

Lower Farm Primary School

Bakewell Close, Bloxwich, Walsall, West Midlands WS3 3QH

Inspection dates

4–5 December 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher is committed to promoting a culture of high expectations to ensure that pupils fulfil their potential. She is well supported by the senior leadership team.
- Governors have high ambitions for the school. They contribute effectively to strategic planning for continuous improvement.
- Teachers and support staff are fully supportive of the leaders' improvement agenda. There is a strong sense of purpose across the school. As a result, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, supported by professional development opportunities for staff, is improving steadily. Consequently, pupils are making good progress.
- The curriculum that leaders have designed and implemented contributes significantly to pupils' enjoyment of their school life. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is well catered for by the range of subjects and enrichment activities the school offers.
- Relationships between pupils and staff are positive. As a result, pupils behave well and feel safe at school.
- The leadership of the early years provision is effective. Children in the early years are well looked after and make good progress. Staff in the Nursery and Reception classes are well qualified and attentive to the development needs of children.
- The provision for two-year-old children has been developed sensitively over the years and offers effective care to support their development.
- The environment in the early years is adequate. However, both indoor and outdoor areas are in need of further development to provide children with more opportunities to be stimulated in their learning.
- Leaders have addressed past issues with progress at key stage 2 and have implemented effective new teaching and assessment strategies. These strategies are still to be fully embedded to ensure that the current improvement in pupils' progress is sustained.
- The headteacher is developing the leadership capacity at both senior and subject levels. These roles are to be developed further to have a sustained impact on standards.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Sustain current improvement in outcomes by:
 - embedding new effective practices in teaching, learning and assessment
 - continuing to support the professional development of teachers
 - developing the early years environment to extend opportunities to nurture children’s curiosity and positive attitudes to learning.
- Further strengthen the leadership capacity by:
 - developing the new senior leadership roles
 - developing further the role of subject leaders to sustain the consistency of the curriculum and its impact on pupils’ progress.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher knows the school very well. She has analysed rigorously the causes of the lack of progress shown in the end of key stage 2 tests in 2017 and 2018. The actions taken following the 2017 results led to some improvement, especially for disadvantaged pupils. Leaders continued to adjust strategies after the results of 2018. Actions to improve attainment have led to staff having higher expectations, a sharper focus on improving pupils' progress across the curriculum and improved pupil progress.
- Senior and middle leaders work well together to ensure that pupils are taught well and looked after. As a result, all leaders share a strong sense of their responsibility to deliver the improvements set out in the school development plan.
- Leaders are outward looking and have developed close links with local primary and secondary schools. They make the most of these links to share effective practice, externally moderate their assessments of pupils' work, and develop the curriculum. Links with secondary schools are used effectively to ensure a smooth transition for pupils from key stage 2 to key stage 3.
- Leaders have developed rigorous systems to ensure that the information they hold about pupils' progress is accurate and used effectively to improve outcomes. Pupils' progress is assessed every term in key subjects. Assessments are moderated, both in school and with partner schools. Leaders analyse results and share the analysis with teachers to increase their knowledge of individual pupils' achievements. Teachers use this information to plan the content of teaching and the interventions required to avoid underperformance. Leaders hold teachers to account for the progress of their pupils.
- Teachers and support staff are positive about the actions taken by leaders to improve the quality of education. They have a strong sense of purpose and respond positively to the culture of accountability set by leaders. They appreciate the opportunities they have to improve their skills through formal training and collaboration with colleagues from partner schools.
- Leaders have designed a curriculum that provides pupils with opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge in a wide range of subjects. Humanities, French, music, drama and art are part of pupils' weekly learning programme. In addition, a thorough personal, social, health and economic education programme helps pupils with their physical and mental well-being and prepares them for their future life.
- Leaders make sure that pupils are well aware of fundamental British values and understand the importance of tolerance and respect for other people's faiths and beliefs. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development is a strength of the school because leaders are keen to ensure that pupils have ample opportunities to broaden their horizons.
- The curriculum is enriched with trips, visits and workshops, as well as breakfast and after-school clubs. Pupils experience outdoor activities as part of the school's 'forest school' programme. The school has a thriving performing arts tradition. It benefits from a performing arts hall that is used, among other activities, to stage school productions to which parents, carers and members of the community are invited, and in which

every pupil in the school has a part. Lower Farm is also part of Walsall's 'children's university', which is aimed at raising pupils' aspirations through engaging in out-of-hours learning activities. Both pupils and parents greatly value the range of opportunities the school offers. Their comments indicate clearly that these opportunities contribute to pupils' achievement and to the popularity of the school in the community.

