

Bulwell St Mary's Primary and Nursery School

Ragdale Road, Bulwell, Nottingham, NG6 8GQ

Inspection dates 22–23 January 2014

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 make good progress in English and mathematics, often from very low starting points. Progress is improving rapidly due to robust and rigorous leadership.
- Good teaching has resulted in rising standards over the last three years and this is continuing. Current standards in Year 6 are much higher than they were in the 2013 national tests, and far more pupils are reaching higher levels in their work.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and good relationships with adults and each other. They behave consistently well.
- Pupils are well cared for and feel safe.
- Parents and carers are very positive about the work of the school.
- The executive headteacher has maintained a sharp focus on school improvement since her appointment.
- The leadership of other senior leaders and the governing body has had a positive impact on improving the quality of teaching and raising standards since the creation of the partnership.
- A major strength has been the use of training to improve teachers' leadership skills so that school improvement activities can be successfully shared among staff.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils are not yet reaching the same standards in reading as in writing and mathematics, and they do not always understand what they are reading.
- Pupils have a narrow vocabulary, and their speaking and listening skills are not as strong as they should be.
- Progress in Years 3 and 4 is less rapid in some lessons because teachers do not always make clear to pupils what is expected or check carefully how well they are learning as the lesson progresses.
- At times the most able pupils in lower Key Stage 2 are not given hard enough work.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 19 lessons or parts of lessons. A number of these were observed jointly with the executive headteacher and the head of school.
- Meetings and discussions took place with the executive headteacher, head of school, staff, governors, pupils and parents.
- Samples of pupils' work were examined. Some pupils read books with an inspector.
- The inspectors took account of a recent survey of parents' views carried out by the school alongside the 13 responses to the online survey, Parent View.
- The inspectors looked at key documents, including performance data on pupils' progress and attainment produced by the school, procedures for safeguarding, the school's own evaluations of its work, reports to the governing body and the plans for raising attainment.

Inspection team

Geof Timms, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Aileen King	Additional Inspector
Denise Bonnette-Anderson	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Bulwell St Mary's Primary and Nursery School is part of a formal partnership with two other local Church of England schools who share the same executive headteacher but have their own heads of school and governing body.
- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The large majority of pupils are White British. Very few speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- A well-above-average proportion of pupils are supported by the pupil premium, which in this school provides additional funding for pupils who are in local authority care or known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school runs a breakfast club for pupils.
- The school meets the government's current 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?

- Improve pupils' communication and reading skills by:
 - ensuring the recent changes made to the teaching of phonics are consistently implemented by all teachers
 - improving pupils' understanding of what they are reading
 - providing more activities such as discussion, role play and drama to improve pupils' speaking and listening skills and widen their vocabulary.
- Improve the progress made by pupils in Years 3 and 4 by:
 - ensuring they understand clearly what is expected of them when they are given tasks
 - checking their learning carefully during lessons so tasks can be adapted if necessary
 - routinely giving the most able pupils work that extends their learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- The progress made by pupils from often very low starting points helps the vast majority to achieve standards that have risen rapidly over the past three years and are now close to or exceeding expected levels. The Year 6 pupils are on track to achieve above-average standards in the 2014 national tests, and this represents very fast improvement in a short time. In addition, many are on track to reach levels better than those expected nationally, especially in writing and mathematics, due to outstanding teaching of these subject areas.
- Most children in the Nursery and Reception classes make good progress, especially in their personal, social and emotional development. Early literacy skills are weaker and this has been identified by the school as a focus for improvement. They are developing good attitudes to school and learning, which prepares them well for the next stage in their education.
- Standards in writing and mathematics have risen recently. This is the result of focused teaching of writing skills and good opportunities for pupils to write imaginatively and factually across different subjects. For example, in Year 2 imaginative written work was based around the Great Fire of London and other history topics.
- In reading, recent improvements in the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) have resulted in improved progress from very low levels found when they start school. Even so, the way pupils sound out letters is not always accurate, and as their skills develop the school does not yet do enough to extend their understanding of what they read. The latest national phonics screening check for Year 1 pupils showed that standards were below the expected level. However, pupils catch up rapidly in Year 2. The current approach to teaching pupils in small groups is already improving skill levels this year, and Year 1 pupils talk about their enjoyment of a range of traditional tales and fairy stories. However, recent improvements to the teaching of reading are not yet consistently implemented by all teachers.
- The proportion of pupils making or exceeding nationally expected progress in Key Stage 2 has risen rapidly and is good. However, the most rapid progress occurs in Years 5 and 6. More remains to be done to improve pupils' learning in Years 3 and 4. Even so, in one outstandingly well-taught science lesson, pupils' learning about the properties and uses of air was of excellent quality with activities that stretched the achievement of all ability groups.
- Pupils start school with limited speaking and listening skills. Many have a narrow vocabulary. Work in the Nursery and Reception classes addresses this weakness and many of the activities are specifically intended to develop speaking and listening skills. In other classes, teachers do not focus so effectively on these aspects of learning.
- Teachers regularly check pupils' achievement and this showed that progress since the start of this year for all groups is much higher than in the past. In particular, work to develop boys' reading through improved resources and a scheme linked to football has had a positive impact on their attitudes and learning.
- The 2013 test results show that the attainment of Year 6 pupils who were known to be eligible for the pupil premium was on average over a year behind their classmates in mathematics, reading and writing. However, the progress of this particular group had been held back by their significant other needs and difficulties. Currently, eligible pupils are making much improved progress thanks to carefully chosen support. This is rapidly closing remaining gaps in their learning and they are achieving well.

- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress. The staff have a good awareness of their often significant needs, and one-to-one or small group help and guidance from learning support assistants helps them make good progress in their learning.

The quality of teaching is good

- The good quality of teaching has a positive impact on pupils' learning and their much improved progress. Teachers and other adults work very well together for the benefit of the pupils and to ensure that they are prepared for the next stage in their education. The school is continually seeking improvements to its practice. For example, innovative changes have been made to the arrangements when pupils transfer to their next class, although these are yet to have an impact on the lower years of Key Stage 2.
- A particularly positive feature is the willingness of staff to work together and with staff from other schools in the partnership and further afield, including internationally, in order to learn from each other and spread good practice. For example, in one successful activity teachers from the three schools planned together and then observed each other's teaching. This led to good professional dialogue about the strengths of their practice and any areas for improvement.
- Teachers create a positive and purposeful climate for learning in classrooms. Pupils talk about how they enjoy lessons and how the teachers help them learn new things. Boys and girls said they particularly enjoyed science lessons because these involve practical and interesting activities. Relationships between adults and pupils are very strong and this supports learning as well as having a very positive impact on behaviour and pupils' good attitudes.
- The best lessons had a good pace and flow that ensured all pupils stayed attentive and on task. In a particularly well-taught lesson in Year 6, the teacher focused on specific vocabulary related to Greek Myths. In cases like this, very clear and high expectations are shared with pupils so that they know and understand exactly what is expected during a lesson.
- Where the teaching occasionally required improvement, especially in Years 3 and 4, partly due to a lack of experience and being new to the school, teachers were less good at helping pupils understand exactly what was expected when they were given their individual activities. This resulted in teachers having to spend more time going over explanations again. Teachers did not check closely enough the impact their teaching was having on pupils' understanding, so they did not adjust the difficulty of tasks to make sure they continued at the right level for all ability groups to make good progress.
- The marking of pupils' work is regular and supports their learning well through praise. However, teachers do not always give pupils the next steps to take or development points that would help them improve their work. Even so, the often very effective use of targets and clear success criteria in lessons do provide pupils with helpful understanding of what they need to do to reach the next levels.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils in lessons and around the school is good. Whether at play or in more formal activities such as assemblies, they show a good awareness of how to respond to different situations.
- Pupils talk happily about what they enjoy doing at school and what lessons they particularly like.

They are mainly polite and friendly, and the good standard of presentation in most books shows that they take pride in their work. The school's efforts to promote pupils' personal and social development are having a positive impact on helping them grow into responsible and caring members of society. For example, a very good project involved the creation of large papier-mâché figures illustrating their good understanding of a variety of emotional and social qualities.

