

# Birches Green Junior School

Birches Green Road, Erdington, Birmingham, West Midlands B24 9SR

## Inspection dates

3–5 May 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Senior leaders have not been robust enough in their evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses. School improvement plans lack precision and detail. Leaders have not tackled areas for improvement quickly enough and this is having an effect on outcomes for pupils.
- Teaching is not consistently good throughout the school. Teachers do not routinely use information about pupils' progress to plan activities at the right level of challenge for all groups of pupils. Disadvantaged pupils, middle-ability pupils and boys are not achieving as well as they should.
- Senior leaders are not robust enough in their monitoring of teaching and performance over time. They do not hold temporary staff to account closely enough and have not taken effective action to challenge weaker performance.
- Low-level disruptive behaviour in some classes is affecting the learning of groups of pupils, in particular boys. Presentation of work in books does not reflect pupils' ability, as some teachers do not insist that pupils present their work to the best of their ability.
- Teachers do not consistently provide pupils with opportunities to write for a sustained period of time or to practise their reasoning skills in mathematics.
- Governors do not accurately evaluate how well the pupil-premium funding is used. As a result, the differences between the progress of disadvantaged pupils and others nationally are not diminishing quickly enough.
- Some parents believe communication with them could be improved, particularly in how effectively the school is managing behaviour.

### The school has the following strengths

- There is some good teaching in the school, where teachers use a range of strategies to meet the needs of pupils. This means they are effectively challenged and make good progress.
- Pupils are given the chance to attend a residential trip every year and the school provides a significant number of first-hand experiences that enhance their knowledge of life in modern Britain.
- Support staff are deployed effectively in lessons and make a positive contribution to pupils' progress.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress.

## Full report

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

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:
  - self-evaluation and school improvement planning are focused more sharply on the analysis of school assessment and performance information
  - the performance of all leaders and teachers is closely monitored and involves ambitious targets focusing on improving the quality of teaching and pupils' progress
  - leaders with responsibility for subjects other than English and mathematics are fully supported to undertake their roles and responsibilities so that they can have a more effective role in improving provision and pupils' standards
  - leaders use the information provided by the new assessment system to ensure that middle-ability pupils make the progress of which they are capable
  - governors evaluate how well the pupil-premium funding is used to ensure more effectively that differences between the progress of disadvantaged pupils and others nationally are quickly diminished.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to rapidly improve outcomes for all pupils, in particular disadvantaged pupils, middle-ability pupils and boys, by ensuring that teachers:
  - plan more closely the next steps in learning for pupils so that pupils of all abilities can excel
  - use assessment information more effectively to identify support for vulnerable groups of pupils
  - insist that pupils present their work as neatly as they can
  - provide pupils with opportunities to write at length in English lessons
  - develop pupils' mathematical reasoning skills more deeply.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
  - ensuring that lessons are sufficiently engaging and challenging so that low-level disruption is eradicated.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- The headteacher, senior leaders and governors have not ensured that their work has a positive impact on pupils' achievement. Self-evaluation is not robust enough to help secure good progress for pupils, including those of different abilities. The school improvement plan does not focus sharply enough on pupils' progress and achievement. This makes it difficult for leaders to gauge the impact of their actions on raising standards or improving achievement.
- Leaders' checks on teaching and learning are not effective enough. The headteacher has identified difficulties in the recruitment of permanent teachers. Teaching is not sufficiently focused on achieving better outcomes for pupils. Teachers responsible for managing subjects other than English and mathematics do not influence the work of staff enough to sustain improvements to teaching and learning.
- Performance management is not effective enough in securing improvements to the quality of teaching and learning. Although there is a clear system in place, teachers are not fully accountable for pupils' progress. Assessment information is not being utilised fully by leaders and governors to hold teachers and leaders to account for the achievement of pupils across the school.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils is variable across year groups. The use of pupil premium-funding has been carefully considered in order to support pupils who are disadvantaged. Activities include one-to-one tuition, support for participation in school trips, activities which aim to raise pupils' self-esteem and aspirations and funding additional sessions in literacy and numeracy. The impact of this funding has not been measured effectively enough by leaders and, as a result, differences between disadvantaged pupils' progress and that of others nationally are still significant. The variable quality of teaching also reduces the effectiveness of this work.
- The curriculum includes an appropriate and broad range of subjects. Pupils explore these subjects through a range of interesting topics. There are also a variety of extra-curricular activities for pupils to enjoy that further enhance their learning. Pupils enjoy school and value the experiences that it provides.
- Pupils benefit from opportunities that promote their personal development and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. There are democratic processes to elect pupils to roles of responsibility around the school. Pupils are proud of these roles. Pupils learn about a range of cultures and religions. British values such as respect, democracy and tolerance are taught through special topics and assemblies.
- Pupils enjoy the variety of sports activities on offer and demonstrate positive attitudes to keeping fit and healthy. Through the local school sports network, pupils regularly attend competitive sports events, where they have achieved success in a wide range of sports. Staff receive regular training and therefore the additional sports funding is used well.
- The local authority has provided robust support and challenge to the school. Leaders have also benefited from the advice of a national leader of education, who is their school improvement partner, and a local outstanding school leader. The local authority

has held leaders and governors to account and is committed to securing a good education for the pupils at the school.

