

Lower Farm Primary School

Bakewell Close, Bloxwich, Walsall, WS3 3QH

Inspection dates 20–21 May 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	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.

- The headteacher, senior leaders and the governing body have focused successfully on improving teaching and pupils' learning. As a result, the school has improved significantly since its last inspection.
- The headteacher and senior leaders rigorously check on the quality of teaching. They provide staff with good advice that is helping teachers improve pupils' learning in lessons.
- Teaching is consistently good, with teachers planning activities well to match the abilities of different groups of pupils.
- Pupils make good progress overall in reading, writing and mathematics across the school.
- Pupils leave the school at the end of Year 6 with attainment that is well above the national average.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. Pupils are generally polite and courteous to each other and the adults in the school.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school and that they have confidence in staff to deal with any bullying if it does happen.
- The school works well to help pupils keep themselves safe.
- The governing body knows the school well. Governors thoroughly question senior leaders about the quality of teaching and pupils' progress.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There are times when teachers do not adapt their teaching to help pupils learn quicker.
- Teaching assistants are not always used effectively in lessons to help pupils learn.
- Boys' progress in writing in Key Stage 1 is not as rapid as it is in reading and mathematics.
- Subject leaders do not regularly check on the quality of teaching and give advice that would help teachers improve.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 27 lessons and part lessons and observed 16 teachers. The headteacher and lead inspector visited four part lessons together.
- Inspectors analysed school assessment records showing pupils' progress; senior leaders' judgements about the quality of teaching; action plans to improve the school; procedures to safeguard pupils; and documents showing the work of the governing body.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' work and heard a number of pupils read.
- Inspectors held meetings with teachers and senior leaders, members of the governing body, a representative from the local authority and a group of pupils.
- Inspectors took account of 39 parents' responses to Ofsted's Parent View survey.
- Inspectors took account of 45 staff questionnaires completed by teachers and support staff members during the inspection.

Inspection team

James Henry, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Lucy Maughan

Additional Inspector

Roisin Chambers

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Lower Farm is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are White British and speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in local authority care or pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, is below the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is broadly in line with the national average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is broadly in line with the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is outstanding by ensuring that:
 - all teachers adjust their teaching when necessary to help pupils learn quicker
 - teachers always use the teaching assistants in the school effectively to support pupils' learning
 - subject leaders check on the quality of teaching more often so that they can provide teachers with advice and share ideas that would make pupils' learning in lessons regularly outstanding.
- Increase boys' progress in writing, particularly across Key Stage 1, by providing boys with more:
 - chances to write at length and in different ways in a range of subjects
 - topics that regularly interest boys and that motivate them to write.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- School assessments, pupils' work and observations in lessons show that different groups of pupils, including White British pupils, make good progress overall across the school. Attainment has regularly been well above the national average at the end of Years 2 and 6.
- The most able pupils make good progress because teachers plan activities that provide enough challenge to help them learn quickly. As a result, the proportion of pupils achieving the higher levels at the end of Years 2 and 6 is well above the national average, especially in reading and mathematics.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress because teachers check their progress carefully and plan activities that match their abilities.
- Pupils supported by additional funding make the same good progress in reading, writing and mathematics as other groups in the school.
- The achievement gap for pupils supported by additional funding is closing. In 2013 this group of pupils left the school at the end of Year 6 approximately two terms behind other pupils in English and mathematics. This compares well with results in 2012, when pupils supported by additional funding in Year 6 left the school three terms behind their peers. Reliable school assessments, particularly across Key Stage 2, show that this gap is continuing to close.
- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and abilities below those expected for their age. They make good progress in their learning and development and enter Year 1 ready to learn the different subjects taught.
- All groups of pupils make good progress in reading. The school has a good scheme to develop pupils' early reading skills through blending sounds together. This helps pupils break down and read unfamiliar words.
- Pupils' work shows that all groups of pupils make good progress in mathematics, especially in developing their basic number and problem-solving skills.
- Progress in writing is not as quick as reading and mathematics for some boys across Years 1 and 2. Work in boys' books, especially in Key Stage 1, shows that boys do not write at length and in different ways in subjects such as history and geography. Topics that would interest boys are not consistently used to motivate them to write.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Pupils' work shows that teachers consistently plan lessons that match the abilities of different groups, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and the more able, so that pupils learn quickly.
- School assessments and inspectors' observations show that children are taught well in the Early Years Foundation Stage. From below-expected starting points in their skills and abilities, children catch up quickly.
- All groups of pupils, including pupils supported by additional funding, make good progress overall. Teachers measure their progress regularly and use these assessments to give extra support to pupils who may be falling behind, to help them catch up quickly.
- Teaching assistants are used well out of classrooms to support small targeted groups and individual pupils, especially disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, to ensure they make good progress.
- Teachers do not always, however, use teaching assistants fully to support pupils' learning in lessons.
- Teachers give pupils targets in writing and mathematics linked to the levels at which they are working. Pupils appreciate this because they say it helps them to know what they have to do improve.
- The marking of pupils' work is good. Teachers regularly give pupils advice on how to improve

their work and pupils are given the chance to act on the guidance.

