

Hill West Primary School

Clarence Road, Four Oaks, Sutton Coldfield, B74 4LD

Inspection dates 13–14 January 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected as an academy
	This inspection:	Good 2
Leadership and management	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Early years provision	Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher is very well supported by the school's senior leaders and colleagues from the Arthur Terry Learning Partnership. Together with governors, all leaders have worked very effectively to make this a rapidly improving school.
- Pupils achieve well from the time they join Reception through to the end of Year 6. Many pupils attain results that are above the national average by the time they leave school.
- Children get off to a good start in early years, where staff teach them well and help them make good progress.
- Teaching is good. It ensures that all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, achieve well, often progressing faster than is expected for their age.
- Teachers mark books thoroughly and give pupils good guidance on how they can improve their work.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. Pupils are very enthusiastic about their lessons and the other activities which the school provides.
- Pupils feel very safe and well cared for. Attendance is above average.
- Leaders, including governors, check the quality of teaching and learning thoroughly. The school provides very good opportunities for staff to improve their expertise further.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils make a positive contribution to the local environment and to the school community.
- Pupils participate wholeheartedly in the extensive sporting and musical activities on offer to them.
- Parents strongly support the school. They recognise recent improvements and value the friendly environment in which their children learn well.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils' progress in reading, while generally good, is not as rapid as it is in mathematics and writing.
- Occasionally, the work teachers set for some pupils, especially the most able, is not challenging enough to hold their interest or help them reach the higher levels.
- The school's new system for assessment and tracking pupils' progress is not yet fully embedded. Information on pupils' achievement is not shared sufficiently with the pupils themselves or their parents.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 23 lessons, two of which were seen jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with staff, a group of pupils and the Chair of the Governing Body.
- Inspectors heard pupils read and talked to them formally and informally at break and lunchtime.
- Inspectors took account of the 139 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). They had conversations with parents and carers as they dropped off their children at the start of the school day. Inspectors also considered the 26 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- School documentation was examined, including data on pupils' current progress and records of governors' meetings, behaviour, attendance and safeguarding. Inspectors carefully reviewed the system used to check teachers' performance. Documentation relating to the care of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs was also reviewed.

