

# Benson Community School

Benson Road, Hockley, Birmingham, B18 5TD

**Inspection dates** 12–13 February 2015

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
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 and governors have taken successful action to bring rapid improvements to teaching and achievement following a dip in the school's performance, in Year 6 tests, in 2014.
- Leaders have dealt quickly and effectively with any ineffective teaching.
- Pupils are making good progress and achieving well. Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics has risen sharply this year and is at least in line with that expected for pupils' ages in all year groups.
- Children are making good progress in the early years. They are prepared well to join Year 1.
- Teachers are skilled at helping pupils from a wide range of backgrounds and with varying educational needs to learn effectively, in a harmonious environment.
- Pupils' progress is checked very carefully. This helps staff provide targeted support to any pupils in danger of falling behind.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and at other times throughout the school day. They are polite and courteous towards each other and to adults.
- Pupils are safe in school. Adults keep a careful watch over pupils and intervene quickly if they feel any child is at risk.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. This makes sure that pupils respect others from different backgrounds.
- The subjects pupils study are well planned to help pupils acquire the skills to learn effectively and be well prepared for the next stages in their education.
- Governors know the school and the community it serves well. They play an important role in planning for change and check that any weaknesses they identify are quickly dealt with.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- A few pupils do not routinely use grammar, punctuation and spelling accurately in all of their written work.
- In mathematics, some pupils do not set out their solutions in enough detail when solving problems, so it is not easy to identify their methods of working or where they make any mistakes.
- Teachers in new leadership roles are not yet checking teaching and its impact on learning.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 22 lessons. Five observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher or other senior leaders. Inspectors looked at pupils’ work in their books to assess the rates of progress they are making in the current school year. They also listened to pupils reading. An inspector visited a number of classes with the special needs leader to observe the quality of one-to-one and small group support.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of documentation, including the school’s own evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses and the data it collects on pupils’ progress. Documents detailing the school’s arrangements for safeguarding were reviewed and discussed.
- Meetings were held with governors, staff at different levels of responsibility, a group of teaching assistants and pupils. A conversation was held, by telephone, with a representative of the local authority.
- Questionnaire responses from 38 members of staff were analysed.
- There were insufficient responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, for them to be published. Inspectors looked at the results of the school’s recent questionnaires, giving parents’ views of the school.

## Inspection team

David Speakman, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Michael Onyon	Additional Inspector
Elizabeth Huggett	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is a larger than average-sized primary school.
- Children in Reception attend full-time. In Nursery about three-quarters of the children attend full-time and the rest part-time.
- Almost all pupils come from a wide range of minority ethnic groups. The largest groups are Black Caribbean and Asian Pakistani. Over a half of the pupils speak English as an additional language. At the time of the inspection, 42 languages other than English were spoken by pupils in the school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported through the pupil premium (additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or in the care of the local authority) is well above the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is about average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The governors run a breakfast club on the school site, and this was included in this inspection.
- Benson Community School is part of The Greet Teaching Schools Alliance. This is a group of 32 inner-city primary schools which support each other and work together on school development.
- The headteacher is a local leader of education and supports other schools.
- The school operates a community centre on site, which supports vulnerable children and their families, runs parenting programmes and hosts 'Stay and Play' sessions for mothers and their young children. The Birmingham Reading Recovery Centre is located in the same building.
- The school is part of an additional school places scheme currently being implemented across Birmingham in response to the rising demand. In September, the school admitted 30 extra pupils in each of Years 1, 2 and 3. The school will be fully three-form entry in 2017.

