

Ferndale Primary School

Ferndale Avenue, Great Barr, Birmingham, B43 5QF

Inspection dates

12–13 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	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.

- Most pupils make good progress. From their starting points, which are often well below those expected for their age, they typically reach average standards by the time they leave.
- Pupils in The Cove make excellent progress in developing the skills and confidence to help them learn successfully.
- Teachers know their pupils well and make learning enjoyable. Teaching assistants make a particularly effective contribution when pupils are learning in small groups.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress.
- The behaviour of pupils in lessons and around school is good. Pupils enjoy school and their attendance has improved.
- Pupils are proud of their school, their school uniform and their books.
- Teachers and support staff, leaders and governors are a united team who have the pupils' best interests at their heart.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils at Key Stage 1 have not done well enough over time.
- Leaders do not make the most effective use of data to check the progress of different groups of pupils.
- Many leaders are new to their roles and their work has yet to have a full impact on improving standards.
- Governors do not always check the impact of extra funding on pupils' reading, writing and mathematical skills.
- The school does not always make sure that parents know what is happening in school and how homework is set.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in all classes, visiting 23 lessons and part lessons. Three of these were joint observations with senior leaders.
- Discussions were held with several groups of pupils, the headteacher, senior leaders and managers, representatives of the governing body and of the local authority.
- Inspectors also spoke with a range of support staff, including lunchtime supervisors and caretaking staff.
- The inspection team looked at a range of documents, including the school’s development plan, records of the governing body meetings, attendance, safety and safeguarding information.
- Inspectors looked at pupils’ work and talked to pupils about their books.
- The views of the 49 parents and carers who contributed to the online Parent View survey were taken into account. Parents and carers gave inspectors their views at the start and end of the school day. Others made appointments to see inspectors or spoke to them by telephone.

Inspection team

Simon Griffiths, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Rosemary Barnfield	Additional Inspector
Jennifer Taylor	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Around half the pupils are White British, with others coming from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds. Of these, the largest group is of Indian heritage.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is above average, as is the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The school has two specially resourced provisions for pupils with special educational needs, one with 10 places for nurture, known as The Cove, and the other with 10 places for children with autism. The local authority places pupils with these additional needs in the school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding is above the national average. This is extra funding provided by the government to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those in local authority care and those with a parent in the armed forces.
- There has been considerable change in the leadership team over the previous year. Several leaders are very new to their role.
- 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?

- Ensure that all teaching is good and more is outstanding by:
 - making sure that all pupils know what is expected of them and how well they need to do in each lesson
 - asking probing questions to make all pupils, and particularly the most able, think harder
 - ensuring that pupils' homework reinforces their understanding.
- Improve the effectiveness leadership and management by:
 - subject leaders using the information from their observations and scrutiny of work to challenge their colleagues to do better
 - senior leaders using their teaching expertise in classrooms to make sure that all teaching is good and more is outstanding
 - ensuring that parents are better informed about what is happening in school and how they can better help the children, particularly with homework
 - governors checking more closely on the progress of pupils supported by pupil premium funding.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils from all backgrounds make good progress as they move through the school. Many children start in the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and experiences which are well below those typical for their age. They reach levels in mathematics, reading and writing which are broadly average at the end of Year 6.
- Pupils in the Nursery quickly settle into new routines and learn quickly. Learning activities are well organised and there are plenty of skilled adults to provide good-quality teaching in small groups. The classrooms are attractive and very inviting. Progress continues to be good in the Reception Year, where activities are carefully chosen and well supported by teachers and other adults. Nevertheless, when children join Year 1, many are still at the early stages of reading and writing.
- Although pupils' skills in phonics (the linking of sounds and letters) are below average in Year 1, they are improving and getting closer to average. Pupils make good progress in learning phonics because they are carefully grouped according to their stage of understanding. Pupils who found early reading difficult are learning the skills to break down tricky words and are beginning to enjoy reading. The most-able readers greatly enjoy reading and wish the school had some 'harder' books.
- Pupils in Key Stage 2 have made at least good progress in each of the last three years. The levels they achieve fell slightly in the most recent year, when there was a high proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. These pupils, though not attaining expected levels for all pupils, nevertheless made good progress.
- School data indicates that pupils, including those in Year 6, are on track to make expected and better than expected progress.
- Pupils with complex needs make particularly strong progress in learning sounds and writing letter sounds. Staff have high expectations and enable pupils to make quick learning gains. Pupils' excellent attitudes to work help prepare them for joining their classmates in the main school.
- Pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium funding make similar and sometimes better progress than their classmates. Despite this, they still attained levels in Year 6 in 2013 which were more than six months behind their classmates in writing, and close to two terms behind in reading and mathematics. There was no gap in English grammar, punctuation and spelling.
- Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. They typically reach the levels in reading, writing and mathematics that are expected. They are confident and speak well. Many enjoy reading. Older girls and boys talk with obvious enthusiasm about their favourite books and authors. They are confident with technology and also read newspapers.
- The most-able pupils generally make similar progress to other pupils but are capable of doing better. This is because they are not always set challenging enough work.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching in the school is enabling most pupils to do well. Teachers know their pupils as individuals and relationships are very good. There is a good climate for learning which enables pupils to speak and listen to teachers and their classmates with confidence.
- A particularly strong feature of teaching is the contribution made by teaching assistants. They are well directed by the teachers and take an active role in teaching small groups of pupils. This enables pupils to get extra help and more individual attention when needed.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage captures the interest of all children. New learning is introduced carefully to build on what children already know and can do. Teachers show children how to use language and writing, and so children try hard to do the same.
- Teachers ensure that the classrooms are bright and attractive, and are well laid out to help their pupils learn. Good use is made of small teaching areas. Staff ensure that the books are neat, tidy and well presented so that pupils are interested and want to learn.
- There is very effective teamwork between adults. This is particularly evident in The Cove, where teachers and teaching assistants work very closely together and understand the pupils' complex needs.
- Teachers are good at checking on how well pupils are doing and encouraging them with lots of praise. They have good knowledge of the subjects they teach and so can move learning on quickly. This includes the teaching of information and communication technology.
- The teaching of physical education and games has improved as a result of the government's primary school sport funding. Pupils enjoy fitness sessions where both they and the teachers put themselves through their paces.
- Parents say teachers are very approachable and easy to talk to about how well their children are doing.
- Homework is not set consistently across the school. Some parents are unsure when it is set and what is expected of their children.
- Expectations of pupils, particularly the most able, are not always high enough. Questioning does not consistently probe pupils' answers and challenge them more.
- Class discussions are lively and enjoyable but do not always fully prepare the pupils for the task ahead. As a result, pupils are not always clear as to what is expected of them.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils like their school and this encourages them to behave well. They are proud to wear the school uniform and they all do so. Their books are kept neat and tidy, and reflect their good attitudes to school and learning.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and pupils say this is typical. They always try hard and listen carefully. Their attention only wanders when the teaching is not engaging them fully. Pupils work well in small groups and on their own, as well as taking part in whole-class discussions.