Inspection team

Andrew Stafford, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Edgar Hastings	Additional Inspector
Catherine Morgan	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Hill West Primary converted to become an academy school in April 2013. When its predecessor school, also called Hill West Primary, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good.
- The school is part of the Arthur Terry Learning Partnership, which comprises seven schools.
- Hill West Primary is larger than the average-sized primary school. There are two classes in Reception and all Reception children attend full-time. There are two classes for each year-group in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.
- Pupils in Year 6 are grouped by ability for teaching in English and mathematics.
- Nearly three quarters of pupils are White British, about the same proportion as nationally. The remainder come from various ethnic minority heritages. Fewer pupils than average speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below average, at 11%. A small minority of pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- Approximately 19% of the pupils are supported by the pupil premium (the additional funding allocated by the government which, in this school, is used to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority). This is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school has received many awards, including the International School Award and Investors in People status.
- There have been substantial changes in staffing at all levels since the academy opened. Governors appointed four new teachers in September 2013, and an assistant headteacher. In September 2014 they appointed four temporary leaders to cover maternity leaves. Four newly qualified teachers were also appointed in September 2014.
- The headteacher and senior leaders contribute to school improvement work in other schools throughout the local authority.
- There is a nursery on the school site, and a before-school breakfast club and an after-school club for children aged 4 to 7. These are not managed by the governing body and did not form part of the inspection. There is a before-school and after-school club for pupils aged 7 to 11. These are managed by the governing body and formed part of the inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen teaching so that pupils make consistently rapid progress, especially in reading, and more pupils reach the higher levels by:
 - making sure that all lessons contain a suitable and sustained level of challenge to engage pupils' interest, especially for the most-able pupils
 - ensuring all teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve in their reading and provide them with texts that stimulate their interest, extend their vocabulary and develop their comprehension skills.
- Embed the new system for assessment to make sure pupils' progress is monitored more closely and share the information it generates more widely with parents and pupils.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, ably supported by the school's senior leaders, has made sure that the school has continued to improve during the past two years. This has resulted in an ethos in which good behaviour is the norm and pupils make good progress.
- Teaching staff with responsibilities for subjects and other aspects of the school's performance, especially in the early years, share the leadership's determination to maintain the drive for excellence. All staff back the school's approach.
- Leaders have an accurate picture of the school's strengths and know where it can improve further. They check the quality of teaching and learning thoroughly and provide teachers and learning assistants with good opportunities to improve their expertise in areas such as reading. This professional development often takes place in conjunction with colleagues from other schools within the partnership and is one of the strengths of the school. As a result, there has been a steady rise in attainment and progress in all year groups.
- The school organises its teaching effectively to reflect pupils' abilities and needs, particularly in Year 6 in English and mathematics. In all age groups, teaching succeeds in engaging pupils' interest and improving their skills and knowledge. Pupils say how much they enjoy doing topics such as the Egyptians, the Victorians and World War 2. Pupils enjoy the good range of after-school clubs and visits, including the residential ones.
- Pupils benefit from specialist teachers teaching specific subjects such as French and sport. The school is also supported from within the partnership through the provision of extensive professional development opportunities for staff. The additional sports funding is used well to supplement this training and increase provision and participation. Pupils participate well in a range of local tournaments, including netball, football and athletics.
- The leadership is rigorous in linking teachers' pay to their responsibilities and their success in helping pupils make good progress.
- The school supports disadvantaged pupils very well through its careful use of the pupil premium and is very successful in giving every child the chance to succeed and benefit from all aspects of school life. Variations in the rates of progress between different groups of pupils are being reduced. Pupils state that there is no discrimination in the school. Parents also confirm that the school operates in a very friendly, caring and supportive environment.
- There is excellent support for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development from the moment children first enter the school. This is a truly inclusive school and every opportunity is taken to teach pupils how to value and respect each other and develop self-esteem. They demonstrate courteous behaviour, hold strong opinions of right and wrong and appreciate the opportunities they are given to contribute to the new behaviour policy. Pupils were encouraged to reflect on various aspects of 'stereotyping' during a school assembly. They learn in depth about other cultures and faiths, in lessons and through links established as a result of the school's International School status. Conversations with older pupils shows that the school prepares them very well for life in today's Britain.
- The leadership is not complacent about any aspect of the school's work. In recent months it has developed a fresh curriculum and new methods for assessing pupils and tracking their progress, so that those who are in danger of underachieving get a good level of support. It has yet to embed these developments or monitor pupils' progress closely, and does not sufficiently share this information with parents and pupils.
- The leadership ensures that the school meets all safeguarding arrangements.

■ The governance of the school:

- The governing body reports to the Trust Board of the Academy Alliance. Governors have a good understanding of the school and know precisely how well it is performing. They support it well and are ready to challenge and rigorously hold the school and staff to account when they feel it necessary. Governors hold individual responsibilities which reflect their individual expertise and the school benefits greatly from this through the work of governors' various committees. Members of the governing body know how well Hill West pupils achieve in relation to other schools. Governors regularly spend time in school and have a very good overview of the quality of its teaching and learning. Governors ensure that all statutory requirements for safeguarding are fully met and check that pupils feel safe and secure at all times. Governors manage the school's finances very well and monitor very carefully the effectiveness of school improvement to ensure good value for money. For instance, they know how effectively additional funding for sport has been allocated. Furthermore, they monitor how the pupil premium funding has been spent and are aware of the highly positive impact it has had upon learning for this group of eligible pupils. Governors are rigorous in the way they monitor teachers' effectiveness and their progression through the pay scale and closely oversee the performance of the headteacher.

