

Little Aston Primary School

Forge Lane, Little Aston, Sutton Coldfield, B74 3BE

Inspection dates 20–21 November 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Early years provision		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Effective leadership and management have led to improved achievement. Pupils continue to make strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics. As a result, levels of achievement remain high at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2.
- Efficient checks on the school’s performance are regularly made. The school’s self-evaluation is accurate and puts leaders and the governing body in a strong position to secure further improvement needed, especially in teaching.
- Children in the pre-school class and those in Reception make sustained progress from their starting points and they achieve very well.
- Attitudes to learning are excellent. Pupils display a love of learning which contributes to their high levels of achievement.
- Pupils from all backgrounds feel safe at school. Their behaviour is exemplary and has improved since the last inspection.
- Good teaching creates a positive climate for pupils’ learning. It gains their willing engagement and meets most pupils’ needs well.
- The range of taught subjects and activities has been successfully aligned to the new national curriculum. It adds to, and enriches effectively, pupils’ learning and experience. The curriculum prepares pupils for the next stage of their education extremely well.
- Most parents are very satisfied with the care the school shows for their children. They also believe that their children are safe and happy at school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough of the teaching is yet outstanding.
- At times, teachers set work that does not help pupils to make the best possible progress.
- Teachers do not always check enough whether pupils understand and follow the guidance given to them through marking. They do not consistently check that pupils use grammar and the spelling in their writing across all subjects accurately.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in 16 lessons or parts of lessons, including four observed jointly with the headteacher. Two small-group sessions where extra support was provided were also observed. Additionally, inspectors reviewed a small sample of pupils' current written work to check the quality of teaching and learning in the school.
- Meetings were held with a randomly selected group of pupils and with senior and middle leaders. The inspectors met the vice-chair of the governing body and another governor. An inspector had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of documents, including the school's records of current pupils' progress, a summary of the school's self-evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses, plans for improvement and monitoring documentation, records of behaviour and safeguarding procedures.
- Inspectors took into account the 64 responses to the online Parent View questionnaires and the electronic communication received from parents during the inspection. Inspectors also considered the findings of the school's own survey of parental opinions. Additionally, inspectors talked informally to 20 parents at the end of the first day and at the start of the second day of the inspection.
- Inspectors considered the 22 questionnaires returned by staff.

Inspection team

Krishan Sharma, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Janet Bird

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school. There is sessional care for children of 3-4 years old, which is a mixture of part and full-time arrangements (known as Sparkletots). This provision is managed by the governing body and was part of this inspection. In addition, there is a full-time class for Reception children.
- Around sixty per cent of pupils are White British, a smaller proportion than average. The remaining pupils come from a wide range of minority ethnic groups of whom those of Indian background are the largest group. A higher than average proportion of pupils speaks English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the additional funding known as the pupil premium, at one in fourteen, is well below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, at one in twenty, is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in Year 6.
- An above-average proportion of pupils joins and leaves the school at other than the normal times during the school year.
- The headteacher has been a local leader of education (LLE) over the previous 12 months.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching to outstanding by ensuring that teachers consistently:
 - check that pupils understand the advice given to them through marking and apply it in their subsequent work
 - set work that is challenging enough for different groups of pupils in all classes
 - check the accuracy of pupils' use of grammar and spelling across all subjects.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher's high expectations are clearly reflected in the school's current plans and priorities. A track record of high achievement, supported by pupils' excellent attitudes to learning and the good teaching demonstrate that the school has the capacity to become an outstanding school.
- Checks made by senior and other leaders on teaching and pupils' learning are regular and include observation of teaching and reviews of pupils' written work. A substantial amount of data, including that relating to children in the pre-school and Reception classes, is routinely collected and very efficiently organised. The findings from these checks inform fully the school's accurate self-evaluation. They also result in extra help being allocated to meet pupils' identified needs. As a result, leaders and governors are able to ensure that all pupils have an equal opportunity to succeed and none is discriminated against.
- The use of the pupil premium is effective. Additional support provided to the small number of eligible pupils meets their specific needs. As a result, across the school, their progress and attainment are usually as good as others.
- Careful thought has been given to developing and aligning assessment of pupils' learning and progress with the new curriculum. The school's arrangements are almost ready to be implemented. The ground work undertaken so far has been robust in ensuring that teachers make consistent and accurate assessments.
- The curriculum is a key strength of the school. It provides a broad and balanced range of exciting activities and promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. A wider range of extra activities enrich pupils' learning and experiences. The school takes pride in promoting a broad set of values, for example fairness and respect for cultural diversity, and prepares pupils well for their future life in modern Britain.
- Subject and other leaders, some of whom are new to the role, have a good grasp of strengths and weaknesses in their areas of responsibility. Their action plans show that they have a clear idea where further improvements are needed and how to secure them. The headteacher continues to enable them to build their leadership skills.
- The use of primary school sports funding has enabled the school to build on its successful provision of before and after-school clubs. It has increased pupils' participation in a wider range of physical activities and in local sporting competitions. The teaching of physical education (PE) has been strengthened by the deployment of external coaches.
- Arrangements for managing teachers' performance are robust. Annual targets set for them make expectations clear. Links between teachers' pay increases to the impact of their teaching on pupils' progress are now fully understood. Staff training is directly linked to teachers' personal targets and to the overall priorities for school improvement.
- Most parents are happy with the ways the school cares for their children. They appreciate the range of contacts that are available to them, such as personal and electronic communication.
- The local authority has maintained effective contacts with the school which have enabled them to provide support if the school's performance identifies the need.
- Senior leaders remain resolutely focused on securing further improvement in the quality of teaching, so that more of it is outstanding. To this end, senior leaders have already fine-tuned their monitoring of teaching to provide practical support to improve teaching and to eliminate a small number of inconsistencies.

