

Clifton Primary School

Brunswick Road, Balsall Heath, Birmingham, West Midlands B12 8NX

Inspection dates

14–15 May 2019

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| 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 | Outstanding |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The new headteacher provides exceptionally strong leadership. He and senior leaders are ambitious for all pupils. They focus on the right priorities to move the school forward.
- Governors provide effective strategic direction and support and challenge senior leaders well in their work to improve the school.
- Although many are new to post, middle leaders are clear about the areas for development. They are enthusiastically driving improvements in their curriculum areas.
- Teaching across the school is good. Teachers' good subject knowledge enables them to plan work that is interesting and engages pupils in their learning.
- Pupils' progress has now recovered after a dip in recent years, especially in reading. Work in pupils' books and school assessment information show that across the school, standards are rising.
- Leaders have successfully improved mathematics teaching and now provide pupils with more opportunities to use and apply their skills and knowledge.
- The curriculum is broad and rich. Pupils spend time developing skills in subjects other than English and mathematics. The curriculum is supported by a variety of visits and extra-curricular activities that pupils enjoy.
- Pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare are good. Pupils have positive relationships with adults in school, which enables them to learn well.
- There is a strong safeguarding culture across the school. Pupils feel safe and appreciate the many ways in which the school helps them learn to stay safe.
- Leaders correctly identify and work to remove the barriers to learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). As a result, pupils with SEND make strong progress from their different starting points.
- Pupils' overall attendance has improved and the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent has also reduced.
- Parents and carers are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. They say their children are well cared for and safe.
- From low starting points, children in early years make good progress. Sometimes adult interactions do not provide opportunities for children to think deeply about what they are learning to do. This limits the progress children make.
- Occasionally, work is not well matched to pupils' individual needs and pupils depend on adults telling them what to do.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and thereby increase outcomes for all groups of pupils, including the most able and those with SEND, by ensuring that work set by teachers is consistently well matched to individual pupils' abilities so that they become less dependent on direct adult supervision and support.
- Continue to develop the quality of provision in early years, by ensuring that adults use every opportunity to challenge and extend children's thinking and reasoning.
- Continue to develop the skills of middle leaders so that they have a sustained impact on whole-school improvements.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Exceptionally strong, strategic leadership shown by the new headteacher is resulting in rapid improvements across the school. He has galvanised the staff team and ensured a shared vision is embraced and embedded.
- Since the last inspection, the school has been through significant staffing changes and expanded considerably. It is now much larger than the average primary school and is housed in four buildings. These are spread across an extensive campus. Working with senior leaders, the head is determined to unite the school into one cohesive unit providing the best quality of education possible. High aspirations and an ambition for each and every child to succeed are shared by all.
- The senior leadership team is a key strength of the school. Leaders are clear about what the school does well, but more importantly demonstrate an honesty and deep understanding of the areas needing further improvement. Self-evaluation is accurate, based on careful and regular checking of the quality of teaching, the work in pupils' books and a very detailed analysis of assessment information. Leaders take well-considered and effective actions based on their evaluation. There is a clear strategic approach to the further development of the school.
- Staff morale is very high. They say that they are valued and empowered by senior leaders. Staff appreciate the opportunities they are given to develop their skills and take on additional responsibilities. They talk positively about the support and guidance they receive from leaders. The careful consideration of staff well-being results in fewer staff absences. It is having a positive impact on the quality of education offered.
- Leaders use their teaching and learning improvement framework to identify areas where support and training are needed. 'Way forward' recommendations are shared with staff and rigorously followed up. High-quality professional development, combined with higher expectations from leaders, is driving up the standards of teaching. Greater consistency in provision is evident across the school.
- Middle leaders are passionate and knowledgeable about their areas of responsibility. They use comprehensive action plans to focus their work. Many are new to post this year and so it is still too early to see the full impact of their work. However, their commitment to improvement is evident in the green shoots of success already being realised.
- Leadership of provision for special educational needs is effective. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) works diligently to support the increasing number of pupils with SEND. An assistant SENCo has recently been appointed to provide further capacity to manage the growing demand. Together, leaders ensure the accurate identification of pupils' individual needs. A focus on pupils' entitlement to a broad and balanced curriculum is foremost in their planning, as well as supporting those pupils with complex learning and health needs. Extra funding for those pupils with SEND is used well.
- The curriculum is designed to engage and interest pupils. It is broad and balanced, linking subjects such as geography and history where appropriate. For example, when

studying tectonic plates in geography, Year 4 pupils make links between earthquakes and the volcanic eruption in Pompeii. Leaders make good use of specialist staff, such as the artist in residence, and provide dedicated provision such as the science lab where practical experiments can be undertaken.