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

- Improve further pupils' progress and so raise attainment levels by the end of Year 6 by ensuring that:
  - pupils routinely and accurately apply their knowledge of grammar, punctuation and spelling to their writing in all subjects
  - pupils develop better skills in setting out in good detail, their written answers to solving problems in mathematics.
- Strengthen the monitoring role of assistant heads, year heads and subject leaders to provide high quality support for the headteacher in managing the growth of the school and raising standards.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- Senior leaders make regular checks on the quality of teaching and learning. They use a broad range of evidence, including formal lesson observations, 'drop-ins', scrutiny of pupils' work, data that track pupils' progress and the views of the pupils themselves. This gives them a clear picture of what is going well and where improvement is needed. Senior leaders set targets for individual teachers, each half-term, and carefully monitor their progress towards achieving them.
- The curriculum has been developed well, taking account of the new National Curriculum, while ensuring that the essential parts of the 'Benson Curriculum' have been preserved. Pupils have excellent opportunities to learn about life in modern Britain, how democratic processes have developed, and how life in modern Britain compares to other countries. Through this approach pupils gain a secure understanding of British values. As well as meeting the academic needs of pupils, their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strongly promoted through the curriculum.
- Additional funding is used effectively to support academic progress and to provide personal and emotional support for disadvantaged pupils. As well as arranging one-to-one and small-group support to help pupils to catch up in their work, leaders have made good arrangements for pupils' pastoral support. As a result, the attendance rates of these pupils have improved so that their learning is not interrupted and is more effective. In addition, a behaviour mentor has helped to improve pupils' attitudes to learning so that they approach lessons positively.
- The school has made effective arrangements for spending the primary sports funding. The subject leader works alongside class teachers in physical education lessons to help them improve their teaching skills. Competitions and out-of-school clubs widen pupils' opportunities to take part in sport. As a result, teachers' skills are improving and the school's records show an increased participation in physical activities.
- The school effectively provides equality of opportunity for all pupils to learn. There is little difference in the rate of progress being made by different groups of pupils, currently in the school. The school's positive approach to celebrating diversity means that there are no recorded incidents of racial discrimination. Arrangements to keep pupils safe meet current requirements.
- The local authority monitors the school's effectiveness regularly. Until last year, the school was regarded as needing minimal support; after the 2014 test results additional help was provided, to good effect. The local authority uses the school's leadership expertise to support other vulnerable schools.
- Issues that had a negative impact on standards and achievement in 2014, particularly in mathematics have been quickly resolved. A number of initiatives have been put into place and inspection evidence shows standards are rising quickly because there is a culture within which pupils can flourish.
- School leaders are managing the school's growth well. They are making wise decisions in recruiting new staff, developing the curriculum and making their high expectations of pupils' behaviour clear. Changes have been made to help to minimise the impact of the school's rapid growth on pupils' achievement.
- Assistant headteachers now have a day-to-day management role for the year groups they lead and they are well supported by a new tier of middle leaders, so that the school runs smoothly. However, these leaders' roles in checking the quality of teaching and the standards pupils achieve are not yet fully developed.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governance is effective. Governors challenge school leaders and hold them to account for its performance. They have regular meetings with senior staff to discuss the impact of their work.
  - Governors know the school well through visiting the school, detailed headteacher's reports and links with staff responsible for key areas.
  - They understand assessment data and are aware of how the achievement of pupils at Benson compares

- with other schools. They are fully aware that achievement dipped last year and why this happened.
- They know the community served by the school very well and use their knowledge effectively to help the school to meet the community's needs.
  - Governors set challenging targets to ensure the effectiveness of the headteacher and staff. They know how good the teaching is and make sure that teachers' pay increases are linked to competence and their impact on pupils' achievement.
  - Governors make sure that all statutory requirements are met, including for safeguarding.

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

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Attitudes to learning are positive and pupils want to do well. Their behaviour during lessons is good and pupils work well collaboratively. As a result, good learning takes place.
- Pupils respond well to the school's emphasis on positive behaviour and conduct themselves well. Pupils value being a 'Benson Bee', which represents their belonging to communities: Benson School, Birmingham, Britain. They say they are proud to be members of all three.
- There is very little bullying recorded. Pupils play alongside each other boisterously but harmoniously. They enjoy school and feel free from any form of intimidation.
- Attendance is broadly average. Most pupils arrive to school on time for a prompt start to the school day. Those who attend the before-school breakfast club are well looked after.

### **Safety**

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe when in and out of school. Work in lessons and good resources ensure pupils develop a very good understanding of internet safety.
- Pupils are aware of the different types of bullying and know what to do if they ever need help. They say bullying is rare and they believe adults deal with any incidents effectively.
- Staff training for child protection is up-to-date and adults are vigilant. The family liaison worker is effective in supporting pupils and their families so they develop trust in the school and become effective learners. Staff have a good knowledge of child protection procedures, know what to look out for and are ready to intervene if necessary.

## **The quality of teaching** is good

- Teachers use assessment information well to plan activities that build on pupils' previous learning, so pupils are confident in taking the next steps. Pupils who have little English are given support that is accurately focused on language acquisition so they can quickly take a full part in lessons.
- There is a strong emphasis on developing pupils' speaking skills. Class teachers and teaching assistants talk a lot to pupils, engaging them in discussion and asking questions to encourage them to think things out for themselves.
- Teaching assistants support a range of pupils, including pupils who have special educational needs, disadvantaged pupils and those who speak English as an additional language. Support is in small groups, one-to-one or in class, depending upon pupils' requirements. Teaching assistants know the pupils well, are included in planning lessons and provide well focused and effective support.
- Class teachers have benefited from working alongside a physical education specialist teacher in lessons. Their teaching skills have developed so they are able to plan and lead well-structured physical education

lessons, evaluate pupils' performance and pay good attention to the safety of pupils.

