

George Dixon Primary School

City Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham, West Midlands B17 8LE

Inspection dates

22–23 November 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, standards in reading, writing and mathematics have declined. Standards are now rising but pupils who recently left the school were not fully prepared for learning at secondary school.
- Until recently, leaders and governors have not done enough to challenge shortcomings in teaching and learning.
- Teaching has not been informed by reliable assessment. Consequently, pupils have gaps in their knowledge and understanding. Currently, some teaching is still not pitched at the right level.
- The support for least-able pupils varies in its effectiveness. Middle-ability pupils have a lot of ground to cover if they are to succeed in line with their potential.
- There is room for continued improvement in the early years so that children are better prepared for learning in Year 1.
- Some pupils miss too much school without good reason and this hinders their learning.
- Playground behaviour, while now improving, can be overly rough at times.

The school has the following strengths

- School leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's performance. They have already brought about improvements to teaching and learning.
- Staff are attentive to pupils' welfare and act as positive role models.
- Physical education (PE) teaching is highly effective and motivates pupils to do their best in lots of ways.
- Pupils' conduct in class is usually good. Good behaviour is rewarded and poor behaviour is not accepted.
- Procedures for keeping pupils safe at school are effective.
- Many of the most able pupils make good progress because they respond well to the higher expectations of current teaching.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the impact of leadership and management on sustainable school improvement by making sure that:
 - newly appointed leaders get the guidance, support and training they need in order to develop in their roles
 - all leaders keep an evaluative eye on the accuracy of assessment and how it is used to inform teaching
 - governors ensure that school development planning is properly informed and that it works
 - staff continue to get regular training and constructive feedback about their work
 - pupils get enough opportunities to practise and develop their literacy and numeracy skills in a wide range of subjects.
- Continue to improve the quality of teaching across the school in order to raise standards in reading, writing and mathematics, by making sure that:
 - the least-able pupils receive timely support when they do not understand
 - pupils have access to suitable resources when they need them
 - staff make use of all the available assessment information in order to pitch teaching at the right level, especially for middle- and lower-ability pupils
 - staff have continued access to regular training to keep them up to date
 - staff share and learn from effective practice in this school and elsewhere.
- Improve pupils' behaviour and attendance by:
 - continuing to support pupils who struggle to control their behaviour on the playground
 - working with parents to improve the attendance of those pupils who miss too much school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, standards have declined at this school. This is because, until recently, leaders did not keep up to date with the demands of the current school curriculum. Staff training lapsed and the quality of teaching dropped.
- Leaders have now halted the decline in the quality of education provided and academic standards are rising. The leadership and staff teams have been refreshed by new appointments, an injection of training and opportunities to share best practice. The headteacher knows exactly what needs to be done and her infectious enthusiasm, purpose and drive are getting the best from everyone. She and her leadership team have challenged underperformance with success and nurtured staff talent. In short, there is a clear sense of shared ambition for the school to regain its former good performance.
- Senior leaders' checks on the quality of teaching are improving and are having a positive impact. However, leaders could do more to check that teachers use assessment information effectively when planning pupils' next steps.
- Middle leadership is strengthening and newly appointed leaders are developing in their roles. Leadership of core subjects and special educational needs (SEN), for example, is well organised and plays an important part in securing a renewed culture of accountability in the school. Leaders' improvement plans are informed by accurate evaluations of the quality of teaching and learning and the school's overall performance.
- Specific funds, such as the pupil premium and SEN funding, have been spent correctly, but routines for checking on the results of such spending are not well established. Consequently, it is hard to know how well different projects have worked. In a similar vein, the impact of the primary school sport fund has not been reviewed in any formal way. However, several benefits are clear to see. Pupils are able to take part in numerous sports that motivate them and channel their energies in positive ways.
- The school curriculum is suitably broad and is supported by after-school clubs and lunchtime activities. Pupils' topic books and colourful wall displays capture a selection of work from many different subjects. These also show that pupils' underdeveloped literacy and numeracy skills have limited the quality of their cross-curricular work.
- While pupils have left primary school with gaps in their learning, they have been guided to develop self-respect and respect for others. The school encourages pupils to take an interest in others and the wider world. They are taught to understand the difference between right and wrong. Through assemblies, lessons and focus groups, pupils learn how to behave appropriately in different situations, both now and in the future.

Governance of the school

- Governors did not do enough soon enough to challenge the decline in standards. They did not get the information they needed and did not use the information they had to challenge the school's leaders on school development planning and whether initiatives were working or not. Consequently, they contributed to a period of ineffective

leadership.

