School report

Birchwood Primary School

Birchwood Avenue, Dordon, Tamworth, B78 1QU

Inspection dates	10–11 September 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	**Outstanding**	**1**
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Early years provision		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Achievement is outstanding. Standards in reading writing and mathematics are rising sharply. Pupils now make excellent progress in all three subjects throughout the school and attainment at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 is above average.
- Attainment in reading is very good. Pupils are encouraged to read widely and have access to often challenging texts, which they read with enthusiasm and skill.
- The most-able pupils frequently reach outstanding standards in their work, particularly in reading and maths.
- Disadvantaged pupils, for example those in receipt of the pupil premium, achieve well. The school ensures any gaps between their attainment and other pupils in the school are quickly closed.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are very well-supported and make good progress from their starting points.
- Pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar are very strong. Results in the national tests are above average.
- Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning and thoroughly enjoy school. Their behaviour in and out of lessons is impeccable at all times and they feel safe. Their attendance is high and is meticulously tracked by the school.
- The quality of teaching is outstanding. Teachers and support staff have very high expectations and plan lessons which are inspirational and challenging. All groups of pupils are well catered for, including the most able, the disadvantaged and disabled and those with special educational needs.
- Teachers challenge pupils to 'aim high' and rigorously evaluate their own practice to ensure it fully meets the needs of all groups and provides them with a stimulating and enriched education across the school.
- Support for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The school's curriculum strongly promotes key values such as tolerance, respect for others and understanding.
- Leaders at all levels are working purposefully to develop a new assessment system that reflects the requirements of the new National Curriculum.
- The inspirational leadership of the headteacher has ensured that the school continues to improve. The management of teachers' performance is robust and this, and the good support teachers receive, has led to marked improvements in teaching and achievement. The headteacher is very ably supported by senior staff and the well-informed governing body.
- The school's provision for Early Years is outstanding. As result Reception children make outstanding progress. The well-trained and highly skilled staff ensure that pupils' achievement in the early learning goals is well above expectations by the time they leave Reception.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 22 lessons of which four were joint observations with senior staff. They also conducted a learning walk and observed two assemblies.
- Meetings were held with pupils, staff, school leaders, governors and a director of the academy trust.
- Inspectors met a small number of parents at the start and end of the school day. They analysed 49 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), 48 responses to the staff questionnaire and the school's questionnaire to parents.
- Inspectors heard two groups of pupils read and looked at pupils' work.
- Inspectors looked at range of documents including the school's plans for improvement, records of its checks on teaching and learning, safeguarding procedures and the school's own assessment data.

Inspection team

Shahnaz Maqsood, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Keith Brown	Additional Inspector
Linda Phillips	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The large majority of pupils are White British, with English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils supported through a statement of special educational needs or education, health and care plans is broadly in line with the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding from the government for children in local authority care, those known to be eligible for free school meals) is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics in Year 6.
- The headteacher leads two other local schools in addition to Birchwood Primary School. These are Dordon Primary and Wood End Primary school. Birchwood Primary school works in partnership with The Polesworth School.
- Birchwood Primary became an academy school in November 2012 and is the lead primary school in the Community Academies Trust. When the predecessor school of the same name was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to refine the support for those pupils who have been identified by the school who experience difficulty in key aspects of mathematics.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher is highly ambitious and determined. His strong sense of purpose and vision are shared by all the staff and the governors. This has led to rapid improvements in teaching and learning which have rapidly raised pupils' achievement.

- The school's improvement plan and evaluation of how well it is doing are thorough and accurate. These documents are regularly reviewed by all leaders, including the governors, to ensure that actions are effective and reflect the objectives set by them.

- Senior and subject leaders lead by example, they have very high expectations and have been instrumental in moving the school forward. They make regular and rigorous checks to find out how well pupils are achieving and take very effective action when required to ensure that pupils do not fall behind.

- The vibrant and exciting curriculum successfully motivates pupils and contributes effectively to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school has formed links with another school with pupils from a range of backgrounds so that pupils can develop key values, such as tolerance and understanding.