- Teachers' marking is mostly effective in helping pupils improve their work. Teachers identify areas of strength and often, but not always, make clear suggestions about what pupils should do to improve.
- Following the dip in standards in 2014, the teaching of mathematics has been revised. The emphasis on developing a deeper understanding of number and on problem-solving has resulted in more rapid progress and attainment has risen. However, pupils are not taught well enough how to show their working when solving problems with several stages.
- Literacy is taught well. The effective teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) in the early years gets children off to a good start. A range of new initiatives to raise standards in reading at Key Stage 2 has been effective in advancing pupils' reading skills. The writing tasks pupils are given are based on their experiences and so are meaningful to them. However teachers do not always insist on pupils using accurate grammar, punctuation and spelling in their writing in all subjects.

### **The achievement of pupils** is good

- Achievement has quickly improved over the last year as a result of rapid action taken in response to the 2014 test results. It is now good, as it was at the time of the school's last inspection.
- Children start in the Nursery with skills and understanding below that typical for their age. Particularly weak areas include language, communication and personal, social and emotional development. Children make good progress. As a result, attainment at the end of the Reception Year has improved rapidly over the last two years, with a sharp increase in the number of children achieving the expected level. In 2014, attainment at the end of Reception was average.
- Achievement at Key Stage 1 is good. Although attainment at the end of Year 2 in 2014 was below average, this represented good progress for these pupils from low starting points. Pupils in the current Year 2 have benefited from the school's action to tackle weaknesses in writing and are on track to attain the national average at the end of the year. This includes pupils who have recently joined the school under its expansion programme. Year 2 pupils who have been at Benson since the end of the Reception Year are set to achieve higher standards than others in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the required standard in the Year 1 phonics screening has improved and last year was broadly average. Pupils who did not reach the nationally expected standard are catching up and their reading is improving quickly.
- Pupils' achievement in mathematics at the end of Year 6 dipped in 2014, with a lower proportion of pupils making the expected progress than found nationally. This was closely linked to staffing difficulty at that time; currently, the achievement of pupils in Year 6, in mathematics, is good.
- The achievement of pupils in writing in 2014 was good, with the proportions making and exceeding the expected progress higher than for schools nationally. In reading, the proportion making the expected progress was similar to the national figure, although a lower proportion than nationally made more than the expected progress.
- In Key Stage 2, achievement is now good. Pupils' books, school assessment data for current progress and lesson observations show rapid improvement in all year groups. Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is in line with that expected for pupils' age. Current Year 6 pupils are on track to reach average levels of attainment at the end of this year. This represents better progress than nationally expected in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The most able pupils are making good progress in all year groups, with a sharp increase in the numbers reaching the higher levels in all subjects. This reflects teachers' high expectations and challenging work.
- Achievement of disadvantaged pupils in 2014 was better than other pupils in the school, in mathematics and reading and the same in writing. These pupils caught up last year and successfully closed the

attainment gaps with other pupils in school. Even so, reflecting the dip in attainment in 2014, the results of these pupils were lower than all pupils nationally. In mathematics they were a year ahead of other pupils but almost four terms behind other pupils nationally. In reading they were almost a year ahead of others but a term and a half behind others nationally. In writing, attainment was half a term ahead of others and about a year behind other pupils nationally. Currently, qualifying pupils are making good progress and working at levels close to other pupils in school and at the levels nationally expected for their age.

- The main pupil groups in the school are making good progress and achieving well. Pupils from Black Caribbean and Pakistani backgrounds are currently working at levels higher than expected for their ages in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are making good progress and achieving well in reading, writing and mathematics as a result of the good support they receive.
- Although there have clearly been marked improvements in reading, writing and mathematics this year, a scrutiny of pupils' books shows a few pupils do not routinely apply their knowledge of grammar, punctuation and spelling in their writing in different subjects. In mathematics, some pupils do not set out clearly or in enough detail, how they have worked through longer problems. It is not always clear therefore, where they have made mistakes.

### The early years provision

is good

- Effective leadership of provision in the early years has ensured much improvement since the previous inspection. Standards at the end of the Reception Year have risen considerably over the last two years so that children are well prepared to start Year 1. Progress is good throughout both Nursery and Reception because of the strong focus on meeting the specific learning needs of all children.
- The quality of teaching is consistently good. Adults are fully aware of what each child knows and is able to do. They plan activities that challenge and extend children's knowledge and understanding across all areas of learning. Consequently, from their differing starting points, children do well in all areas of learning and particularly in developing early literacy and number skills.
- Adults talk purposefully with children to extend learning and encourage curiosity, especially when children have chosen activities for themselves. Consequently, children's speech develops well. Children interact well with adults, listen carefully to their teacher and concentrate well. They respond enthusiastically to the wide range of interesting activities planned for them.
- Children behave well. They get on well with each other and work productively together. They quickly respond to adults' requests, listening politely to adults and each other. Adults are vigilant in regard to safety; children are safe and secure during all activities.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	103362
<b>Local authority</b>	Birmingham
<b>Inspection number</b>	456275

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	521
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Sue Beardsmore
<b>Headteacher</b>	Cath Rindl
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	09 July 2012
<b>Telephone number</b>	0121 5544913
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