

Much Birch CofE Primary School

Much Birch, Hereford, HR2 8HL

Inspection dates 14–15 May 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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.

- Throughout the school, pupils enjoy learning. They make good progress and achieve well in a wide range of subjects.
- Pupils generally reach average to above-average standards in reading, writing and mathematics in national assessments and tests at the end of Year 2 and Year 6.
- Teaching is routinely good and an increasing proportion is outstanding. Questioning is particularly skilful and teachers help pupils to express themselves maturely and with confidence.
- Marking and assessment are very thorough. This helps individual pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, make good progress.
- Pupils are happy and keen to learn. They behave very well in lessons and around the school. They feel safe and well cared for.
- The headteacher and senior staff lead the school well. They are fully supported by a team of hardworking staff, who relish any opportunity to improve the education that the school provides.
- Since the previous inspection, the school's leaders, including its governors, have consolidated good teaching and achievement and improved attendance.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils do not get enough opportunities to use and apply their mathematical skills to solve problems.
- Children in the Reception class have fewer opportunities to develop their writing skills than pupils in Years 1 to 6.
- Parents' views on some aspects of school life are not regularly sought or sampled and so are not always taken into account.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in 15 lessons, including one lesson jointly observed with the headteacher.
- Inspectors listened to pupils reading. They looked at the work in pupils' books to assess current standards, how much progress they have made, and the quality of teachers' marking.
- Inspectors met with pupils, members of the governing body and school staff. Inspectors also spoke with a representative of the local authority and the Chair of the Governing Body by telephone.
- Inspectors took account of responses to an inspection questionnaire from 18 staff, 102 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and a small number of written comments from parents. Inspectors also heard parental views directly when they met parents and carers informally at the start of the school day.
- Inspectors looked at a number of documents, including the school's information about the progress of pupils, planning and monitoring documents, reports from external school advisers, behaviour and attendance records and documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Nicola Davies, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Rena Saggiu

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who are girls is well below average
- Nearly all of the pupils come from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also average.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported through the pupil premium is below average. This is additional funding for pupils in the care of the local authority, those known to be eligible for free school meals and for pupils whose parents are serving in the armed forces.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' progress from good to outstanding by:
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to use and apply their mathematical skills to solve problems across different subjects and topics
 - ensuring that children in the Reception class have frequent and exciting opportunities to develop their writing skills.
- Improve communication with parents by regularly sampling their views.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children join the Reception class with knowledge, skills and understanding that are typical for children of the same age. They quickly gain in confidence and make good progress in their Reception year, although fewer reach the expected level of development in their writing than in other areas of learning.
- Pupils of all abilities, including more-able pupils, make good progress in Years 1 and 2 and achieve well. Pupils currently in Year 2 are on track to replicate the above-average standards in reading and mathematics of previous years and improve those in writing to match these.
- Pupils continue to make good progress in Years 3 to 6, generally reaching standards in reading, writing and mathematics that are at or above those found nationally by the time they leave the school. The exception was in 2013, when the results of the national tests in Year 6 were below those found nationally in writing and, to a lesser extent, in mathematics.
- Although the results of this unusually small year group were atypical, the school had already made changes to the teaching of writing and mathematics to accelerate pupils' progress. Alongside this, teachers also began to check the progress of individuals and groups of pupils very carefully to pinpoint exactly where pupils might need more help or challenge. They quickly provide this and, as a result, the progress of current pupils in Years 3 to 6 in writing and mathematics has improved strongly and is now good.
- Pupils throughout the school read well. The youngest pupils are quickly taught the sounds that letters make (phonics) and in 2013, nearly all met the expected standard in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1. Pupils' phonic skills are systematically developed as they go through school which stands them in good stead as they mature into confident, fluent and enthusiastic readers.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress. Their academic progress and well-being are monitored exceptionally carefully by the co-ordinator for special educational needs and their class teachers. Extra support from skilled teaching assistants within the school, and outside professionals where appropriate, is effective in helping these pupils to achieve well.
- Similarly, the particular needs of the few pupils supported through the pupil premium are carefully checked. Their individual needs are well met through a combination of classroom activities and additional help funded through the pupil premium grant. As a result, they also make good progress and the gap between their achievement and that of other pupils is closing rapidly.
- As the school has many more boys than girls, staff pay particular attention to identifying and closing any gaps which emerge between the genders. Effective support and a wide range of teaching approaches and activities ensure that girls and boys both achieve well.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching throughout the school has improved since the previous inspection. Teaching is routinely good and a very full programme for developing teachers' skills has meant that more teaching is now outstanding.