- Pupils understand clearly what they are meant to learn in lessons because teachers use questioning well. They use their good subject knowledge to give clear explanations in order, for example, to correct any misunderstandings pupils may have.
- Occasionally, teachers do not adapt their teaching in response to pupils' progress and understanding of what pupils are learning. As a result, pupils' learning slows in a minority of lessons.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are pleasant and well-mannered to one another and to the adults in the school.
- Pupils say that behaviour is typically good around the school, in the dinner hall and in the playground.
- Pupils are eager to learn, although sometimes their attention and concentration can wander when teachers have not adapted activities sufficiently to take account of pupils' progress.
- The responses from parents to the Ofsted survey support this view, with most parents agreeing that the school makes sure pupils behave well.
- The school has effective systems for managing pupils' behaviour. This is based on an appropriate balance between rewards and sanctions and is used consistently by staff.
- Senior leaders regularly check on pupils' behaviour and have brought in new ideas to help to stop poor behaviour occurring. For example, the introduction of a wide range of lunch-time sporting activities engages pupils in games and helps to develop their social skills.
- The school works effectively to improve attendance. This has risen since the last inspection and is now broadly in line with the national average.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school because there is little bullying. They have a good understanding of the different types of bullying and have confidence in staff to deal with any instances of bullying if it does happen.
- All the parents who responded to the Ofsted survey agreed that their children feel safe in school.
- The school helps pupils to keep themselves safe through activities such as its anti-bullying week, visits from the police to talk about 'Stranger Danger', and road safety and e-safety workshops for pupils and parents.

The leadership and management are good

- Since the last inspection, the headteacher, senior leaders and the governing body have taken robust action to improve teaching and pupils' learning.
- The headteacher and senior leaders rigorously check on the quality of teaching and provide effective feedback to help teachers improve their teaching. Consequently, teaching has improved since the last inspection and is now consistently good.
- Senior leaders and teachers themselves carefully monitor the progress of different groups of pupils, especially pupils supported by additional funding. This helps senior leaders to check that the gap in attainment for these pupils is being closed. This is an example of how the school ensures all groups of pupils have an equal opportunity to succeed.
- The school has good systems to manage the performance of staff. Following discussions with senior leaders, teachers are given targets for pupils' progress that are reviewed regularly. This is linked to appropriate professional training to help teachers improve their teaching skills. The headteacher makes sure that any pay increases for teachers are closely linked to their performance.
- Teachers who are responsible for different subjects do not regularly observe teaching. This limits

their opportunities to provide teachers with advice and to share ideas that would make pupils' progress in lessons regularly outstanding.

- The additional sports funding is used to employ a 'health mentor' to develop sporting activities for pupils and to work with staff to improve their ability to teach physical education. The difference this is making is being carefully checked by a senior leader and is having a positive impact on the health and emotional well-being of pupils. An increasing number of pupils are taking part in different activities, there are fewer incidents of poor behaviour, and staff are more able to teach physical education lessons effectively.
- The different activities and subjects taught in the school are well balanced and promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively.
- Pupils take part in a variety of sporting and musical activities. The choir sings at different venues and pupils have opportunities to learn to play different musical instruments.
- Pupils visit places of religious and cultural interest, such as the local mosque and Anglican church, with the vicar leading assemblies. Pupils from different backgrounds get on well together.
- Older pupils are given different roles and responsibilities around school, with pupils choosing and raising money for different local and national charities. This is an example of how the school fosters good relations within the community.
- The local authority provides effective light touch support for the school.
- The school has robust procedures to help keep pupils safe. Staff have regular child protection training and are appropriately checked before working in the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Members of the governing body have a good understanding of how the school is doing compared with other schools nationally, including with regard to pupils' achievement. They question senior leaders about the progress of different groups of pupils, including pupils supported by additional funding. This ensures that the additional funding is helping to improve the progress of this group of pupils. Governors check on the quality of teaching by undertaking different activities with senior leaders, such as visits to classrooms and looking at pupils' work. They know that there are good systems for managing the performance of staff, including the headteacher. They understand how, for example, any promotions or salary rises are justified by good performance and how any weaker teaching is being tackled. Governors undertake regular training to help them fulfil their roles successfully. The governing body makes sure that the school meets all its legal requirements, including ensuring that safeguarding policies and procedures are updated and reviewed regularly.

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	104169
Local authority	Walsall
Inspection number	442532

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	418
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nigel Ford
Headteacher	Sarah Milner
Date of previous school inspection	7–8 November 2012
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