

Rowley Hall Primary School

Windsor Road, Rowley Regis, West Midlands B65 9HU

Inspection dates

6–7 February 2018

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
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- While pupils are now making better progress overall, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 in 2017 remained below national levels.
- Disadvantaged pupils are not yet achieving as well as other pupils in the school, or other non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.
- The standards of teaching and learning are not consistently good across the school. As a result, pupils' progress and attainment vary between year groups. Leaders do not yet analyse pupils' progress in all subjects.
- The most able pupils are not challenged sufficiently well to achieve the standards of which they are capable.
- While standards in writing are improving, pupils do not have the same opportunities to write at length in subjects other than literacy.
- Teachers do not intervene quickly enough to make sure that pupils' misconceptions about their learning are addressed.
- Leaders do not use the information they gather carefully enough to analyse trends in behaviour, incidents, attendance and exclusions. Rates of absence, fixed-term exclusions and incidents have risen this year.
- Current systems do not enable leaders to have an accurate picture of the progress pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities make. Leaders do not check the support for this group of pupils well enough.
- In some year groups, the good standard of behaviour seen in lessons is not mirrored in pupils' behaviour during breaktimes and lunchtimes. Staff do not model expectations of good behaviour consistently well.

The school has the following strengths

- Children in early years get off to a good start in their education.
- The teaching of phonics is effective and above standards seen nationally.
- The curriculum provides a broad range of activities for pupils, enriched by additional trips and visits.
- School leaders are now taking effective action to improve standards across the school. Newly appointed middle leaders make a positive contribution to recent improvements.
- Staff work well with different agencies to make sure that the most vulnerable pupils and families get the help they need. Pupils are safe.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve outcomes for all groups of pupils so that:
 - more pupils achieve or exceed age-related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics, in line with other pupils nationally
 - groups of pupils, particularly boys and disadvantaged pupils, are helped to catch up with other pupils nationally.
- Secure good-quality teaching and learning in all classes, enabling pupils to make the progress of which they are capable by ensuring that:
 - all staff have high expectations about what pupils can achieve
 - staff intervene quickly to address pupils' misunderstandings while the work is still fresh in pupils' minds
 - the most able pupils are given tasks that stretch and challenge them in their learning
 - pupils have frequent opportunities to write at length in other subjects as well as in literacy.
- Improve pupils' behaviour and attendance, and reduce fixed-term exclusions by ensuring that:
 - all staff model and expect consistently high standards of behaviour, especially during breaktimes and lunchtimes
 - leaders analyse information they collect about pupils so that they can identify any emerging patterns and use this information to intervene to improve behaviour and attendance and reduce exclusions.
- Build on the recent improvements to the leadership and management of the school by:
 - embedding middle leaders' roles to further improve teaching and learning, so that the progress and attainment of all pupils continue to improve
 - ensuring that the provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is monitored systematically and the quality of support is well matched to the needs of the pupils
 - developing a system to enable leaders to track the progress of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities from their starting points
 - tracking the progress of pupils in other curriculum subjects.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Until recently, leaders and governors have not acted quickly enough to address the poor progress and outcomes of pupils across the school. However, the headteacher has now taken effective steps to strengthen the leadership team and raise expectations of all staff. As a result, the drive for improvement in all aspects of the school's work is beginning to have an impact.
- The headteacher and governors have improved the capacity of the leadership team through new appointments and a wider distribution of responsibilities. Staff are now clear about the need for rapid improvement. Leaders at all levels have a clear sense of purpose and a drive to make sure that pupils receive the high-quality education that they deserve.
- While there have been improvements in pupils' progress and attainment in the last year, the quality of teaching and learning remains variable. Staffing issues have had a negative impact on the consistency of the quality of teaching in the school. As a result, standards differ across year groups, affecting pupils' performance. Leaders are addressing these challenges, but there is still work to do to ensure consistency in teaching for all pupils.
- Middle leaders are enthusiastic about their roles and have a clear plan of action for their areas of responsibility. Some of these appointments are relatively new, and as a result, it is too early to see the impact of leaders' actions. However, there is no doubt about the shared commitment of these leaders to improving the school.
- Leaders have a detailed knowledge of the needs of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, and support is well matched to individual pupils' needs. However, leaders do not monitor the quality of this support well enough, or ensure that pupils are always receiving the support when they should. On some occasions, staff administrative duties affect the support pupils receive.
- Leaders have developed their assessment systems over time to make sure that teachers have information about pupils' achievements to help plan their lessons well. Leaders have a good understanding of the progress that different pupils make, as well as groups that need to catch up. As a result, recent actions to address these gaps in performance are beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' progress and attainment.
- Leaders have refined the six-weekly meetings about pupils' progress, empowering teachers to take a greater responsibility for the progress of pupils in their class. Phase leaders and the special educational needs coordinator contribute to these meetings, so that pupils who need additional help can be identified and supported quickly.
- Staff speak positively about the professional development opportunities they receive to help them improve their practice. Staff recognise the need to improve outcomes for the pupils.
- Information about the progress of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is less accurate. The school's information system suggests that this group of pupils are not making enough progress. However, this is not the case for most pupils. Leaders are not