- The leaders, in conjunction with staff, are working closely together to develop an effective assessment system that takes account of the changes brought about by the new national curriculum.

- Systems for checking the quality of teaching are rigorous and accurate. The information gathered is used to provide teachers with a carefully considered and planned programme of professional development. This has resulted in the elimination of weaker teaching and the rapid improvement in teaching. Teachers say that they have also benefited from the sharing of expertise between the schools in the academy trust.

- The sports funding has been used to train teachers to improve their skills and confidence, as well as to employ a specialist coach. The pupils informed inspectors that they now enjoy physical educational lessons more and do not feel it necessary to make excuse to avoid participating.

- The school's positive relationship with parents and the local community contributes enormously to pupils' learning. Parents speak highly of the school and feel it keeps them well informed about their child's progress and ensures that they are able to speak to staff when they wish to do so.

- Support from the academy trust has been very beneficial to the school. Members of the trust share their knowledge and expertise in different areas of life to make an invaluable contribution to school improvement.

The governance of the school:

- The governors know the school well and are kept well informed about its performance by the headteacher and know how standards of achievement compare with national figures. Every governor has responsibility for particular area and subject and regularly visits the school to check progress data and documents. This knowledge is used by them to ask leaders challenging questions regarding pupils' progress. Teacher's pay is closely linked to the quality of teaching and the governing body is fully committed to supporting the headteacher's actions to eliminate weak teaching.
- Governors keep a close eye on the curriculum to ensure it is broad and balanced and that pupils learn to respect and understand those whose religious beliefs differ from their own. They have ensured that the school understands the requirements of the new national curriculum and is implementing them. They are aware of the developments regarding the need to devise new approaches to assessment and keep themselves well-informed about developments in this aspect of the school's work.
- Governors manage the budget well and ensure that the pupil premium is used effectively to support the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. They ensure arrangements for safeguarding and child protection fully meet requirements.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Behaviour is outstanding in lessons, at break time and lunchtime because pupils have very positive attitudes to school, each other and to their learning. They are tolerant of others, working and playing with each other naturally and easily, and spontaneously celebrating each other's successes. They are exceptionally well-motivated and take great pride in their school and work. All this has a very positive impact on their achievement.

- Staff manage behaviour consistently and fairly so pupils are aware of what is expected of them. Visitors are welcomed and pupils go out of their way to be helpful, such as holding doors open for them.

- The school makes excellent use of its mentoring system, called 'a friend in the trade'. Mentors are assigned to pupils to act as 'friends' and they meet regularly to discuss issues. The mentors listen to the pupils and support them both personally and academically. This support has been extremely effective in helping pupils feel at ease in school and in maintaining the highest standards of behaviour.

- Pupils are aware of all types of bullying, including internet and racist bullying. They told inspectors that bullying was rare and if it did happen it was dealt with swiftly. Pupils are also made aware of how to stay safe. For example, articles written in the school's newsletter 'The Bugle' referred to the dangers of writing personal details on the internet.

- Attendance is high because pupils enjoy coming to school. Nevertheless staff are extremely vigilant and track attendance meticulously. Records show that pupils are very rarely late for school in the mornings.

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure are outstanding, because arrangements are thorough and comprehensive. Pupils' safety is paramount in this school.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- The quality of teaching is outstanding. Teachers plan lessons which excite pupils and provide the right level of challenge for all pupils. For example, in a Year 1 class the teacher had organised different areas of learning based on the theme of 'space'. The well-thought-out task pupils were set meant that their writing was ambitious and imaginative; the range of their vocabulary was often impressive, with some pupils, for example, writing 'huge asteroid and sparkly satellites'.

- The teaching of mathematics has improved considerably. The teachers and support staff have received training to improve their skills and support with planning. Teachers now plan and deliver lessons that take into account the different abilities in the class and provide the right levels of challenge and support for all groups of pupils.

- The teaching of disadvantaged pupils, for example those in receipt of the pupil premium, is strongly based on their specific individual needs. All teachers are aware of the particular needs of these pupils and they ensure they plan work that is supportive, challenging and helps them to achieve outstandingly well.

