

# Birchfield Community School

Trinity Road, Aston, Birmingham, B6 6AJ

**Inspection dates** 10–11 March 2015

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Early years provision		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- The school's leaders and governors have not maintained the good teaching and achievement seen in Key Stage 2 at the time of the previous inspection.
- Leaders do not focus sharply enough on pupils' progress when they check the quality of teaching and learning in lessons or in pupils' books.
- The targets senior leaders set for teachers' performance are not challenging enough to accelerate pupils' achievement.
- Leaders' improvement plans do not always focus on the key priorities or set out sufficiently sharp criteria against which they can measure success.
- The governing body does not hold leaders sharply to account for the year-to-year progress made by pupils in different age or ability groups.
- Pupils' attendance is below average. A few pupils do not come to school sufficiently regularly to support good achievement.
- Sometimes pupils lose interest in their work when teachers do not move learning on quickly, and this holds back their progress.
- Teachers do not always check on the progress of different groups during lessons or provide enough challenge, especially for the most-able pupils.
- Marking is not always effective in helping pupils to improve their work.
- Pupils' achievement requires improvement in Key Stage 2. Too few pupils make rapid progress or build well on the standards they reach at the end of Key Stage 1.
- The school's website does not include all the required information about the impact of additional funds on pupils' achievement.

### The school has the following strengths

- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very effectively, and prepares them well for life in modern Britain. They have a good understanding and appreciation of different cultures and beliefs.
- Pupils readily take on roles and responsibilities with high levels of maturity. They are encouraged to share their views and discuss issues they care about.
- Pupils feel safe and are well cared for. They know how to keep themselves safe and whom to go to if they have a problem.
- Children achieve well in the early years and Key Stage 1. Teaching in these age groups is consistently better than it is for older pupils.
- Reading is taught well across the school. Pupils make good use of their skills in phonics (letters and the sounds they make) to help them read.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classes. They saw parts of 36 lessons, 12 of which were jointly observed with the headteacher or senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with pupils, the headteacher, other staff with leadership responsibilities and members of the governing body. Inspectors also spoke to a representative of the local authority and an external consultant who works with the school.
- There were not enough responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) to generate information for inspectors to consider. However, inspectors spoke informally to parents as they brought their children to school in order to gain their views. They also took account of the views expressed in the 68 questionnaires returned by staff.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read, talked to them about their learning and reviewed the work in their books.
- Inspectors reviewed a number of documents, including the school's checks on how well it is doing, school action plans, data on pupils' current attainment, leaders' reports following lesson observations, and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

## Inspection team

Heather Simpson, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Julie McCarthy	Additional Inspector
John Pitt	Additional Inspector
David Westall	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Birchfield Community School is much larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The school has separate provision on site for children aged 2 to 4 in the Pre-School Academy. This is in addition to the Nursery and Reception classes and is inspected separately. Most children attend the Nursery on a part-time basis but a small minority attend full time, as do those in the Reception classes.
- All pupils are from minority ethnic heritages, mainly Pakistani, Indian or Bangladeshi. Many pupils speak two languages, English and their heritage language, but they are able to communicate effectively in school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported through the pupil premium is much higher than the national average. This is additional funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below 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.
- The governing body manages a breakfast club on the school site. It was included in the inspection.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and thereby accelerate progress, especially in Key Stage 2, by making sure that teachers:
  - check the progress of all groups of pupils during lessons and pick up and address misunderstandings as they occur
  - provide more challenging work, particularly for the most-able pupils, and move learning on quickly when pupils show they understand the work set
  - give pupils precise and clear guidance through marking on how to improve their work, and check that they respond.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
  - using all sources of information to identify where further improvements can be made to the quality of teaching
  - holding teachers rigorously to account for pupils' year-on-year performance and setting more challenging targets for teachers, particularly in Key Stage 2
  - streamlining action plans with a sharp focus on key priorities and clear, measurable targets against which leaders and governors can evaluate success
  - giving governors detailed information about pupils' performance so that they can challenge senior leaders effectively and check that timely support is provided where it is needed
  - ensuring that governors provide information about the impact of the pupil premium and the primary physical education and sport funding on the school's website
  - working closely with the few parents whose children are regularly absent to make sure they know the importance of regular attendance in sustaining good achievement.