- Pupils' positive attitudes have a good impact on their learning. This is particularly true in Years 5 and 6, where pupils sustain their concentration even though the accommodation is cramped and the buildings emphasise any noise. Pupils' good behaviour ensures that there is little interruption or disruption to learning. Because of this, teachers are able to provide more interesting and practical lessons. Where behaviour occasionally slips it is well managed by staff and is often the result of pupils having significant emotional, physical or learning needs.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe is good. They say that if any bullying or misbehaviour occurs it is dealt with well by staff. This is supported by the school's records. Parents and carers say that their children feel safe at school in questionnaires, and almost all parents and carers spoken to agreed. Pupils have a good understanding of different forms of bullying and of how to stay safe on mobile phones or computers, for example when using social networks.
- The breakfast club provides pupils with a calm start to the day and some nutritious food and drink. Good, purposeful activities are provided. For example, pupils worked well together on a long single sheet of paper producing a colourful art work.
- Attendance fell in 2013 and was below average. However, this was due to reasons beyond the school's control, such as long-term illness and a temporary closure after a fire. Leaders work very closely with an attendance officer who in turn works with families and others in the local community, such as the public library, to encourage full attendance. The school uses detailed and effective reward systems to encourage full attendance.

The leadership and management are good

- The executive headteacher has provided excellent support and challenge for all staff since she took on the role. The head of school and senior leaders have led the school well since it became part of the partnership. Leadership has become much more robust and rigorous. There is a clear awareness throughout the school that the improvements made so far, while good, are not enough and there is a shared ambition among all to make St Mary's an outstanding school.
- The school is making very effective use of good practice across the partnership. This is done by bringing in expertise from outside to support staff but also by sending staff to other schools to observe and learn from excellent practice. Detailed development planning provides the school with a clear set of targets and aims for the future. Leaders monitor and evaluate the school's work in depth and therefore have an accurate picture of its strengths and weaknesses.
- Recent restructuring of senior and middle leadership has ensured responsibilities are divided appropriately. The good work of subject leaders and others with leadership responsibilities, such as for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, shows that the school has a strong capacity to continue improving.
- The executive headteacher, head of school and other leaders monitor teaching and learning well. They observe lessons and check pupils' work and teachers' planning. Recently, more frequent tracking of pupils' progress and attainment has had a positive impact on teachers' understanding of how their pupils are making progress. The performance of individuals and groups is analysed at regular meetings between senior leaders and class teachers. Because of

this, any underachievement is addressed more rapidly and this has a positive impact on rising standards. The school is effective in its work to ensure equality and a lack of discrimination.

- Teachers' performance is checked carefully to identify strengths and weaknesses. The challenging targets set for teachers are based appropriately on improving pupils' progress, the whole-school priorities and individual training needs.
- The local authority has appropriately reduced its level of support and challenge since the appointment of the current executive headteacher, given the rapidly rising standards and much improved teaching. The school makes effective use of training provided by the local authority. This has recently helped to improve the way children are taught in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and the teaching of phonics. The school also makes very good use of joint activities, training and external advice across the partnership and a wider alliance of schools in the city.
- Funding available through the pupil premium is used effectively to help eligible pupils to take a full part in school life, and receive, where appropriate, specific resources such as reading books, and additional help from adults. The progress made by these pupils is monitored closely by the headteacher and governors, who are aware of the remaining attainment gaps and are addressing them.
- The school recently commissioned a detailed audit of physical education. Following this, it has made clear plans for using the money to boost teachers' skills and bring in external expertise to give pupils more activities to develop their health and well-being.
- The curriculum is good. Imaginative links between subjects bring learning to life. For example, Year 5 work linked literacy skills well to work in science and history. Such activities, together with the growing links to the local and wider community, contribute well to pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has worked hard to improve the impact of its work since the executive headteacher was appointed. Since the last inspection governors have greatly improved their work in monitoring and actively challenging the school's performance. The Chair of the Governing Body is a knowledgeable and effective leader who has a good grasp of what needs to be done to improve the school even further.
 - Governors check on the school's work through visits and meetings with staff. These enable a good professional discussion to take place. Governors' understanding of data on pupils' progress and attainment has improved and they are aware of strengths and weaknesses. They have a good understanding of how targets are set for teachers and of appraisal systems, and they check how effective these are in improving the quality of teaching. Decisions about teachers' pay are closely and appropriately linked to performance and responsibilities.
 - Governors track finances well and assist the school in deciding how to spend additional money to support pupils eligible for free school meals and to extend sports and physical education. They make good use of individual governors' expertise in, for example, monitoring finances. The governing body makes sure that arrangements for pupils' safeguarding meet the current national requirements.

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	122740
Local authority	Nottingham
Inspection number	430722

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	333
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrew Nicolls
Headteacher	Rebecca Meredith
Date of previous school inspection	29 May 2012
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