- Leaders have clear strategies to ensure that the pupil premium funding is having a positive impact on the progress and personal development of disadvantaged pupils. As a result, there is a very thorough and effective programme in place to meet the needs of disadvantaged pupils and ensure that they have a positive and successful time at school.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are equally well supported. Funding is used effectively to provide access to the curriculum, learning interventions, additional staff deployment, and support from external agencies when required. Leaders keep track of the progress of pupils with SEND to make sure that they keep up with their peers.
- Leaders use the primary physical education (PE) and sport premium judiciously to ensure that all pupils are encouraged to be active and take part in sporting activities. The school has appointed a new member of staff to oversee all sporting activities. This includes lunchtime activities, after-school clubs, and the development of teams to compete in inter-schools contests. The funding is also used to support the development of PE as a subject, including the training of the PE subject leader.
- The headteacher is doing well in developing the leadership capacity of the school. She has appointed a new member of the senior leadership team and has attributed new roles in the subject leadership team. While there is some evidence that these new appointments are supporting the school's improvement agenda effectively, they are not yet sufficiently well established to show a full impact on the capacity of the whole-school leadership and the development of the curriculum.

Governance of the school

- Governors support the school's improvement agenda well. They have a thorough knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are fully involved in its self-evaluation and development planning. Governors have the skills and knowledge to support and challenge leaders appropriately. They commissioned their own review of governance to check that they are fulfilling their roles well, and they acted on its recommendations.
- The governors have organised their activities so that they can gain first-hand experience of what happens in school and monitor the progress of the school's development plan. They are involved with leaders in all aspects of the school's strategic developments. They oversee safeguarding, financial management, pupils' progress and outcomes, staffing, and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders and governors have a thorough approach to safeguarding. All statutory requirements are met. Policies are fit for purpose, records are well kept, and staff are

made aware of their duty of care through regular training.

- All members of staff, including ancillary staff, are confident about what they have to do to identify and report concerns about pupils who may be vulnerable or at risk. When pupils need support, the school works well with families and external agencies to ensure as prompt a resolution of problems as possible.
- The school organises regular presentations to inform pupils on how to keep safe. For example, members of the police and the fire service come to school to talk to pupils about avoiding dangerous situations. Pupils take part in activities that promote road safety. The curriculum also promotes safety and covers areas such as the risks linked to the use of the internet and social media.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers use their subject knowledge to plan activities that are stimulating and engage pupils' interest. Pupils respond well to teachers' expectations. Because they are interested, the vast majority of pupils are attentive in class and keen to complete the tasks given to them. As a result, lesson time is used productively.
- There is clear evidence in lessons and in pupils' books that teachers have a focus on providing tasks that are matched well to pupils' abilities and previous learning. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to provide support to pupils who find the work in class difficult. Teachers encourage the most able pupils to develop their skills further with additional challenges.
- One of the school's key priorities is the development of reading. Teachers actively support this priority and encourage pupils to read widely and often. In addition to lesson time devoted to reading comprehension, pupils are expected to read regularly at home. A pupil in each class is nominated every week for the 'reader of the week' competition, which focuses on both volume and quality of reading. These activities have been successful in making reading more popular among pupils and in raising standards in reading.
- Teachers follow the school's assessment policy consistently. They assess pupils' progress formally every term and meet with leaders to discuss the progress of pupils in their class. Teachers also meet regularly with colleagues from partner schools to moderate assessments and to compare standards.
- In Years 5 and 6, teachers and pupils have the opportunity to work with secondary school teachers. Teachers from local secondary schools run workshops in the school and pupils, with their teachers, attend lessons at secondary schools. These arrangements are popular with both teachers and pupils and are effective in preparing pupils for the next stage of their education.
- To ensure that all pupils make good progress, especially at key stage 2, the content of the curriculum has been updated. Teachers have successfully adapted their teaching to the new requirements. They have benefited through training to develop their teaching skills and, consequently, new approaches are having a positive impact on pupils' progress. However, they are not yet fully embedded in a few classes. There are also some variations in the effectiveness of the delivery of the new elements of the curriculum and further training for some staff would be helpful.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The school has a strong focus on the well-being of pupils. Pupils' personal development is central to many of the activities of the school throughout the day. The breakfast club provides a positive start to the day, creating a strong sense of community. Daily assemblies focus on self-esteem and issues such as bullying. Personal, social, health and economic education lessons support the development of pupils' understanding of the world around them.
- The school recently opened a 'nurture house', where pupils who are vulnerable and need support for their emotional well-being receive help and support.
- The after-school clubs, 'forest school', and participation in Walsall's 'children's university' are further examples of the wide range of activities that pupils at Lower Farm school can access to support their academic, physical and personal development.
- Pupils are encouraged to take responsibilities within school and to contribute to each other's well-being. Pupils who are elected to the school council take their role very seriously and are keen to represent the opinions of other pupils. 'Digital leaders' help pupils to recognise and tackle bullying on line. Year 6 pupils volunteer to be buddies to children in the early years.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The conduct of the vast majority of pupils in lessons and around the school at breaktime and lunchtime is good. Pupils respect adults and respond well to their instructions. Pupils show respect to each other. As a result, the school provides an orderly and cohesive environment.
- The vast majority of pupils have a positive opinion of the school. They understand the behaviour policy and are clear about what is unacceptable behaviour, including the use of abusive language. They think that sanctions are fair and they respond well to rewards.
- Attendance and punctuality are not issues of concern. Leaders' actions to ensure that pupils attend school regularly have a positive effect. School records show that attendance is in line with or above the national average for all groups of pupils. Punctuality is also closely monitored and actions to encourage pupils to be at school on time are successful.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Leaders showed no complacency when dealing with dips in attainment and progress, mostly in the end of key stage 2 tests in 2017 and 2018. Their analysis showed that pupils were not sufficiently prepared to deal with some aspects of problem solving and reasoning in mathematics and areas of reading comprehension in English. In addition,