- Pupils in The Cove behave well because they enjoy their work, take part in all the activities and get on well with each other and the teachers.
- Behaviour around the school and at lunchtime is good. The pupils are calm and quiet in the dining room; they queue patiently, even when the queue is a bit long. Outside, pupils appreciate that adults supervise them sensitively. Lunchtime staff say the pupils behave well and that they are able to talk with them and prompt their games and activities.
- Pupils' attendance has been low in the past but the most recent figures show it has improved considerably and is currently above average. Pupils know why it is important to attend and be punctual, and records show that punctuality has improved. Some say how the new computerised system at the school entrance has encouraged them not to be late. There have been no exclusions in recent years.
- The school's work to keep the pupils safe and secure is good. Safeguarding arrangements meet the government's current requirements.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school and their parents agree. There are always plenty of adults around to support the pupils.
- Pupils benefit from learning about road safety, safe cycling, fire safety and internet safety. A national bus company has taught pupils how to keep themselves safe when travelling on a bus.
- Pupils understand the different forms of bullying. A small number said bullying, including name-calling, sometimes occurs but that it is dealt with effectively.

The leadership and management are good

- Leaders have been successful in creating a strong and supportive team, all of whom do their best for the school. A good example of this is the caretaking staff, who take great pride in the buildings and school as a whole.
- The current leadership team has only been formed recently due to a number of staff changes. They are an enthusiastic group who are refreshing the school's direction, monitoring teaching and checking the quality of work in the books. They have good ideas and plans to improve pupils' progress but their work is at an early stage of development. Leaders have been successful in raising attendance, which they rightly made a priority.
- The headteacher is bringing in a number of changes to the way main subjects are taught and the progress of pupils recorded. Meetings are held regularly to assess the progress of all pupils. She attends all of these meetings, together with the phase leader, teachers and teaching assistants responsible, to check individual pupils' progress.
- Teaching is observed regularly and guidance given on how it could be developed. Teachers say that training is helping them to improve further. Leaders' observations of lessons are sometimes unannounced. The headteacher also observes teaching assistants, in recognition of their importance in the school. The headteacher knows where teaching needs to be improved.
- Senior leaders have a good understanding of the school's strengths and shortcomings. The school development plan has been revised. It is now a short and clear document which identifies the right areas, states clearly what is to be done, and how actions taken can be checked to see

if they have improved things for the pupils.

- Leaders have allocated the pupil premium funding carefully and this has enabled eligible pupils to have extra targeted teaching in small groups, as well as one-to-one teaching where needed. Eligible pupils have the opportunity to attend all clubs and go on all visits.
- A wide variety of subjects are taught and are well supported by trips and residential visits. In history, Year 4 pupils particularly enjoyed a visit to Warwick Castle and dressing up as Tudors. Good-quality artwork is on display in the school. Pupils learn about different religions and cultures.
- The school's sports funding is used to widen the choice of sports available. As a result, a wider range of after-school clubs is now provided and many more pupils are actively taking part. Pupils in Year 4 now go swimming. Teachers are more confident teaching dance and games. Pupils enjoy the new fitness sessions and are more aware of the need to be active to maintain a healthy lifestyle.
- The local authority has recently become more involved due to the changes in the school's leadership team. The school adviser has assisted leaders effectively in creating a new development plan.
- Leaders have a lot of data about how well the pupils are doing but it does not clearly and simply support them in evaluating how well groups of pupils are performing over time.
- Parents say they are not always kept in touch about events, and communication with school could be improved so that their views and opinions are always responded to.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are very proud of the school. They are passionate about its inclusive nature and the fact it welcomes all pupils, including those at risk of not doing as well, when places are available. Governors talk with obvious pride about the achievements of these pupils. They are up to date with data on how well pupils are doing. They have allocated the pupil premium funding with care. They check on how it has improved pupils' experiences but do not check as closely these pupils' results across the school.
 - Governors are very aware that the newly formed leadership team requires their support and challenge as the school enters a new era in its development. They know about the quality of teaching from first-hand evidence, including learning walks. They are starting to implement the new arrangements for linking teachers' pay to performance. Procedures to ensure health and safety are secure. There is a lot of expertise on the governing body which brings much to the school.

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	103982
Local authority	Sandwell
Inspection number	440509

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	515
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Keith Davies
Headteacher	Anita While
Date of previous school inspection	5 October 2009
Telephone number	0121 3573326
Fax number	N/A
Email address	headteacher@ferndale.sandwell.sch.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2014

