

# Topcliffe Primary School

Hawkinge Drive, Castle Vale, Birmingham, B35 6BS

**Inspection dates** 13–14 June 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Pupils in the mainstream classes make good progress from their starting points and an increasing number make better than expected progress in English and mathematics.
- Pupils in the resource bases for autistic spectrum disorder and speech and language make good, and at times outstanding, progress because their needs are very well provided for.
- Pupils are happy and proud of their school. They feel safe, behave well and have positive attitudes to their learning.
- Parents and carers are highly positive about the support their children receive, particularly those with special educational needs.
- Teaching is typically good and there is an increasing amount of outstanding teaching.
- The organisation of the resource bases and the provision for pupils with special educational needs throughout the school are extremely well managed by the two special educational needs coordinators.
- The driving force behind the school's improvement has been the good leadership of the headteacher who is strongly supported by a knowledgeable and highly involved governing body which has challenged leaders at all levels rigorously.
- There is a relentless focus by staff on raising pupils' achievements and improving the quality of their learning. Staff know the pupils well.
- Pupils have many memorable and vibrant learning opportunities, including a wide variety of visits and visitors to the school, which contribute very well to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils' attainment is improving but is below expected levels at the end of Year 2, particularly in writing.
- Not enough pupils are reaching the higher levels in Key Stage 1 because tasks in some lessons are not sufficiently demanding.
- The Reception class outside area is poorly developed. Not all areas of learning can be accessed independently.
- Teachers' comments when marking pupils' work do not always help pupils to improve their work effectively.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 18 lessons involving 12 teachers; three lessons were observed jointly with school leaders. They also observed an assembly.
- Inspectors held discussions with school leaders, staff, governors and a representative of the school improvement provider.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at documentation, including improvement plans, the systems for tracking pupils’ progress, the arrangements for safeguarding pupils and samples of pupils’ work. They heard groups of pupils read and spoke with others about behaviour and safety arrangements at the school.
- Inspectors took account of the 18 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the views expressed by those parents and carers who spoke with them at the start of the school day.

## Inspection team

Michael Bartleman, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Brenda Jones	Additional Inspector
Dennis Brittain	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This school is an average-sized primary school.
- The majority of pupils come from a White British background. An increasing proportion come from minority ethnic groups.
- The proportion of pupils speaking English as an additional language is average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium (additional government funding for specific groups of pupils, including those known to be eligible for free school meals) is well-above average.
- The school has specially resourced provision for pupils with special educational needs. It has two resource bases, one for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) with 24 pupils in three classes and the other for 25 pupils with speech and language difficulties in two classes.
- In 2012, the school achieved the Inclusion award.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage is made up of one Reception class.
- During the inspection, the vast majority of pupils in Year 6 were on a residential visit.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

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

- Raise pupils' attainment and accelerate their progress at Key Stage 1, particularly in writing by:
  - closing the gap between pupils' attainment in reading and writing
  - increasing the proportion of outstanding lessons
  - increasing the level of challenge in lessons so that more pupils reach the higher levels in their work
  - ensuring all pupils understand how to improve their work.
- Develop the Reception class outside area to allow children independent access to all areas of learning.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Children join the Reception class with skills that are well below those expected for their age, particularly in language and communication. They get off to a good start, are well taught and make good progress, although they are still below expected levels when they start Year 1.
- By the time mainstream pupils leave at the end of Year 6, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected Level 4 in English and mathematics is broadly average, and an increasing number of pupils attain the higher Level 5. This means that the progress pupils make from their starting points is good. However, this good academic progress is not reflected in whole-school data because of the significant minority of pupils with statements of educational needs who are performing at well below age-related expectations.
- The school's own data for 2012 show that, while attainment of mainstream pupils is below average at the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics, increasing numbers of pupils in Years 1 and 2, including those supported by the pupil premium and those learning English as an additional language, are catching up and making better progress than previously.
- Pupils' progress in writing at Key Stage 1 is slower than in reading. Not enough pupils are reaching the higher levels in their work because some of the tasks in lessons, particularly for more-able pupils, are not challenging enough.
- Pupils in both resource bases make good progress overall, and outstanding progress in their social and personal skills because their needs are extremely well provided for. This enables many of the pupils to be fully integrated successfully into mainstream classes for all or a part of their learning.
- The school has worked effectively to improve the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) by using teachers and teaching assistants to run daily, small-group sessions. Results in the national phonic screening check at the end of Year 1 in 2012 were above average.
- Attainment in reading is currently below expected levels in Year 2 due to the large number of pupils with a statement of educational need from the resource bases in this year group. It is above expected levels in Year 6.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively to provide additional teaching assistants, an educational psychologist and curriculum enrichment opportunities. The attainment of pupils supported by the pupil premium in English and mathematics in 2012 was similar to that of other pupils in the school.
- All parents who spoke to inspectors or responded to Parent View believed that their children were making good progress.

### The quality of teaching is good

- The teaching is good and there are elements of outstanding practice, particularly in the resource bases where pupils' next steps in learning are particularly well met. Lessons see busy pupils responding with enthusiasm to the many opportunities to apply their skills and to work independently. Teachers, in partnership with well-trained teaching assistants, plan imaginative

activities in the classroom and outdoors, such forest schools, canoeing and videoing, that excite and motivate pupils to succeed.