■ The governance of the school:

- The effective governing body has a good grasp of the performance data and how the school compares with other schools nationally. As a result, it is well equipped to support and challenge senior leaders to secure further improvement, when needed.
- The governors are aware of the overall quality of teaching. They ensure that decisions about teachers' pay relate to the impact of their performance in the classroom on pupils' progress and reward only good teaching.
- The governors keep a regular oversight on the use and impact of the pupil premium.
- The governing body ensures that safeguarding arrangements meet current requirements.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding**Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. The management of behaviour is consistent and reassuring for pupils and their parents. Pupils, staff and parents speak highly of the typically high standards of behaviour in the school.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are exemplary and are at the heart of pupils' high achievement over the years. They are highly motivated to learn and display their love for learning. Numerous pupils openly expressed their love for mathematics during conversations with the inspectors.
- Relationships, including in the early years, are excellent. Pupils from all backgrounds get on extremely well with each other. They are exceptionally polite and courteous to each other and adults in the school. The high quality relationships provide very strong support to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupils take great pride in the presentation of their work. They take good care of their classrooms, other parts of the building and outdoor facilities. Litter is extremely rare.
- Attendance has risen and is now above average. Senior leaders and governors remain determined to continue to promote good attendance and punctuality.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. All the required checks on the suitability of staff and volunteers who work in the school are consciously made. Potential risks, for example during external visits, are carefully assessed. Pupils are fully aware that they are responsible for their own and others' safety.
- Pupils are clearly aware of the different forms of bullying, such as name-calling or the misuse of the internet or that which is prejudice-based. They say that bullying is extremely rare and is decisively dealt with when and if it occurs. School records confirm this view.

The quality of teaching is good

- Typically, teachers plan lessons that maintain pupils' interest. They expect pupils to work hard in lessons and commit themselves to their learning. They are adept at probing pupils' understanding which they use to clarify misconceptions or to prompt them to do better. These common features ensure that pupils continue to make sustained progress.
- Where learning is at its best, the work set for pupils is highly demanding and excites them to excel. The most-able pupils, particularly, respond to such challenges with palpable enthusiasm and demonstrate outstanding achievement. In contrast, in some classes the work set is not always suitably challenging and it leads to unevenness in the progress pupils make. When teachers identify that pupils need extra help this is provided quickly and makes an immediate impact on pupils' learning. Adults' additional support in the Early Years Foundation Stage is highly successful in helping children to be independent.