An external review of governance, including a review of the school's use of the pupil premium, should be undertaken in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and management may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leaders have not secured a culture in which teaching, learning and good behaviour can flourish. Since the school's previous inspection, its leaders and governors have not been effective in maintaining consistently good teaching and achievement, especially in Key Stage 2. As a result, pupils' progress has slowed and those who left Year 6 in 2013 and 2014 did not reach the levels of which they were capable.
- Senior and subject leaders carry out checks on the quality of teaching and learning, but they do not bring all sources of information together to make an accurate judgement about the quality of teaching and pinpoint areas for improvement. For example, school data and work in books show that pupils in Key Stage 2 make expected progress, but leaders' judgements of teaching, based on short samples of lessons observed, show that almost all teaching is good or better. Consequently, leaders' evaluation is too generous and teaching is not having the intended impact on pupils' achievement.
- Leaders set annual targets for teachers but these are not always sufficiently challenging to ensure that more pupils make rapid progress. Pay awards are recommended by the headteacher and approved by the governing body when teaching is less than good.
- Leaders have produced a large number of action plans to help accelerate the rate of pupils' progress in different subjects. While they are mostly clear and appropriate, they try to cover too many priorities and the criteria against which senior leaders and governors monitor success are not sharp enough or reviewed regularly.
- Leaders track the progress of individual pupils in all classes in reading, writing and mathematics. However, they do not summarise this information so that they have a whole-school overview of how well different ability groups or year groups are doing. This prevents them from quickly identifying where progress slows down so that additional help and support can be provided. Governors' ability to challenge senior leaders is also reduced as they do not receive this information in a concise format.
- The school's accurate data show that progress in Key Stage 2 is accelerating, particularly in Year 6. This shows that the school has the capacity to secure further improvement.
- Pupils in this school come from a wide range of different ethnicities and backgrounds. Staff make sure that pupils learn to respect and value each other, develop a very good appreciation of those with different beliefs and from other cultures, and that they all have an equal chance to succeed. An eye-catching display in the entrance sums this up beautifully. It says: 'We are all different but we have the same values.'
- Pupils have a very good understanding of the fundamental values that underpin the British way of life. For example, they hold 'council and ministerial meetings' that mirror those of the government. Those involved represent the views of other pupils and discuss issues that concern pupils, for example equal rights, the extinction of animals and the need to reduce litter.
- Displays around the school and in all classrooms illustrate the dynamic way in which pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted. Pupils value the diversity found within the school, which is a vibrant, happy community where all are respected. Any hint of discrimination is tackled firmly.
- The school has taken good account of the new national curriculum in planning how and what pupils are taught. Leaders are still considering how best to record and track pupils' progress following the removal of assessment levels. The way in which topics are taught helps to further promote English and mathematics but also extends pupils' other skills and abilities. Pupils enjoy lesson activities and the additional visits and visitors that enrich their learning.
- The pupil premium funding to support eligible disadvantaged pupils pays for additional staff and extra resources to improve pupils' reading, mathematical and technology skills. Over time, the strategies used have not been fully effective in accelerating progress and closing the gaps between disadvantaged pupils

and other pupils in the school and nationally, especially in Key Stage 2.

- The school uses the primary school physical education and sport premium funding effectively. An outdoor adventure programme (TOAD) for pupils in Year 6 helps them to develop their physical and social skills and promotes their well-being. Specialist coaches and instructors teach lessons, run clubs and help to develop teachers' skills. As a result, pupils are achieving more in physical education and gaining greater success in sports competitions and tournaments.
- The school buys in support from an external consultant to challenge its performance and check leaders' judgements. A recent focus has involved looking at the attainment of current year groups. The local authority does not check the impact of this support and has little input into school improvement as school leaders do not wish to engage with them following previous disagreements.
- Leaders and governors make sure that the school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils and staff are effective and meet all statutory requirements. As a result, it is a safe place to be.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governance requires improvement. The governors are very supportive of the school and have a good idea about the strengths and weaknesses in pupils' work, but rely too much on senior leaders to inform them as their understanding of assessment data is limited and concise information is not available.
  - Governors set suitable targets for managing the performance of the headteacher and other staff, and know how well staff are progressing towards them. They keep abreast of the performance of teachers but do not always link teachers' pay to the progress of pupils.
  - Governors visit school and meet with teachers, leaders and pupils. They have a good understanding of the curriculum and the opportunities provided for pupils. Minutes of governors' meetings confirm that they discuss important issues and take action where needed to ensure that these issues are resolved.
  - Governors do not ensure that all statutory duties are met. The school's website is missing some of the required information; there is no reporting on the impact of the pupil premium and the primary physical education and sport funding.