- Leaders make strong provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and work to ensure these elements are threaded throughout the whole curriculum. The school motto, 'A world of learning together,' underpins the school's work in developing global citizens. Leaders aim to bring the world to the pupils through a range of first-hand experiences such as visits to the Space Centre and Compton Verney Gallery, and the opportunity to perform in dance and music festivals.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the principles behind British values. They recognise the importance of tolerance and appreciate the inclusive school ethos in their diverse community. Work on equalities and protected characteristics is given a high profile and promoted by all staff across the curriculum.
- Leaders ensure that additional funding for disadvantaged pupils has a strong impact on pupils' outcomes across all year groups. Barriers to learning are identified and funding used in a purposeful way to meet their individual needs. Gaps between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils are closing.
- Specific funds for primary school physical education (PE) and sport are put to good use. Pupils participate in a range of sporting competitions, as well as developing their physical and sporting skills for pleasure. An annual review of provision indicates higher rates of participation, especially from girls. Staff are strong role models, promoting sport and health throughout the day. The school carefully considers the local community and promotes and facilitates activities for parents, such as cycling for parents and a women's community netball team.
- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. They comment on the highly effective communication and say that the school provides a friendly, safe and welcoming environment. Many parents who spoke to inspectors talked about the positive way in which the school works with families and the high-quality education their children receive.

Governance of the school

- Governance is highly effective. Governors use their wealth of skills and experience to hold leaders to account. The governing body is led by an extremely skilled, experienced chair of governors who provides clarity and leads from the front. Governors provide school leaders with effective support and challenge in equal measure.
- Governors know the school well and are ambitious for its continued development. Through regular meetings, the whole governing body is kept up to date and well informed. Visits to the school and discussions with staff enable governors to gather additional information for themselves. They are astute and discharge their duties diligently.
- Governors keep a close eye on how additional funding, such as that for disadvantaged pupils and the PE and sport premium, is used. They work to ensure that the needs of individual pupils are met by making additional contributions to the special educational

needs funding that the school receives. Governors ensure the decisions they make are centred on the pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The 'Clifton safeguarding triangle' ensures that keeping children safe is central to the work of the school. Policies and procedures are kept up to date. All staff are well trained including, in the 'Prevent' duty and how to keep pupils safe from extremism and radicalisation. The curriculum is reviewed to ensure a wide range of opportunities help pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. A strong culture of safeguarding is evident in the school.
- All staff understand the role they play in keeping children safe. They know what to do if they have a concern about a child. Record keeping is thorough and enables a clear picture to be built up over time. Through regular discussions, designated safeguarding leaders maintain a comprehensive overview of issues facing vulnerable children and their families. Referrals are swiftly followed up and action taken. Staff work tirelessly to provide support and engage appropriate external help where necessary.
- Leaders are passionate about ensuring that pupils develop the skills and knowledge they need to keep themselves safe. Opportunities to learn about peer pressure, knife crime and e-safety help equip pupils with appropriate skills for life.
- The single central register is very well maintained by a highly knowledgeable member of staff. A well-established system is in place for checking the suitability of staff to work with children. Induction procedures ensure that all new staff understand the school process for dealing with any concern about a child. Governors are knowledgeable about safeguarding and understand their responsibilities for keeping children safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Leaders have an accurate view of the quality of teaching across the school. They monitor teachers' work and check pupils' progress regularly. They provide coaching and support to ensure that where there are weaknesses in teaching, it improves rapidly. As a result, the quality of teaching across the school is good and developing further.
- Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and plan work that engages and interests pupils of all ages. They create a positive learning environment. Opportunities to work together in pairs or small groups are provided for all pupils. Adults and pupils work together well. Pupils develop positive attitudes to learning and concentrate in lessons.
- Teachers are skilled in modelling what they want pupils to do. Teachers give appropriate instructions and take time to explain the tasks that pupils are asked to do. During lessons, teachers check that pupils understand what they are doing and explain again if necessary. They regularly re-visit aspects of new learning so pupils grasp it quickly. As a result, pupils succeed and make strong progress.
- Teachers place a high emphasis on developing pupils' vocabulary. Opportunities for talking and reflecting out loud are built into all areas of the curriculum. Time is used

effectively to unpick the meaning of words and introduce other challenging words. For example, when talking about a character feeling sad, pupils began to use words such as disheartened, dismayed and dejected. Teachers introduce appropriate technical vocabulary in subjects such as science and geography and encourage pupils to use these words in their own work.