able currently to measure progress for this group of pupils from their starting points.

- Leaders have not ensured that parents and carers of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities receive enough information about the impact of the additional support their child receives.
- As a result of poor outcomes in reading, leaders have reviewed their approach to the teaching of reading across the school. Leaders have ensured that pupils learn to decode words through the systematic teaching of phonics. Pupils read books suited to their phonics skills and this approach has resulted in very good outcomes in the phonics screening check.
- Leaders now place a greater emphasis on the teaching of reading and the development of pupils' comprehension skills, grounded in a developing love of books. Pupils enjoy spending time in the well-maintained and stocked library, and help to select books to purchase. Nearly every classroom has its own reading area, and pupils read to staff several times a week, as well as participating in guided reading sessions.
- Leaders have taken steps to raise the profile of the importance and enjoyment of reading through events such as the 'bedtime story' week, visits from local authors and joint visits to the local library with parents.
- As a result of these actions, more pupils are on track to achieve age-related expectations in reading this year. However, some of these strategies have not had time to have had enough of an impact on all pupils' reading skills. This is especially so for pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6, who have gaps in their learning due to poorer teaching in the past.
- Leaders have reviewed the curriculum to make sure that pupils can develop a range of skills through interesting and engaging activities and themes. Throughout the year, some subjects are 'blocked' for an extended period of time to enable pupils to deepen their experience in subjects such as science, history and art.
- Pupils enjoy additional enrichment activities, such as residential visits and outdoor pursuits, which help to develop pupils' social and emotional skills. Pupils explore different religious faiths through the curriculum. With the support of Sandwell Music Service, every pupil in Year 3 is learning to play the tenor horn. Inspectors enjoyed listening to the pupils practising together, and developing a love of music.
- Leaders and governors make sure that the physical education (PE) and sport premium funding is used to good effect, in improving teachers' skills in teaching PE, or engaging high-quality sports coaches to work with pupils. However, leaders' plans for spending this fund do not accurately reflect this year's allocation. Currently, pupils do not have the opportunity to go swimming beyond Year 4. Leaders do not know how many Year 6 pupils are on track to be able to swim at least 25 metres by the time they leave Rowley Hall.

Governance of the school

- In the past, governors did not do enough to challenge leaders about the poor progress and attainment of pupils over time. They did not ask searching questions of leaders, or address poor performance.