leaders identified the need for a sharper focus on the progress of disadvantaged and most-able pupils.

- The school's records on the progress of current cohorts at both key stage 1 and key stage 2 show that the strategies to improve outcomes are effective. The results of assessments conducted during the autumn term, as well as work in books, provide evidence that pupils are making good progress across the curriculum.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils is an area on which leaders have a strong focus. The deployment of dedicated staff and the provision of additional resources are having a positive impact on progress. Currently, across all year groups and in all subjects, including English and mathematics, disadvantaged pupils are making progress which is either in line with or above that of other pupils.
- Effective support in lessons and timely interventions allow teachers and support staff to help pupils with SEND to catch up when they experience difficulties. As a result, assessment information on the progress of these pupils shows that their progress is at least similar to that of other pupils.
- The most able pupils are routinely encouraged to do work which is more challenging. There is evidence in books that these challenges are generally well targeted and provide opportunities to the most able pupils to develop their skills and knowledge further. Assessment records show that an increasing number of pupils at key stage 1 and key stage 2 are accessing the higher standards in mathematics and English.

Early years provision

Good

- The early years provision is well led. The early years leader is clear about what needs to be done to ensure that children are well looked after and continue to make good progress.
- The induction of children into the Nursery and Reception classes is effective. As a result, children settle in quickly and routines are well established. Children behave well and they relate well to each other. Relationships between children and adults are positive. Parents are actively involved from the start and contribute to the records of their children's progress.
- Teaching is effective because staff are well trained and they follow a curriculum which is well suited to the needs of the children. The teaching of early literacy, numeracy and phonics is effective. The early years staff make the most of the environment available to them to provide stimulating activities for children. However, both the indoor and outdoor areas offer only limited opportunities for children to develop their curiosity independently.
- Children make good progress overall through the early years. Those who join the early years with levels of development below those typical for their age are well supported. Most of them make enough progress to catch up and are well prepared for key stage 1.
- The assessment of children's progress is rigorous. All assessments are moderated, both in school and externally. Teachers analyse children's progress and identify development needs to ensure that activities are effectively targeted to support further progress. Disadvantaged children and children with SEND are well supported.
- The provision for two-year-old children is effective. Children benefit from a high level of

care and attention. Staff encourage children to socialise with each other and to develop their curiosity and interest in learning through well-designed activities.

- Safeguarding is effective. Staff are well trained and alert to the need to keep children safe.

School details

Unique reference number	104169
Local authority	Walsall
Inspection number	10045512

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	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	473
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nigel Ford
Headteacher	Sarah Milner
Telephone number	01922 710479
Website	www.lowerfarmprimaryschool.co.uk
Email address	postbox@lower-farm.walsall.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	20–21 May 2014

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The early years has a Nursery which includes provision for two-year-old children. Nursery children attend either in the morning or in the afternoon. Reception children attend full time.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are supported by the pupil premium is below average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is below average. The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is below average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in 26 lessons, including some observed jointly with the headteacher or senior leaders.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at breaktime and lunchtime.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and looked at their work in books.
- Inspectors took account of the 60 responses and free-text comments on Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and talked to parents at the start and end of the school day.
- Inspectors considered the views of 39 staff who completed the staff questionnaire.
- Meetings were held with two groups of pupils, the chair and another member of the governing body, the school's senior and middle leaders, the early years leader, groups of teachers, and the special educational needs coordinator.
- Inspectors looked at school documents, including: the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan; minutes of the governing body meetings; the school's information on pupils' progress; planning of work in different subjects; leaders' monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning; and records relating to behaviour, attendance and the safeguarding of pupils.

Inspection team

Patrick Amieli, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Steven Cartlidge	Ofsted Inspector
Linda Brown	Ofsted Inspector

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