who are not widened in Year 6 in 2013. This was because pupil-premium funding had not been well-enough targeted, for example, to increase resources or support the teaching of those pupils. The pupils were nearly three terms behind in mathematics, and just over two terms behind in reading and writing. Compared with national figures, the gaps were greater in reading and writing and similar in mathematics.
- Lower attaining pupils, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make expected and sometimes good progress. They benefit from being taught in smaller groups by teachers and/or support staff.
- The progress of more-able pupils requires improvement. This is because what the pupils are

given to do is not always hard enough for them, or they too often have to start at the same point as other pupils before getting to the harder work, for example, on a worksheet.

- Pupils' participation in sport is good. Pupils are enthusiastic about sport and readily join in the sports' coaching that takes place before, during and after school.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teachers do not routinely expect pupils to do as much work as possible in lessons, and not all fully understand the part they play in making sure pupils do as well as they possibly can in the Year 6 tests and assessments.
- Within ability groups, pupils too often have the same work to do. More-able and average-ability groups then either whiz through work that is too easy, or struggle with work that is too hard.
- Some questioning probes pupils' thinking and encourages them to see what they are doing well and what they need to improve. In mathematics, questioning is sometimes superficial, or teachers ask and then answer questions themselves. Thus, pupils do not have the chance to think through and understand what they are learning.
- Pupils often work their way through mathematical exercises without understanding them or their relevance. The good practice seen in one Year 6 lesson, where fractions, decimals and proportions were linked to food, and to the proportions of males and females attending a sporting event, is not repeated throughout the school.
- The help given to Nursery children through supported play and activities to increase their learning contributes to their good progress. In Reception, adults miss opportunities to talk to the children as they play and learn in order to develop their language and social skills.
- As staff get to grips with the new resources for phonics' teaching, and the organisation of pupils into ability groups, they are helping pupils learn to read better. Although the quality of phonics teaching is still inconsistent, some good practice was observed.
- Teachers do not use assessment information well enough to plan pupils' learning. Until recently, some of that information was unreliable but recent training and the frequent checking of teachers' judgements about pupils' work across the school has made assessments more accurate.
- Teachers' marking too often consists only of ticks and therefore does not help pupils see how to improve their learning. Pupils now have targets for literacy and numeracy, but they do not know them well enough to use them to help their learning.
- The contribution support staff make to teaching requires improvement. This is because, although the staff usually help the groups they work with to make progress, they do not always support pupils well enough in whole-class sessions.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement because they show a lack of urgency in learning. They are too often content just to mull along. Their attitudes to learning are not consistently positive and this affects their progress. For example, their responses in a personal development

session showed a lack of engagement with the topic being discussed. This is typical of their behaviour when teaching is mundane.

- Teachers have started to involve pupils in assessing their own and each other's work. Pupils enjoy this, but sometimes simply correct their work by copying someone else's they know to be right, without fully understanding what caused their own errors in the first place.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Parents are happy with what the school does for them and their children. Pupils say they feel safe, and show they know how to keep themselves safe.
- Bullying is seen as rare. Pupils know the different forms it can take and what to do about it and are confident that staff will help them overcome any form of harassment. They have a good understanding of the dangers associated with using the different forms of modern technology.
- Movement around school is mostly orderly, and play and lunchtimes are happy social occasions. There is an atmosphere of calm and pupils appreciate the revised behaviour code introduced earlier this year. Attendance is broadly average.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The constant changes in leadership and management and in staffing over the past few years left the school in a vulnerable position because staff lacked the leadership, drive and determination to improve. This limited improvement since the previous inspection.
- The situation is now changing rapidly. During the most recent period of interim leadership, the school received intense support from the local authority and the local Teaching Alliance, of which it is now a member. The local authority says it is keeping a weather eye on the improvements now under way.
- The headteacher took swift action to accelerate the pace of improvement. The school's view of its effectiveness is spot on. The links between it, school improvement planning and targets for staff and pupils are easily followed through. They are wholly focused on securing faster progress for the pupils.
- Books show that pupils have made better progress since the headteacher took up post, and checks on teaching make clear that it, too, is improving.
- With the support of the governors, the headteacher bought in external support to help re-assess every pupil in the school to gain an accurate view of each one's achievement. While this threw up anomalies in previous assessments, it has given the school a strong and accurate baseline on which it is now building effectively.
- Most staff recognise that the targets set for them are wholly aimed at helping pupils make at least good progress. They appreciate how the in-house and external support and training they receive is honing their skills.
- The fortnightly checks on pupils' learning across the school are making sure that assessments are accurate now. The new assessment systems enable the school to track individuals and groups of pupils. It is using the information to take immediate action to get learning back on

track should it falter, for whatever reason.

- Senior leaders fully understand their roles and responsibilities and are supporting the headteacher well. The re-organisation of other leadership roles is too recent to show impact, but the staff involved are enthusiastic and willing to learn. Teamwork is being quickly established throughout the school as staff plan together and reflect on the impact of their teaching.
- Leadership and management of the provision for Nursery and Reception children require improvement. The school's own recent audit of that provision, which was confirmed by an external audit, supports the school's accurate analysis of it. This has helped to determine what training is needed to raise the provision to good. The provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs across the school is managed well.
- Different subjects are taught within themes and topics that encourage pupils to use their reading and writing skills but rarely their numeracy skills. The school provides many additional opportunities for pupils to learn through visits, visitors and different clubs and activities that broaden their experience. Pupils very much enjoy these activities, all of which are well attended.
- The school is spending its primary school sport funding on training for staff to teach and assess physical education better, to extend the number and type of sports and exercise activities available to pupils and to map the health curriculum and promote healthy eating and healthy lifestyles. It is too soon to measure the impact of this work because not everything is fully in place. Nevertheless, a good start has been made with the well-attended sports clubs that many pupils attend at the start and end of the school day and at lunchtimes.
- Safeguarding procedures meet current requirements. The good range of culturally diverse texts used in guided-reading sessions, along with visits to different places of worship and the study of the major world religions, is developing pupils' understanding of the wider world.
- The promotion of equality of opportunity requires improvement. This is because, although the school tackles discrimination well, the achievement of different groups of pupils is not yet fully assured.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - There has been a marked improvement in governance in the past year. As a result of training, governors now have a secure understanding of how to interpret data, which they are using to question the school and challenge it to do better. By visiting the school regularly, they keep up-to-date with the quality of teaching and learning. They have every confidence in the new headteacher and are supporting her well.
 - Governors review the performance of the headteacher. They check that the performance of all staff is improving and question what is being done about it if not. They have supported the headteacher in the changes she has made to staff roles and responsibilities in order to improve pupils' progress and attainment.
 - Governors also keep a firm eye on financial matters. They have reviewed pupil premium funding and made wise decisions about how to change the focus of its use to ensure it helps the pupils eligible for it make better progress. They have an appropriate action plan for the use of the sports' funding for primary schools, which has not yet been fully implemented. They are increasingly promoting learning for pupils beyond the school day, including by setting up additional out-of-hours classes and tuition to help boost learning.

What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
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| 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

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| Unique reference number | 103265 |
| Local authority | Birmingham |
| Inspection number | 432221 |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 3–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 470 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mumtaz Mohammed |
| Headteacher | Huda Aslam |
| Date of previous school inspection | 2 February 2011 |
| Telephone number | 0121 464 7002 |
| Email address | enquiries@ladypool.bham.sch.uk |

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