- Following a review of governance, governors are now clear about their responsibilities. The current governing body has new members and a wider set of skills, and as a result is becoming more effective. Governors now visit the school regularly and meet with leaders to check on the school's work. The local authority adviser has provided training and support for the governing body to enable governors to carry out their duties more effectively and ask searching questions of leaders.
- Governors now have a good understanding of the improvements that need to be made to the school. They have made sure that pupil premium funding is suitably targeted to raise standards and support disadvantaged pupils. As a result, this group is closing the in-school difference with other pupils. However, governors are less clear about the need to compare disadvantaged pupils' outcomes with those of other pupils nationally.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff are committed to keeping pupils safe, as well as making sure that they receive the support they need. Leaders hold weekly safeguarding meetings to identify and discuss any concerns about pupils, and seek additional help from other agencies when necessary.
- Leaders make sure that appropriate checks are carried out on staff before they begin working at the school. Detailed records are kept securely and updated regularly. All staff receive annual training in all aspects of safeguarding and receive frequent updates from the designated safeguarding leader. A number of leaders and governors have been trained in safer recruitment procedures.
- Staff also receive training on aspects of safeguarding which are relevant to the needs of the pupils in their school. Staff have recently attended training about attachment, and know about the risks to pupils from radicalisation and extremism. Leaders are acutely aware of the risks in the local area, but governors are less clear about these.
- Leaders have ensured that clear procedures are in place for staff to follow if they have a concern about a pupil. Leaders act on concerns quickly, and make further referrals when necessary. Confidential information about pupils is stored securely, in well-organised and maintained files.
- Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe in school, and staff echo this view. The site is safe and secure, and entry to the school building is managed well by the administrative team, using a robust signing and entry procedure.
- Pupils who have medical conditions are well supported in school. However, the record keeping for administering medication is not accurate enough.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Leaders have recognised that improving standards in teaching and learning will lead to better outcomes for the pupils, and have taken steps to address this. However, work in books and current progress show that some pupils could be doing better. Teaching is not yet consistently strong across all year groups, and as a result, better teaching is needed to make sure that pupils catch up and achieve their age-related expectations.
- Teachers do not have consistently high expectations about what pupils can achieve.

Where teaching is strong, lessons are well planned to match pupils' abilities, and consequently, pupils are challenged and stretched in their learning. This is not routinely the case, especially for the most able pupils.

- Work in books shows that expectations in writing are not as high in other subjects as they are in literacy. Work is not matched to pupils' abilities as well, and pupils complete the same tasks, regardless of their ability. As a result, some pupils find the work too hard or too easy. Pupils have fewer opportunities to write at length in subjects other than literacy.
- Not all pupils are developing enough resilience for learning. Where teaching is strong, pupils are able to discuss their understanding of their work, or where they went wrong. In other lessons, pupils are quick to rub out their mistakes rather than reflect on what went wrong. Some pupils, when they have finished an activity, sit passively, rather than trying to find out more.
- Teachers do not intervene quickly enough to address pupils' misconceptions or misunderstandings in lessons. Consequently, pupils can continue to make the same mistakes in their work, or their learning slows.
- Teachers' and other adults' use of questioning varies from class to class. Where teaching is strong, pupils are asked questions, which help them to deepen their learning. On other occasions, pupils are asked simple questions, or only pupils with their hands up are chosen.
- In mathematics, pupils sometimes repeat calculations that are too easy before moving on to more difficult problems. On other occasions, teachers try to move pupils on too quickly without checking their understanding of the task. Some pupils use practical equipment well to support them in their mathematical understanding. In Year 1, inspectors saw pupils using different coloured counters to solve number problems. However, this approach is not consistent across all year groups.
- Strong relationships are evident throughout the school, as reflected in pupils' behaviour in lessons. Where teaching is strong, pupils listen carefully and respond well. They work together cooperatively and help each other.
- The teaching of reading in key stage 1 is good. Teachers build on pupils' strong phonics knowledge and extend their reading skills further. Inspectors saw a group of pupils enjoying the story, 'We're Going on a Bear Hunt,' retelling the story, discussing the meaning of the text and identifying and spelling '-ing' words. In key stage 2, inspectors heard pupils reading fluently and with good comprehension.
- Inspectors saw pupils using some effective strategies to support them in their learning. For example, in a guided reading lesson, pupils were using the 'APE' strategy – answer, prove, explain – effectively.
- Teachers use progress and assessment information to target pupils who need to catch up, especially boys and disadvantaged pupils. Current progress information and work in books show that these groups of pupils are making better progress, but the inconsistent standards of teaching mean that there is still more to do.
- Work in pupils' books shows that generally, there are high standards in handwriting and presentation.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- There is a strong emphasis on values and respect that permeates through the school's work. The school council plays an active role in the school. Their 'health and happiness' committee raised awareness about a hole in the school fence, and made sure it was fixed so that pupils could be kept safe.
- Pupils' achievements are celebrated regularly and displays promote respect for the rights of others. The prayer tree in the reception area allows pupils to share their thoughts and prayers by writing a message or thought and hanging it on the tree.
- Lunchtime activities are thoughtfully planned, to help pupils spend time together to develop their social skills, or help to look after areas of the school, such as the library. Pupils enjoy reading, and some have set up their own 'anime' (animation) club within the library club.
- Regular safety-themed weeks such as on anti-bullying or internet safety help pupils to learn how to keep themselves safe. Pupils say that they feel safe and talked with enthusiasm about the police visiting the school regularly to help them learn about keeping safe in the community.
- Pupils to whom inspectors spoke said that there was very little bullying at the school, and it was more to do with pupils 'falling out'. However, a small percentage of pupils and parents who completed the online questionnaires and surveys expressed the view that there was bullying in the school. School records show a small number of bullying incidents over time.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Behaviour during breaktimes and in the lunch hall did not reflect the positive behaviour seen in lessons. While pupils in Years 5 and 6 play together sensibly, breaktimes are not a positive experience for other year groups. Inspectors saw boisterous behaviour in Years 3 and 4, with pupils slow to follow teachers' instructions to line up. In Years 1 and 2, pupils play with resources that are tired or broken.
- Pupils' behaviour is much improved in the playground when pupils are able to access play equipment and join in with activities. Play leaders from Year 6 organise group games for younger pupils. As a result, pupils play cooperatively with their friends.
- Lunchtime in the hall is not a positive experience for pupils. Noise levels are high. Expectations of behaviour are not addressed, and some pupils sit in their coats and hats eating their lunch. Staff do not encourage pupils to use cutlery appropriately, and plates are banged on the bin to empty them, resulting in food being scattered on the floor. Pupils told inspectors that they did not enjoy the dinners much, or that their choice was not available.
- The newly appointed attendance officer has introduced strategies to address the drop