- Leaders have a clear understanding of the needs of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and their provision and assessment. Progress is monitored regularly and targets set to boost pupils' outcomes. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported within lessons and leaders use additional funding for these pupils effectively.
- Although further improvement is still needed, there are some indications that middle leaders are starting to take on more responsibility for the subjects they manage and oversee. They are starting to focus more on pupils' progress and have a broadly accurate view of what needs to be done to improve achievement in their subject. Leaders demonstrate the capacity for further improvement but it is too soon to see the impact of this work in all subjects.

### **Governance of the school**

- Governors have not focused well enough on making sure that leaders secure the improvements that are needed for pupils to receive a good standard of education at the school.
- Governors know the school's strengths and weaknesses, but they have not checked closely enough the impact of some of the improvements that leaders are making in the use of the pupil premium and outcomes for pupils.
- Governors are passionate about the school and are ambitious for the pupils to do well. They are rightly proud of the care pupils receive at the school. They have maintained effective oversight of their statutory duties. For example, the chair of the governing body visits the school to ensure that arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The single central record is up to date and all required checks are in place. Leaders take appropriate care when recruiting staff to ensure that they are safe to work with children.
- Leaders have made sure that staff receive up-to-date training and know how to raise a concern about a pupil's welfare. Leaders keep records when a concern about a pupil's welfare is raised. Where necessary, they make referrals to the appropriate authority in a timely manner.
- Pupils say that they are taught how to keep themselves safe. Most pupils were able to explain that, if they saw anything inappropriate when they were using the internet, they should inform a trusted adult straight away. The police support the school well by helping to deliver aspects of the curriculum relating to child safety.
- Although the large majority of parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, believe their children are safe and well looked after in school, a significant minority disagree. The school uses risk assessments to help keep pupils safe but, on occasions, these need to be more detailed in identifying appropriate

ways to minimise risk.

### Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

### Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not consistently good. In some year groups, teachers use effective strategies to enable pupils to learn well but, in others, teaching is much less effective, so pupils do not make the progress they are capable of. Assessments of pupils' learning and progress are not being used consistently enough to identify the most vulnerable pupils who are at risk of underachieving.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving are not consistently high enough. On occasions, work does not stretch or offer sufficient challenge to pupils of middle abilities. Consequently, pupils often spend time completing low-level tasks and waiting for others to catch up, rather than tackling more demanding activities.
- Work seen in pupils' books is of a variable quality. Sometimes, pupils produce work that is well presented and neat and demonstrates real pride in their achievements. On other occasions, pupils' work is messy and careless. Teachers do not consistently hold pupils to account for work of poor quality, so it goes unchallenged. Teachers are not planning or doing enough to provide pupils with information about the next steps in their learning. As a result, pupils are often unclear about how best to improve their work.
- Pupils are not challenged enough in some lessons, especially when pupils over-practise skills, for example calculating in mathematics. There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop their reasoning and problem-solving skills. As a result, pupils do not learn as rapidly as they could. Teachers do not routinely pick up errors and misunderstandings in lessons quickly enough and so learning is not as effective as it could be.
- Pupils benefit from a wide range of learning experiences. Opportunities to enrich the curriculum are provided but these activities have insufficient impact on pupils' progress because they are not closely linked to the curriculum. Leaders could not show how the school ensures coverage of content, as well as cross-curricular development of skills.
- The teaching of reading, including the 'catch-up' support programmes provided by staff for pupils who do not read at an age-appropriate level, is successful. During guided reading sessions, pupils work at a level that matches their needs and they receive the support and challenge required.
- Teachers have worked with colleagues from partner schools to ensure that their assessment of pupils' work is accurate, and is more closely aligned to national age-related expectations. Recent improvements to the school's assessment system are enabling teachers to identify pupils who are below the expected levels more quickly, and ensure that they receive the help they need to catch up. However, assessment is not being used enough to check that pupils of middle ability who have the potential to attain age-related standards reach their full potential.