## The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. In some lessons, where teaching does not motivate or excite pupils, they do not show a keenness to learn. On these occasions, some are inattentive and slow to start activities. Their work rate is slow and they do not always finish tasks.
- Attendance is stubbornly below average and the proportion of persistently absent pupils is above the national rate. Leaders have taken action to work with families to improve attendance. The family support worker liaises closely with pupils who struggle to come to school regularly in order to improve their attendance. However, some parents take pupils on extended holidays abroad during term time, without the consent of the school, to the detriment of their children's education.
- Around the school, pupils are polite and well mannered and behave sensibly when moving around. Their behaviour on the playground and in assemblies, for example, is usually good. Pupils say that behaviour is generally good but if there are any incidents, adults deal with these effectively.
- Pupils contribute positively to school life. School ministers and councillors collect pupils' views and discuss important issues that affect or concern pupils. They develop a sense of responsibility toward others by taking on roles such as Eco-committee members, 'lunchtime heroes', librarians, and head boy or head girl.

### Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say they feel safe and understand how to keep themselves safe in different situations, including when using the internet. They know who to go to if they have a problem. The parents who expressed a view think that their children are well cared for and safe in school.

- Bullying is infrequent and pupils are aware of the different forms of bullying. School records show that leaders take positive action to address any concerns, including any racism or bullying, and are strongly committed to tackling any discrimination.
- All adults, including governors, demonstrate a strong awareness of their responsibilities to keep pupils safe. Safeguarding policies and procedures are fully applied. Any accidents are carefully recorded and regular site checks are carried out to make sure that the building and outside areas are safe and secure. Checks are made of all staff to ensure they are safe to work with children. Safeguarding training for all staff is up to date.
- Pupils are well supervised at break and lunchtime. The breakfast club provides a safe and nurturing environment for pupils before school. Although only a small number attend, it is a valuable resource for parents and helps prepare pupils for their lessons by providing a healthy breakfast and opportunities to develop their personal and social skills.

### **The quality of teaching** requires improvement

- Although teaching is improving, it is not consistently good enough to ensure that all groups of pupils in all year groups make rapid progress, especially in Key Stage 2. A third of the teachers are newly qualified and some are in the early stages of their development. Leaders are providing good support to help these staff acquire the expertise needed quickly, but it is too soon to see the full impact.
- Teachers and other adults do not always check effectively on the progress and understanding of pupils in lessons. This means they are not able to quickly identify and address errors and misunderstandings as they occur, or to make sure that pupils are making sufficient progress.
- In some lessons, teachers do not challenge pupils enough to help them make good progress. Sometimes they do not move work on quickly enough when pupils have grasped a concept so that they are not fully stretched to reach their potential. This is particularly the case with the most-able pupils and explains why too few reach the higher levels in national tests, especially in reading and writing.
- Most teachers mark pupils' books regularly and accurately. Teachers are, increasingly, adding comments or setting additional tasks to check pupils' understanding. However, the comments made are not always focused sharply enough on what pupils need to do next to improve their work, especially in writing. Even when helpful guidance is provided, staff do not always then check to make sure pupils have responded by redrafting their work or learning from their mistakes.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are positive in all classes. Teaching assistants make a good contribution to pupils' learning by providing effective support to disadvantaged pupils or those who are disabled or have special educational needs, to ensure they keep up with their classmates.
- The teaching of writing is improving and most pupils have neat handwriting and a good grasp of spelling. Their use of grammar is slightly weaker. Reading is taught well in the early years and Key Stage 1, and pupils develop good skills in breaking down and sounding out difficult words. However, teachers do not build well enough on these skills in Key Stage 2 or help pupils to establish key strategies for finding information quickly or developing comprehension skills.
- Mathematics is taught well in Key Stage 1. Teachers successfully develop pupils' mathematical vocabulary, have high expectations and set work that is challenging and interesting. Progress is also accelerating in mathematics in Key Stage 2, especially in Year 6. Pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 are grouped by ability and this ensures tasks set are more closely matched to what they already know and can do.
- Specialist teachers help to develop pupils' cultural awareness and understanding, for example in physical education, music, technology and French lessons.
- Teachers set homework regularly for pupils across the school. This helps to reinforce the skills and knowledge taught, especially in English and mathematics. Pupils use computer software to practise