in attendance levels this year, but it is too early to see any impact of these actions. The level of persistent absence is much higher than last year, and the attendance of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities has dropped.

- Pupils who have challenging behaviour are often supported by external agencies. However, despite this support, the number of fixed-term and repeat exclusions is increasing over time and is higher than national figures. A very small number of pupils are currently on part-time timetables, and leaders have not ensured that their re-integration plan helps them back into full-time education quickly enough. As a result, these most vulnerable pupils are missing even more time from school.
- While leaders gather attendance, incident and exclusion information, because they do not analyse it, they cannot identify any trends. As a result, they cannot target support effectively to reduce incidents and exclusions and improve attendance.
- Pupils move around the school in a calm and orderly manner. They are polite and courteous to staff and visitors, greeting them and holding doors open. On several occasions, pupils asked inspectors, 'Are you our VIP guests?' and were happy to talk about their learning. Inspectors saw pupils behave well during school assemblies.
- Pupils understand the expectations for behaviour in lessons. The 'parking' system enables pupils to take a short time away from their learning to reflect on their behaviour before re-joining the class. Pupils to whom inspectors spoke felt that the system worked well in helping to improve behaviour.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Following the poor outcomes seen in progress and attainment at the end of key stage 2 in 2016, leaders worked with urgency to bring about improvements in reading, writing and mathematics. As a result, 2017 saw improved outcomes in all subjects. However, levels of attainment remain below those seen nationally.
- In 2017, pupils' progress at the end of key stage 2 improved significantly, but there remain gaps in the progress of different subjects and groups of pupils. In mathematics, progress has been in the bottom 20% of all schools nationally for the last two years.
- Previously, attainment in key stage 1 had been well below national levels, especially in reading and mathematics. 2017 saw a significant improvement in attainment in all areas, although differences between all pupils and disadvantaged pupils remain.
- The school's current assessment information, and pupils' work in books, show further signs of progress in reading, writing and mathematics. More pupils are now on track to achieve age-related expectations than in previous years. However, progress varies depending on year group and prior ability. Pupils in key stage 1 are making particularly strong progress and most other year groups are making gains in their learning.
- Information shows that disadvantaged pupils' progress has also improved, but fewer pupils are expected to achieve age-related expectations than other pupils nationally. There is a similar pattern for boys, and leaders have identified that these groups need additional support to help them catch up.