- Teachers plan very well to make sure that their lessons benefit boys and girls and pupils of all abilities. This helps to ensure that all pupils, including the more-able pupils, make good progress. Where teachers have the support of teaching assistants, they provide very clear guidance on what to expect of pupils in each lesson and provide them with ways to record the progress each pupil makes.
- Teaching assistants are highly valued and make an impressive contribution to helping all pupils to learn and make good progress. This includes the sensitive and well-informed help they give to groups of pupils in classes and the tightly organised extra support programmes they provide for pupils with particular academic or social needs.
- Teachers mark pupils' work exceptionally thoroughly. They identify how pupils can correct any mistakes they have made and give them guidance on exactly what they need to do next to make even better progress.
- Pupils respond very well to guidance and constructive criticism from their teachers and their classmates. They understand the marking system and are very keen to improve their work. They particularly enjoy the opportunities they have to enhance their work independently by using dictionaries, planning grids and 'backpacks' which contain excellent pieces of work to which they can refer.
- Teachers and other adults help pupils to communicate well. They encourage pupils to express themselves maturely when speaking and in writing. Teachers make very good use of questions in their classrooms, not only to test pupils' knowledge or understanding but also to prompt pupils to explain, justify or extend their ideas.
- Teachers have focused on improving the progress that pupils make in their writing. They have used two simple but very effective strategies. Teachers make sure that pupils have interesting things to write about and require the same standards in their writing across all subjects. As a result, progress in writing has improved across the school. However children in the Reception class do not yet have such good opportunities to practice and develop their writing.
- Teachers have been working hard to improve the teaching of mathematics. This has led to an increase in the proportions of pupils making better than expected progress in the subject. However the school has correctly identified that there are still too few opportunities for pupils to use and apply their mathematical skills to solve problems across different subjects and topics.
- Classrooms are bright and orderly. Lessons start promptly and adults and pupils demonstrate mutual respect. Resources and displays in classrooms provide pupils with a mixture of inspiration and aids or 'toolkits' to help them improve their work.
- Teachers set regular homework, which pupils enjoy completing and parents welcome.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are happy at school and arrive to their lessons promptly. Pupils are enthusiastic about their time in school which they describe as a 'mixture of fun and learning'. These very positive attitudes to school help them to make good progress.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Leaders have effective systems to make sure that all safeguarding requirements are met, including rigorous checks on all adults

who work with children. Staff are keenly aware of the need to ensure that pupils are safe and make sure that any potential risks are evaluated and minimised.

- Pupils feel safe in school. They demonstrate sensible behaviour in lessons and around the school's grounds. Their good behaviour is reinforced by the 'Golden Rules' which are prominently displayed in every classroom. Pupils particularly welcome the opportunities they have to be praised publicly in the 'Praise' section of the school newsletter and in the weekly 'Praise' assemblies.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and said they had no concerns about bullying or bad behaviour. They recognise that disagreements happen but believe these are sorted out quickly and efficiently. They feel they can confidently approach teachers and other adults if they are concerned about any issue.
- Pupils are keen to come to school. Attendance is higher than that found nationally and has improved over the last year. This is due to the firm line the school has taken on holidays during term time and the good work of the staff member who works closely with families to promote good attendance.
- The school maintains very good links with the secondary schools to which pupils generally transfer and with the private child-care provider which operates on the school site. Staff prepare children carefully for the move from nursery to school and on to their secondary schools.
- While the large majority of parents are very happy with the school, a small minority feel there are some areas which could be improved, in particular how well the school takes their views into consideration and responds to any concerns they raise. Many parents praise the quality of information provided about their child, for example through highly informative school reports, but communication and consultation with parents about other aspects of school life is weaker.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher provides very clear leadership to the school. A number of parents referred to the direction, passion and purpose evident at the school since she took up her post in January 2013. She has developed the hard-working staff team well and they now take a very active role in improving further the quality of education at the school.
- Accelerating pupils' progress from good to outstanding was a key issue identified at the previous inspection and is being tackled well. Teachers recognise that the comprehensive programme of teacher training that has been put in place has had a very positive impact on their lessons and how quickly pupils in their classes learn.
- Assessment and the tracking of pupils' progress are now a strength of the school. The system includes half-termly checks on pupils' attainment coupled with regular meetings to discuss the progress each pupil is making. This has had a very positive impact in ensuring that each pupil is making the best progress she or he can as well as being used to monitor trends across the school.
- The performance of staff has been managed well. Teachers are held responsible for the progress made by pupils in their classes and senior staff make frequent checks on the quality of teaching and the quality of pupils' work.
- Pupils enjoy the wide variety of subjects and topics they study in lessons. Pupils thoroughly enjoy sport and levels of participation are high. Extra funding for primary sport has been well

used to develop pupils' physical skills and increase the number of children participating in sport outside of lessons.

- The school takes appropriate action to tackle any form of disadvantage or discrimination and makes sure that all pupils have equal opportunities to do well. Staff log the rare incidents of name calling very carefully. School leaders make sure that pupils have opportunities to learn about people who are different from themselves within the topics and lessons they study.
- The local authority is aware of the strengths in the school leadership and so provides only limited support. This includes an annual visit.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body is very well aware of the standards that current pupils reach and the outstanding standards that the school is aiming for. The headteacher provides comprehensive information about the progress of pupils but governors have the skills to interpret the available data on pupils' progress and attainment for themselves. This means they can readily check that the school is doing all that it can to give all of its pupils an excellent education. Governors visit the school regularly and individual governors investigate the school's progress through their formal links with teachers who lead particular subjects. Governors expect value for money and monitor the impact of pupil premium funding carefully. They ensure that potential pay rises for staff are linked to the learning and progress of pupils. The governing body is well organised and governors bring a wide range of relevant experience to the tasks they undertake. Very high-quality induction procedures help new governors understand their roles and responsibilities, including for safeguarding. Plans are in place for governors to take a more active role in surveying and sampling parents' views.

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	116833
Local authority	Herefordshire
Inspection number	444174

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	195
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mark Johnson
Headteacher	Hilary Hines
Date of previous school inspection	9 June 2010
Telephone number	01981 540254
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