mathematics skills and increase their speed of mental calculation. They also read regularly at home and learn spellings.

### **The achievement of pupils** requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, pupils' progress has slowed in Key Stage 2. Despite recent improvements, teaching has not been challenging enough to help pupils make good progress, especially in reading and writing.
- Pupils make good progress in Reception and Key Stage 1. Their attainment is typically broadly average when they leave Year 2, reflecting good progress given their starting points when they join Reception. Progress in Key Stage 2 has been more variable. In 2013, the attainment of Year 6 pupils dropped markedly and was below average. Standards recovered in 2014 in writing and mathematics but were still below average in reading. Leaders have recognised this and purchased new resources to help improve the teaching of reading in Key Stage 2. As a result, progress rates are now accelerating and standards are rising.
- The teaching of phonics (sounds and the letters they make) is very effective. As a result, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level in the Year 1 national screening check was above average in both 2013 and 2014.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similar progress to other groups. The senior leader who has recently taken over responsibility for their learning is very knowledgeable about ways to address their needs, and planning and support for these pupils have improved.
- The most-able pupils make good progress in Key Stage 1 and the proportions reaching the higher level (Level 3) in their work is broadly average. Although the progress of the most-able pupils in Key Stage 2 requires improvement, more of these pupils are reaching the higher levels, especially in mathematics. This is because work is more challenging for them and they are responding better to it. Books checked during the inspection confirm this improvement.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils requires improvement in line with their classmates. Those who left Year 6 in 2014 were one year behind others in the school in mathematics and one term behind in reading and writing. They were over two terms behind other pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. The school's use of the pupil premium funding is not yet effective, and the gaps are not closing sufficiently quickly in Key Stage 2, especially in mathematics.
- There is little difference in the performance of different minority ethnic groups over time. While leaders analyse the attainment of these groups, they are aware that they do not analyse progress well enough to address any differences more effectively and speedily.

### **The early years provision** is good

- Children achieve well in the early years because teaching is consistently more closely matched to their abilities than it is for older pupils in Key Stage 2. Most children join the school with skills and knowledge below those typical for their age in all areas. Staff have an astute understanding of how young children learn and provide a rich range of activities to foster children's personal development and their academic learning.
- Imaginative and lively teaching captures children's interest effectively. All adults use questions well to probe children's understanding, mixing well-judged guidance with letting children discuss things for themselves. As a result of consistently effective teaching, children make good progress in all areas of learning and are well prepared to join Year 1.

- Staff plan effectively to cover all areas of children’s learning. They ensure that children have ample opportunities to learn how to use their initiative while also fostering early reading, writing and mathematical development. During the inspection, for example, children benefited from stimulating and well-informed teaching and made good progress in developing their basic reading skills.
  
- Adults ensure that children are safe. Staff are highly vigilant and children know that staff take good care of them. As a result, they are relaxed and smiles and laughter are commonplace. Children feel secure, are interested and develop well as confident learners. They behave consistently well.
  
- The leadership and management of the early years are good. The leader monitors children’s progress carefully, helps staff to accelerate the learning of children who may need more support, and provides a clear sense of direction. The dedication of staff shines through strongly and it is clear that they are committed to doing their very best for the children. Teamwork is very strong.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	103321
<b>Local authority</b>	Birmingham
<b>Inspection number</b>	456274

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	762
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Geoff Rees
<b>Headteacher</b>	Moira Foster-Brown
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	15 March 2012
<b>Telephone number</b>	0121 464 5661
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