- Leaders ensure the teaching of reading is a priority. Phonics is taught well through a systematic approach progressively building up pupils' knowledge of letters and sounds. Changes to the timetable ensure that frequent opportunities are provided for pupils to practise and develop their reading skills. A literacy spine set from Year 1 to Year 6 introduces pupils to texts such as 'The Tiger Who Came to Tea', 'The Firework-Maker's Daughter' and 'Macbeth.' Pupils develop an enjoyment of reading as well as the ability to read fluently.
- Opportunities to reflect, review and edit pieces of work are helping pupils to improve their skills in writing. Teachers ensure that pupils have many opportunities to write in different subjects across the curriculum. A renewed focus on improving handwriting and presentation is having a positive impact. Pupils know why it is important to write clearly and are beginning to take much more pride in their work. Over time, pupils develop good stamina for writing.
- Teachers work closely together to develop a consistent approach to teaching mathematics. The mathematics curriculum that has been introduced places a much greater emphasis on reasoning and problem solving. Teachers ensure pupils have basic knowledge in, for example, their multiplication tables and can use and apply it in their work.
- Leaders are developing an effective system for ongoing assessment in order to ensure that all pupils, including the most able, are effectively challenged. Teachers note errors and misconceptions from pupils' work in an assessment diary. The use of assessment diaries, while in the early stages, is effectively influencing next steps in learning. There is still more work to be done to ensure an appropriate match of work to pupils' needs so that they can work more independently.
- Additional adults are used effectively to support different groups of pupils, especially those with SEND. They demonstrate patience and an understanding of pupils' additional needs. Adults break tasks down into small steps and show pupils what to do. Occasionally, pupils are not encouraged to be as independent as they might be and this limits the progress they make.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Respectful relationships are at the heart of the school's personal, social and health (PSH) education curriculum. Interactions between adults and pupils demonstrate the strong respectful and positive relationships that exist in the school.
- The pastoral care in the school is strong. Pupils know whom they can talk to if they have any concerns. Leaders ensure that caring for mental and emotional well-being is a

key element of the school's provision. Learning mentors and family support workers are held in high regard by pupils, parents and staff. They are effective in developing confidence and raising self-esteem among pupils.

- Pupils are keen to please and try hard in lessons. They listen to adults and follow instructions carefully. Many pupils are compliant, but do not routinely show independence in their learning. The new headteacher has raised expectations of what pupils can do and pupils say that they are trying hard with their work, including their handwriting.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school. They are given many opportunities to learn about keeping themselves safe when in and out of school. Pupils talk confidently about how to use the internet safely and know the dangers associated with gangs, such as knife crime. The curriculum provides regular opportunities for pupils to learn how to keep themselves safe.
- Pupils are knowledgeable about a range of different religions. Work in religious education focuses on the similarities between the major world religions rather than the differences. As a result, pupils develop tolerance and understanding.
- School records show that incidents of bullying are very rare. Leaders ensure that all pupils are taught about the different forms of bullying. Pupils say that if and when bullying occurs, it is quickly dealt with by staff.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils conduct themselves well during the day. Staff and pupils work effectively together to ensure that the school is calm and orderly. Leaders implement clear systems and procedures that enable the large number of children to move safely around the extensive school site.
- Pupils display good manners and are courteous. They are polite, holding doors open for each other and for visitors. They take turns and help one another, for instance, when clearing away after lunch. Outside on the playground, pupils respect each other's space and interact well with one another.
- Expectations from adults are high. The comprehensive behaviour policy is applied consistently across the school. Pupils fully understand what is expected. Pupils say that rewards are fair and talk clearly about the consequences of poor behaviour. They demonstrate a good understanding of the three school rules, 'respect, care and listen'.
- As a result of a renewed focus on improving behaviour since September, the number of exclusions has reduced considerably. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are excluded has also dropped significantly. There are now very few exclusions from school.
- Attendance has improved and at the time of the inspection, was above the national average. Leaders follow up any absence swiftly and provide good support and appropriate challenge to those families where poor attendance is an issue. Consequently, the numbers of those who are persistently absent have fallen dramatically.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- The progress pupils make over time has improved and increased year on year. Although attainment at the end of key stage 2 remains below national averages, there is a clear improving trend and the gap is closing. Leaders set ambitious targets, particularly in reading and phonics in aiming for all pupils to be able to decode and read fluently.
- Leaders have ensured that baseline data is accurate and provides a firm foundation on which to base the monitoring of pupils' progress. They keep a close eye on the progress pupils make and ensure that additional support is provided quickly to help those who are struggling. This targeted support is ensuring that more pupils across the school are now at age-related expectations.
- The school's own performance information indicates that current pupils in key stage 2 are making strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Reading, in particular, shows a strong upward trend, with almost three quarters of the cohort working at age-related expectations. This is a significant improvement on previous years.
- At the end of key stage 1, attainment is below national averages, but pupils make good progress from low starting points. The attainment gaps between key groups of pupils, such as that between boys and girls, have narrowed.
- Progress in mathematics across the school is strong and improving. Over time, progress has significantly improved. This is resulting in higher attainment for all groups of pupils.
- The books of current pupils show strong progress in a wide range of subjects. Over time, pupils secure their knowledge and make links between different subjects and with work they have previously completed. For example, when studying an American Indian myth, pupils identified similarities with an Aesop's fable, studied during a topic on Ancient Greece.
- Outcomes in phonics are improving as a result of a systematic approach in teaching letters and the sounds they represent. Effective catch-up sessions support pupils to prevent them falling behind. Leaders have clear evidence that outcomes have risen again. More pupils in Year 1 are currently reaching the expected standard in phonics than has previously been the case.
- Pupils with SEND make good progress from their different starting points. Their needs are accurately identified and appropriate support is provided. Assisted communication is used effectively by some pupils with SEND and enables them to be more independent at school.
- Disadvantaged pupils are making improved rates of progress. Leaders track their progress carefully, and differences in progress and attainment are diminishing. Leaders ensure that appropriate targeted support enables those pupils falling behind to quickly catch up.