- The proportion of good and outstanding teaching is increasing well but needs to advance further to overcome past underachievement at Key Stage 1, particularly in writing, and to ensure that more pupils reach the higher levels in their work.
- Teachers have high expectations. Reading, writing, mathematics and phonics are taught effectively. Teachers have increased their knowledge of what makes an effective lesson and what impact their work has on pupils' progress through the sharing of good practice.
- In the better lessons, relationships are strong, teachers question pupils effectively and teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to the learning. Good links are made with previous work and other subjects. Pupils are motivated by the tasks in hand and they have good opportunities to discuss and share their ideas with each other. As a result, learning is fun and all groups of pupils make good progress.
- Although marking is regular, teachers' comments to pupils do not always help them improve their work. In a few classes, pupils are not given time to respond to comments.
- Where teaching is less strong, teachers underestimate what pupils can achieve. This means that some of the tasks for more-able pupils are not sufficiently demanding.
- All teachers use resources well to motivate pupils. They use information and communication technology (ICT) frequently to help with pupils' learning. This was seen, for example, in a lesson in Year 2 where pupils were making a video clip to explain instructional writing.
- Pupils supported by the pupil premium receive well-managed help which enables them to achieve as well as other pupils. The focus on individual needs also ensures that disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and those from minority ethnic groups are supported effectively and progress well.
- Teaching is good in the Reception class where adults provide interesting activities which engage children. They intervene at appropriate points to enhance children's learning and regularly assess and record their progress. Language development is promoted well. However, the outside area is not well organised and does not promote all areas of learning and independence effectively.

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

- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. At times, their conduct is outstanding. The good relationships between all pupils and adults contribute to the positive values and sense of belonging in the school. They have positive attitudes to learning.
- The school's culture of 'caught being good' promotes a positive learning environment. School records confirm that pupils' behaviour is good on a daily basis and is improving over time, although it is not yet exemplary. The few pupils who find it difficult to manage their own behaviour are supported well, particularly through the use of the emotional diary.
- Pupils told inspectors, 'It is fun at our school; there is a lot for us to do.' They like the rewards they get for good behaviour and work. Pupils readily take on responsibilities of being house captains and play leaders, and they enjoy being involved with the development of the canal

barge as a creative classroom.

- Pupils show clear values of respect and tolerance of others. This is because these aspects are central to the school's values and are supported well by the school's 'moral compass' guidelines.
- The school has excellent working relationships with outside agencies to support pupils and their families whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Parents and carers said that all staff go the extra mile to ensure that all pupils are able to access high-quality learning and enrichment activities.
- Attendance is average and continuing to improve which reflects the effective work of the learning mentor.
- Parents and carers say their children are safe and well cared for. This view is reflected in the confidence expressed by pupils that they are safe at school and that any bullying is dealt with effectively. Pupils have a good knowledge of all forms of bullying, for example cyber-bullying, and have great trust in the headteacher to solve any difficulties that arise.
- Pupils are helped to develop a range of strategies so they are able to manage everyday risks for themselves, such as those associated with the internet, drugs and roads.

### **The leadership and management are good**

- Good leadership by the headteacher and deputy headteacher has been central to the school's improvement since the previous inspection. With effective support from governors and other staff, they have successfully raised expectations and ensured that standards are continuing to rise. Staff regularly check that all pupils are on track to make good progress from their starting points.
- The headteacher has managed the pace of change, the increase in the school's roll and the number of pupils in the resource bases very effectively so that there is a common sense of purpose and staff morale is high. The school is well placed to improve further.
- Regular lesson observations followed by detailed feedback to teachers and a successful programme of professional development and coaching have ensured that teaching is good, with an increasing proportion that is outstanding. The performance of teachers is managed effectively.
- The support for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, including the high number of pupils with statements of special educational needs, is managed outstandingly well by the two special educational needs coordinators.
- The school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination well. Differences in pupils' achievement at Key Stages 1 and 2 are closing rapidly. There are no incidents of harassment. Pupil premium funding is managed well so that eligible pupils make good progress.
- Senior leaders are very focused on improving the life chances of all pupils and removing any barriers to learning for all pupils whatever their circumstances.
- The headteacher's and deputy headteacher's presence around the school is highly effective in cementing strong relationships.

- Innovative approaches to information and communication technology, including robotics, and partnerships with local independent schools, businesses and universities, motivate pupils well and raise expectations and achievement effectively.
- Topics bring together different subjects in a way that the pupils describe as 'fun'. The range of subjects and activities contribute strongly to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Visits, including residential visits, opportunities to develop music through whole-class brass tuition and performances, sporting activities, themed days and the development of artistic skills add further enhancement.
- Regular support from the school improvement provider and 'light touch' support from the local authority provide effective assistance for school leaders, teachers and governors. This has helped leaders to evaluate the school's performance accurately and to develop a clear strategy to improve the school further.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body supports and monitors the work of the school well. Governors understand the school's performance information well and how the school has improved. They provide good support to the headteacher and senior leaders because they are increasingly able to ask the difficult questions about how decisions will have an impact on pupils' learning. The governing body is kept informed regularly about how teaching is improving, and governors visit the school regularly to check on performance. This has led to good decisions being made on the rewards that teachers receive, and effective allocation of the school's finances and the pupil premium, which it monitors through regular visits. The governing body carries out its statutory duties effectively, ensuring, for example, that procedures for safeguarding pupils are well managed, regularly reviewed and fully meet the regulatory requirements.

## 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>	103307
<b>Local authority</b>	Birmingham
<b>Inspection number</b>	412093

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>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	250
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Kim Wheeler
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ian Lowe
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	9 December 2009
<b>Telephone number</b>	0121 6756296
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