- Not enough pupils are on track to achieve greater depth in their learning. Leaders have rightly identified that more work needs to be done to enable pupils to reach the higher standards.
- As a result of improvements to the teaching of phonics, outcomes have improved. The proportion of pupils passing the phonics screening check has been above the national average for two years in a row.
- Teachers take part in regular internal and external moderation activities with other staff and schools in the locality. As a result, leaders are confident that teachers are making accurate judgements about pupils' progress.

Early years provision

Good

- From their low starting points, children have a good start to their education in the early years provision. The provision is well led and managed. Children are safe and welfare requirements are met.
- The proportion of children achieving a good level of development has risen steadily over the last three years and is now almost in line with levels seen nationally. Early years pupil premium funding is used to excellent effect, and as a result, disadvantaged children outperform other children nationally. In addition, boys' outcomes are higher than those of other boys nationally.
- Leaders have a good understanding of children's abilities on entry because they carry out accurate checks, and talk to parents about what their child can do. A high proportion of children require support to develop their communication and language skills. Consequently, leaders have ensured that there is weekly support from a speech and language therapist to boost children's speech and language development.
- Children settle quickly into the early years provision and are confident to talk to adults. Warm, nurturing relationships between children and adults are clear to see.
- Teachers and other staff make sure that the learning environment is stimulating, with a variety of engaging activities to meet children's needs. There is a strong focus on the development of fine motor skills, which enable children to develop their hand strength in preparation for writing.
- Children enjoy the range of activities available, both in the indoor and outdoor provision. Some children show great resilience in their activities, and are keen to write independently.
- In structured activities, teaching is effective. Staff use questioning well to develop children's learning, ensuring that children are challenged appropriately.
- Children work and play cooperatively and enjoy the challenge of becoming more independent. Children take it in turns to be the child helper of the day, completing a list of 'jobs'. Staff encourage children to join in activities, through modelling and role play. Behaviour is good.
- Early phonics is taught in Nursery and is a strength of the provision. The most able children are able to join Year 1 pupils for phonics and literacy activities to help them make even better progress. By the end of the early years foundation stage, children

are well prepared for the challenge of Year 1.

- Parent engagement is a strength in early years. Parents are able to visit the provision on a weekly basis. Leaders hold regular progress meetings to identify which children may be in need of additional support. Support for parents in toilet training has resulted in more children becoming independent in their personal care.
- The outdoor environment lacks visual displays to support children in the development of their literacy and numeracy skills further.

School details

Unique reference number	103955
Local authority	Sandwell
Inspection number	10041071

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	653
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sara Bowen
Headteacher	Nicola Stanley
Telephone number	0121 559 1400
Website	www.rowleyhall.sandwell.sch.uk
Email address	nicola.stanley@rowleyhall.sandwell.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	13 December 2012

Information about this school

- Rowley Hall is a large, three-form entry primary school with a Nursery class.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below that found nationally.
- The school runs 'Badgers', a before- and after-school club.
- A review of governance took place in 2016.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in all year groups and in nearly all classes across the school. Some lessons were jointly observed with senior leaders.
- Inspectors listened to several pupils of differing ages read.
- Inspectors met with a group of pupils and staff to talk about their experiences at Rowley Hall Primary School. Inspectors considered the 35 responses to the confidential staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, phase and subject leaders, and members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- The lead inspector met with the school's improvement adviser from Sandwell local authority.
- Inspectors spoke to parents on the playground and considered the 75 responses on Parent View, Ofsted's online survey.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to the pupil questionnaire. However, they noted that some of the free-text comments had been written by parents and not by pupils.
- Inspectors looked at a range of evidence, including the school's website, self-evaluation, action and development plans, monitoring records, pupil progress information, minutes of meetings of the governing body, visit notes, safeguarding records, child protection files, and incident, accident, behaviour and attendance records.

Inspection team

Deb Jenkins, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
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Linda McGill	Ofsted Inspector

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