Early years provision

Good

- Leadership of early years is strong. Leaders have a good understanding of the strengths and areas for development. The leader demonstrates a good understanding of the development needs of young children. Improvement plans are focused precisely on making sure that children's early development improves further. Strong leadership ensures that children make good progress from their starting points.
- Over the last three years, the proportion of children entering early years with skills below those typical for their age has increased significantly. Currently, a large proportion of children are working well below expectations, especially in speech and language. As a result of accurate assessment and careful matching of learning activities to the needs of the children, the majority of children make good progress from their low starting points.
- Leaders place a high priority on ensuring that children learn their letters and sounds swiftly. The teaching of phonics is well organised and phonic skills are taught systematically across the Reception classes. Staff have good subject knowledge and model effectively the sounds that letters represent. The most able children begin to use their sounds in their independent writing. Additional opportunities are provided for those children who need extra support so that no child is left behind.
- Adults focus on developing children's speech, language and communication skills. Opportunities to widen children's vocabulary are threaded through different activities. For example, in Nursery, children are introduced to the names of different vegetables as they taste them. During phonics sessions, adults help children understand the words 'stew' and 'crew'. Children begin to use new words and develop confidence when talking to others.
- Activities are planned that take account of children's interests and meet their learning needs. Occasionally, activities do not provide sufficient opportunities for children to investigate and deepen their learning. Some adult interactions and the questions they ask do not challenge and extend children's thinking and reasoning enough. Occasionally, children are not supported effectively to fully develop their emerging skills and knowledge and this slows their progress.
- Behaviour is good in early years. Children listen carefully and play well together. Routines are well established and help children know what to do. The learning environment is well resourced and set up to enable children to be independent. Children tidy away and follow instructions quickly.
- Links between home and school are effective. Parents are positive about the start their children get to school. Workshops to help parents to know how to support their children are very well attended. Parents regularly contribute to learning journals so that a full picture of each individual child is built up over time.
- Standards of care and welfare are high and all adults understand their responsibility to keep children safe.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 134840 |
| Local authority | Birmingham |
| Inspection number | 10088615 |

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Maintained |
| Age range of pupils | 3 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 941 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Sylvia Fry |
| Headteacher | Nick Lambert |
| Telephone number | 0121 464 2926 |
| Website | www.cliftonprimary.bham.sch.uk |
| Email address | enquiry@cliftonprimary.bham.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 8–9 May 2013 |

Information about this school

- Since the last inspection, the school has increased in size and is now a four-form entry primary school. This is significantly larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is higher than that found nationally.
- There are more pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds than found in most primary schools nationally, and the vast majority of these pupils speak English as an additional language.
- There are more pupils with SEND than are found in most primary schools. An increasing number of pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
- Following the retirement of the executive headteacher and head of school, a new headteacher was appointed in September 2018.

- The chair of the board of governors' role is shared between two governors.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteachers and assistant headteachers and subject leaders. The lead inspector spoke with three governors, including one of the chairs of governors.
- Inspectors made visits to classrooms on both days of the inspection. Most of these visits were with school leaders. Inspectors scrutinised a wide selection of pupils' books from across the curriculum.
- Pupils were spoken to formally and informally. A group of pupils met with an inspector. Inspectors heard pupils read. They observed behaviour in classrooms, in corridors, in the dining hall and outside on the playgrounds.
- Inspectors also spoke to parents at the start of the school day on both days of the inspection. There were no responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.
- The lead inspector met with a group of staff, both teaching and non-teaching.
- Various school documents were scrutinised, including the school's self-evaluation and school improvement plans and records of monitoring. Minutes of governors' meetings and information about pupils' progress, behaviour, attendance and safety were also analysed and discussed with leaders.
- Documents relating to safeguarding were checked and inspectors looked at published information on the school's website.

Inspection team

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|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Nicola Harwood, lead inspector | Her Majesty's Inspector |
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| Patrick Amieli | Ofsted Inspector |
| Chris Pollitt | Ofsted Inspector |
| Collette Higgins | Ofsted Inspector |

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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