- Relationships between teachers and pupils are excellent. Teachers' high expectations are reflected in the pupils' books. Work is well presented and it is clearly evident that teachers have encouraged pupils to take great pride in their work and always try to do their best. Teachers use the school's system of rewards and sanctions consistently. Consequently, pupils respond well to teachers and support staff, creating a harmonious working environment in which pupils excel.

- Teachers and support staff also set out clear expectations for achievement. They check pupils' understanding carefully and systematically. They know when to intervene and when to allow pupils to work problems out for themselves. Questioning is skilful, searching and challenges pupils' thinking. This results in all groups of pupils making rapid progress.

- Exceptionally well-planned support for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs ensure that they experience high quality learning at all times.

- Teachers assess pupils' progress carefully in lessons and are quick to spot and address any misunderstandings and misconceptions. Formal assessments used to indicate overall achievement for individuals and groups are accurate and inform lesson planning. Marking is detailed and makes very clear to pupils what they need to do improve their work. The pupils in turn respond accordingly.

- Teaching assistants have very secure subject knowledge, they support pupils effectively and ask probing questions to help pupils of different abilities learn and understand the tasks set.

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Pupils make exceptional progress in Years 1 and 2. Pupil's books and the most recent school data indicate that standards rose sharply between 2013 and 2014 in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 and are likely to be well above average when national results are published later this year.

- Standards in Year 6 were also well above expectations in reading, writing and mathematics and a marked improvement on the results gained in 2013. A higher proportion of pupils are making better than expected progress in all the subjects than did in 2013. Differences between pupils' attainment in English and mathematics have now been closed.

- Attainment in reading is high. This is an area in which the school particularly excels because it is proficient in the teaching of phonics (the relationship between letters and sounds). Pupils of all ages are introduced to a wide range of authors and actively encouraged to read.

- Able pupils perform very well. The school has used the expertise of the local secondary school to further improve provision and teaching for the most able. This group of pupils receive work that stretches and challenges them and they study topics in more depth than was previously the case. Consequently, there was a substantial rise in 2014 in the proportions of pupils working at the highest level in all the subjects as compared to 2013 and much higher than would be expected.

- The school has a detailed programme for helping disadvantaged pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium. It identifies these pupils as soon as they enter the school and very effectively provides the exact level of support that is needed. In 2013, although they performed better than their peers nationally, these pupils were approximately two terms behind their peers in school in writing and mathematics. However, these pupils are now progressing much more quickly and the gaps closed further in 2014. As a result, these pupils are now only a term behind their classmates in reading and writing and less than half term in mathematics. School evidence suggests that the gaps further down the school are minimal and closing rapidly.

- At times, a few pupils in Key Stage Two are not sure which strategy to use to solve a mathematical problem. The school has identified these pupils and plans are in place to support them further.

- Disabled pupils and those with a statement of special educational needs make outstanding progress because methods used to support them are tailored precisely to their specific needs.

The early years provision is outstanding

- Pupils enter the school with skills and knowledge that are generally below what is normally expected for their age. The high quality provision and focused teaching in Early Years means that all groups of children make an excellent start to their education so that by the end of Reception most pupils attain or exceed the expected goals. Both the indoor and outdoor areas are used very effectively to develop pupils' ability to explore and discover new things.

- The leadership of this phase is outstanding. Leaders constantly evaluate and challenge their own and other teachers' practice to ensure the provision is continually improved and developed a high priority is given to the children's well-being and safety. Teachers record children's progress carefully and use their

assessments very effectively to ensure subsequent work engages their interest and challenges them to stimulate their natural curiosity about the world and think hard about what they are learning.

- Close links with parents and the pre-school ensure that the pupils settle quickly into school routines. Inspectors observed pupils playing and learning happily in the vibrant indoor and outdoor areas, even though they had only been in school a few days.

- The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of children is excellent. Pupils interact and play well with one another and relationships are very good.

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	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. 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.

School details

Unique reference number	138934
Local authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	449216

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	427
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nigel Bratt
Headteacher	Edward May (Executive Headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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