### Personal development, behaviour and welfare

### Requires improvement

## Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement. In some classes, low-level disruption and the attitude to learning of a minority of pupils are having a negative impact on the progress they make.
- Pupils reported that some incidents of bullying, racism and homophobic name-calling occur and that some pupils in the playground show aggressive behaviour towards one another. However, pupils also say that adults are quick to sort out any problems that they may have.
- Pupils do not always take pride in their work, particularly in subjects other than English and mathematics and in year groups where adults' expectations are not as high as they should be.
- Leaders provide opportunities for pupils to take on additional responsibilities. Through their work in the school council, pupils have been given genuine opportunities to identify improvements they wish to see in their school and then take action to put these in place. Pupils contribute to the life of the school by raising money for charity, helping with the infant school's sports day and disco and by showing parents around their school.
- Pupils feel safe when in school. They have a good understanding of e-safety and of the risks associated with the use of the internet.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. When teaching is not strong, pupils' interest is not high enough and this slows their progress. Pupils generally work well together, especially when discussing ideas, but some low-level disruption affects learning and progress.
- Pupils are generous in praising others during assemblies, particularly when they receive their good-behaviour and attendance awards and house points.
- Pupils move around the school and between the sites in a calm and orderly manner. Pupils are polite and courteous to visitors and each other. They understand the school's behaviour policy and feel that adults are fair.
- Some parents value the approachability of staff and senior leaders. They feel that staff listen well and respond to any issues raised.
- The attendance rate of some groups of pupils was too low in 2016. However, leaders' prompt actions have enabled disadvantaged pupils, girls and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities to attend school much more regularly this academic year.

### Outcomes for pupils

### Requires improvement

- Pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics was significantly below national figures in 2016, especially for those with middle starting points. Progress has been well below average since the last inspection, with too few pupils reaching expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics. This includes disadvantaged pupils who have the

potential to reach age-related standards and the most able pupils who are also disadvantaged.

- Inspectors' scrutiny of pupils' books across a range of subjects and year groups showed that the progress made by current pupils in the school is variable. Writing skills, mathematical reasoning and reading are not yet consistently strong. Not enough pupils in the school are working at greater depth and work in pupils' books shows that there are not enough opportunities provided for them to write at length independently. This slows pupils' progress and achievement in writing.
- Rates of progress of pupils currently in the school are variable. In some classes and year groups, pupils are making good progress, but this is not true across the school or for all groups of pupils. For example, boys' progress is slower than that of girls. Other groups, such as disadvantaged pupils and those who need to catch up, do not make the progress they are capable of.
- The use of pupil-premium funding supports the school's aim to give more experiences to its pupils. The impact of this funding on pupils' outcomes is weaker. Disadvantaged pupils do not make consistently good progress. While improvements are evident in classes where good teaching occurs, in other year groups the difference between their attainment and that of other pupils nationally with the same starting points shows little sign of diminishing.
- Improved consistency in the teaching of reading has led to more pupils meeting the expected standard for their age. The gap between current pupils in school and pupils nationally has narrowed. Teachers monitor reading accuracy and fluency regularly. One pupil remarked, 'The teacher has to write in the reading book when we have read it to make sure we can read properly.'
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their individual starting points because their needs are identified quickly. Good levels of support are put into place and reviewed regularly.

## School details

Unique reference number	103168
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10025216

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	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	232
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Beverley Roberts
Headteacher	Mary McManus
Telephone number	0121 373 3457
Website	<a href="http://www.birchgni.bham.sch.uk/">www.birchgni.bham.sch.uk/</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:enquiry@birchgnj.bham.sch.uk">enquiry@birchgnj.bham.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	16–27 January 2013

## Information about this school

- The school is an average-sized junior school.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities who require support is above average.
- The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by additional funding through the pupil premium, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, is well above average.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage, but the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average.
- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about the curriculum on its website.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in every class, both independently and with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator, the mathematics and English lead teachers, pupils and representatives of the governing body.
- A meeting took place with the improvement adviser for the local authority and the local authority school improvement manager.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation. These included the school's self-evaluation and school development plan, responses to the staff questionnaire, governing body minutes, local authority reports, attendance records and safeguarding records.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work and observed their conduct at break and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors had discussions with parents and took account of the 16 responses to the online Parent View survey and 10 parent free-text responses.
- Inspectors took into account pupils' standards of attainment and rates of progress.
- Inspectors read a range of school policies, including those relating to safeguarding and child protection.

## Inspection team

Max Vlahakis, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Julie Griffiths	Ofsted Inspector
Michael Appleby	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. [www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings](http://www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings).

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