- Additional adults are deployed routinely to give extra attention to groups of pupils with identified needs. Often, these groups include: the disadvantaged groups, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs or those who speak English as an additional language. As these pupils find some aspects of learning difficult, the support which additional adults provide helps them make quick gains leading to strong improvement from their starting points.
- Marking is conscientious. At its best, it is helpful to pupils to understand how they could improve their work. This is not always the case, however. Occasionally, teachers do not check enough whether pupils understood the advice given or whether they learnt from their mistakes and do not repeat them in their subsequent work. Checking for accuracy in pupils' use of grammar and spelling in their writing across the curriculum is also variable.
- Effective teaching in reading, including phonics (the sounds that letters make) is sustaining high standards across the school. The insecure readers, including those who speak English as an additional language, particularly benefit from the systematic teaching of phonics. The teaching of writing is thoughtful and helps pupils to organise their ideas into sensible and interesting text. The teaching of mathematics is highly effective. Not only has it contributed to high achievement across the school but it has also engendered a love of mathematics. This was visible in lessons observed during the inspection.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- The standards reached in 2014 at the end of Reception, in the Year 1 phonic screening check and at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2, are exceptionally high. In general, they rose above the national rate of improvement. The continuing high achievement in reading, writing and mathematics is a consistent feature in the life of the school over the years. Taken together with the performance of current pupils, the overall picture is that of substantial and sustained progress.
- Pupils enjoy reading and frequently read for a range of purposes, including retrieving relevant information for their class topics. Their comprehension skills are of a high standard as are their skills in understanding the underlining meaning of the texts they read.
- Pupils' progress in writing is excellent. They receive effective guidance on how to make their writing more interesting and technically sophisticated. Pupils are very confident in organising their ideas into sentences and paragraphs. They are becoming increasingly competent in assessing their own written work.
- Mathematics is a key strength of the school. Pupils make outstanding progress. Their skills in making mental calculations are strong and are routinely used to good effect in solving mathematical problems.
- Children's spoken language skills get off to a flying start in the early years. The emphasis on their development continues as pupils move through the school. Pupils are articulate and express themselves confidently. Pupils' achievement in their spoken language is high.
- The most-able pupils do exceptionally well. At the end of Years 2 and 6, the proportion of the most-able pupils achieving the higher levels of attainment has been above the national picture. The proportion of pupils gaining the highest National Curriculum Level 6 is growing and compares favourably with the national figures. The most-able pupils currently in school are continuing to achieve well.
- The achievement of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is generally good. Most of them make good progress towards their identified goals. Most pupils who speak English as an additional language make rapid progress as they move through the school. Those with Indian backgrounds achieve as well as they should.
- In the 2014 Year 6 national tests, the number of disadvantaged pupils being supported by the pupil premium was too small to report on their relative attainment and progress without identifying individual pupils. Senior leaders and the governing body maintain a regular overview of this group of pupils across the school. They are given extra help and the school's own analysis shows that currently their progress is

similar to others in the school.

The early years provision

is outstanding

- From levels on entry that are typical for their age, children make a flying start in the pre-school class and in Reception. Most children, from all ability groups and backgrounds including those who speak English as an additional language, make excellent progress in all areas of learning. Achievement in early literacy and mathematics is particularly impressive. When they leave Reception, the levels of attainment children have gained equip them well for their entry into Year 1.
- Adults plan a wide range of stimulating activities in the classroom and outdoors. Children engage with them well on their own or in small groups. Children listen to adults and are highly responsive to their instructions and suggestions. The routine of teaching phonics is now well established and is laying a good foundation for reading in Year 1. The records in the 'learning journeys' show adults are highly skilled in observing and assessing children's achievement.
- Children work in a safe environment. They behave extremely well and move around sensibly to ensure others around them are safe. Relationships are warm and are built on mutual trust between children and adults.
- The leader for the Early Years Foundation Stage is new to the position but she has already acquired a good grasp of its strengths and areas that need improving. Adults welcome parents into the classroom and value their contribution to their children's learning. Parents feel well informed about their children's progress.

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	124127
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	448552

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	226
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Adam Farrer
Headteacher	Elizabeth Pearce
Date of previous school inspection	13 July 2010
Telephone number	01543 334421
Email address	headteacher@litleaston.staffs.sch.uk

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