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

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils say that they love the school, especially for the imaginative lessons teachers prepare for them and also for the numerous out-of-lesson activities, such as the German club and the many musical and sporting opportunities.
- Pupils' attendance is above average and their punctuality to school and to lessons is excellent. As one parent commented about her daughter, 'She does not want to miss one minute at school'.
- Pupils work well together. They enjoy discussing ideas and like taking responsibility. Members of the school council told inspectors about how their council, which represents all year groups, has helped to raise funds and improve the school environment. Pupils also welcome other opportunities to take responsibility and help other pupils.
- While pupils are mostly very attentive and engaged in lessons, occasionally a few pupils lose their focus and work with less urgency, which is why behaviour is not outstanding. However, parents report that behaviour is good and causes them no concerns, and they regard the school as offering a very reassuring and welcoming environment.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils understand that bullying can take various forms, but do not regard any of them as significant issues in this school. They say that there is occasionally over-exuberant behaviour in the playground, but insist that it is not malicious. School records confirm that there are few untoward incidents and none involving racist or homophobic abuse.
- Staff are trained very well to ensure pupils' safety. Pupils understand the roles of the emergency services and know, for instance, that the police and fire service are there to help.
- Leaders carefully review the risks that pupils may encounter on the school site, in the use of tools and equipment, as well as during visits to other places, and take very well-considered and appropriate action when necessary.
- The child protection policy is reviewed annually and staff attend child protection training regularly. This contributes to ensuring that all pupils are kept very safe. Staff work hard to support the disadvantaged pupils in the school, which is a major reason for their significantly good progress.
- All parents who responded to the on-line Parent View and those who spoke to inspectors agree that pupils are very safe in school. The school gives pupils and parents very useful information, for example about how to promote e-safety.

The quality of teaching is good

- Consistently good and sometimes outstanding teaching over time is the reason why so many pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. As a result, pupils have a strong work ethic whatever their learning ability.
- Staff are very conscientious. Homework, linked to the work pupils complete in class, is set and marked regularly. There is a thoroughness with which staff mark pupils' work and use pupils' targets in their teaching. This use of checks on learning to show pupils how to improve their work is one of the particular strengths of the school. Older pupils told inspectors how much they value it. However, across the school, teachers do not sufficiently share the outcomes of their assessments of pupils' progress with the pupils themselves or with their parents.
- Good resources help to make lessons and other activities interesting for pupils. Inspectors saw evidence of this, for example, when photographs showed older pupils making costumes for their production of 'Bugsy', which successfully combined aspects of art and design technology. Their written accounts indicated that pupils were absorbed in the production, and particularly enjoyed combining acting and singing along with collaboration and support for their classmates.
- Improvements in the teaching of particular subjects have helped to raise attainment and progress, for example in writing, across a wide range of subjects and for all groups of pupils.
- Teaching assistants play an important part in supporting teaching staff. Inspectors saw examples of them teaching small groups effectively, for example, in phonics (the links between letters and the sounds they make) sessions.
- Staff report they get good opportunities to develop their expertise in areas in which they were once less confident.
- Occasionally teachers do not move on to more challenging activities quickly enough. For example, inspectors saw lessons when the need to provide harder work to move pupils on at a faster pace was not recognised soon enough. At such times, pupils sometimes do not concentrate as hard as they could and the rate of learning slows, especially for the most able.
- While most teachers have high expectations of their pupils, occasionally, some teachers have lower expectations of what pupils can achieve in reading. In the main, teachers provide texts which stimulate pupils' imagination and extend their vocabulary and understanding of plot very well but this is not always the case in every class. As a result, pupils' progress in reading, whilst good by the time they leave, is not always as rapid as it is in writing and mathematics.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Given their starting points, pupils make good progress by the time they leave, in reading, writing and mathematics. Progress over Key Stage 2 is strong and attainment at the end of Year 6 is above the national average. A high proportion of pupils are exceeding the nationally expected levels for their age at Year 6, with high proportions achieving the higher Level 5 and above in different subjects, and especially in writing, English grammar and spelling and mathematics. As a result pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Attainment in Key Stage 1 in 2014 was above average. Standards in reading and writing are particularly high. The school's data indicate that pupils in the present Year 2 are already at high levels of attainment.
- The great majority of pupils, when they leave the school, are able to read accurately and fluently, with good understanding. They talk confidently about their reading habits.

- The teaching of phonics has improved over the past two years, and is now highly effective. By the end of Year 1, the vast majority of pupils now reach the standard expected for their age in the national screening test.
- Pupils' achievement in writing is very good. They are helped by the way the school encourages them to regularly 'blog', and teaches them how to write for a purpose, at length and in a range of subjects. Year 6 pupils, for example, improved their writing by finding alternative and more effective words in a thesaurus. They focused well on the task and wrote lively descriptions, using adjectives and adverbs very effectively.
- There are many opportunities for pupils to use their mathematical skills across Key Stage 2. For example, Year 6 pupils used their skills and knowledge of proportion and ratio to very successfully calculate the quantities and costs for a number of different ingredients needed to produce a wide range of cakes. The challenging task, and pupils' very strong desire to do well, led them to enjoy their work and make rapid progress.
- The small proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs achieve well. Teachers keep a close eye on their progress and ensure their needs are identified early and good support provided to help them improve.
- The most-able pupils usually make good progress in lessons because, in the main, they are set challenging work. However, when they are set work that is too easy for them, as is occasionally the case, their progress slows. As a result, they do not all reach the higher levels of which they are capable.
- The school has reduced, although not yet completely eradicated, previous differences in the rates of progress between different groups of pupils, for example, between the most-able pupils and their peers nationally in reading.
- Disadvantaged pupils are targeted with additional support to close the gaps in their progress and attainment with that of their classmates. In 2014, the Key Stage 2 test results showed that disadvantaged pupils were behind their classmates in reading and writing by roughly half a term, and by one quarter of a term in mathematics. In comparison with all pupils nationally, disadvantaged pupils were better by more than one and a half terms in writing, broadly in line in mathematics, and behind by roughly half a term in reading. Across the school eligible pupils are making at least good progress from their starting points, reflecting the school's effective use of the pupil premium.

The early years provision

is good

- Good leadership and management of the early years ensure that children settle into school very quickly and that they achieve well. Right from the start, supportive links are established with parents. This has a positive impact on children's learning and their personal, social and emotional development. All safeguarding policies and procedures are good and implemented consistently so that children are kept safe. Staff are particularly skilled in providing a caring and positive environment where children can thrive and ensure they are well-prepared for when they enter Key Stage 1.
- Children enter Reception with skills and abilities that vary but most are at or above the level of development that is typical for their age. By the time they leave Reception, children's achievement in all areas of learning is well above the national figure. Children also make very good progress in a range of personal and social skills, such as the ability to play and work together constructively. Children's progress in phonics gives them a good platform for developing their reading skills.
- There are regular and much-valued links between Reception and the large number of pre-school nurseries from which the Reception children come. The valuable information about each child's skills and abilities that these provide is reviewed by adults when children first enter the early years to enable staff to plan effectively for children's needs.
- There is extensive assessment of children in Reception. Children's learning journals give a strong indication of their good development in skills such as writing.

- There are good indoor resources for learning, complemented by effective outdoor ones. The children are very adept at making good use of the resources, whether working with staff or by themselves.
- Children in Reception behave very well. They understand the daily routines and what staff expect of them. The early years leader organises the learning well to interest children. Activities cover all the required areas of learning very effectively.
- Parents value the early years' provision highly. For example, they appreciate seeing their children's work. The school welcomes parents into the classroom.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	139520
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	449962

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	423
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrew Staples
Headteacher	Beth Clarke
Date of previous school inspection	16 March 2009
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