- Current governance is growing in its effectiveness. Governors now understand the full extent of their responsibilities and have access to reliable information that enables them to make informed decisions and plan for improvements. They have carried out a review of governors' skills and have learned from their past mistakes. Governors have sought external advice and support, and have been responsive to its findings and recommendations. They have put routines in place to check on the impact of their actions to lift standards.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff are aware and informed about their responsibilities with regards to pupils' safety and well-being. They know how to spot the warning signs that a pupil may be at risk of harm, and act swiftly on any concerns that arise. Staff are equally aware of the dangers of extreme views and behaviours, and liaise with different agencies in order to keep all up to date.
- The school site is well maintained and very secure. All the proper checks on staff and visitors are carried out and school documentation is completed correctly. Pupils who need medicine in school have access to it when needed and first-aid treatment is on hand when required. Parents are kept suitably informed about matters relating to health and safety.
- The school's system for monitoring internet use is highly effective. It keeps pupils safe online and allows staff to identify and follow up anything that causes concern.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Shortcomings in the use of assessment to inform teaching have been at the heart of the school's recent drop in standards. Pupils have been kept busy but have not learned what they need to know. This has left them with gaps in their knowledge and, consequently, they have not coped well with end-of-key-stage tests.
- The current quality of teaching shows much promise. However, in some year groups, teaching is not pitched quite right for pupils' current levels of understanding or pupils do not have access to helpful resources when they need them. Furthermore, at times, pupils' mistakes or misconceptions are not picked up there and then, which leaves them confused.
- During this inspection, for example, some key stage 1 pupils could not keep up with explanations about fractions and were not sure what to do. Further up the school, misunderstandings about ratio went unnoticed by staff for some time. In other instances, younger pupils had little to help them with their early counting and some older pupils did not readily call on reference books to help them improve their writing.
- There is, however, no doubt that teaching is improving. Across the school, teachers' subject knowledge is generally good and, in all classes, a systematic and consistent approach to assessment has been introduced. Teachers and leaders now have an accurate view of what pupils know. Increasingly, staff are making use of this

information to help pupils catch up and to push them on further.

- The most able pupils, in particular, are responding very well to the higher level of challenge now being provided. In Year 6, for example, the quality of teaching for the brightest pupils is excellent and meets their needs with almost pinpoint precision. Work in these pupils' books and observations made during this inspection found rapid progress and high standards.
- Pupils, too, say that teaching is improving. They told inspectors that work now follows on more logically from earlier work and helps them to build secure understanding. Homework is also an established routine and supports classroom learning.
- The quality of teaching across the curriculum varies. Leaders are aware of this and have been rightly focusing on improving teaching in English and mathematics. That said, the quality of teaching in sport and PE is excellent. Specialist teaching is informed, lively, upbeat and motivational. Pupils love it and it inspires them to do their best in lots of different ways.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Attention to pupils' welfare, well-being and mental health is a key driver of many aspects of the school's work. Specialist staff have been recruited in order to help pupils understand and manage their feelings and behaviour in positive ways. The learning mentor team organises highly constructive sessions that prompt pupils to reflect on their actions, develop empathy and build resilience so that they can cope when things upset them.
- This focus on supporting pupils to change and improve their behaviour has enriched the culture in the school. Work carried out in learning mentor sessions is followed up in class. Leaders keep in touch with how things are going and staff act as positive role models. Consequently, adults and pupils remain calm in class and lessons are rarely disrupted by poor behaviour.
- Pupils feel safe at school and know that staff will always listen to their worries and ideas. They are taught about bullying and what to do should it occur. They say it is uncommon and that unkind behaviour, such as name-calling, does not happen as much as it used to. Again, this is a direct consequence of the school's work to help pupils be thoughtful and considerate.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- While classroom conduct is calm and orderly, some pupils can become aggressive on the playground. In the summer term 2017, for example, there were several exclusions for breaktime fighting. In the main, these were caused by tempers flaring during games of playground football. In response, the school has introduced a variety of playground activities and put extra support in place to help pupils who find it hard to control their

behaviour. This is paying off and there have been fewer incidents of rough behaviour this term.

- Most pupils attend regularly and on time but a few are absent too often without good cause. This means they miss lessons and fall behind in their learning. Leaders are working with families and organisations in order to check on pupils' whereabouts and offer support when appropriate. Leaders are also prepared to take firm action to challenge low attendance.
- When eating lunch, moving around the school or taking part in clubs, pupils behave well. They understand the school's rules and say these are fair and sensible. The school's values of commitment, care, courage, cooperation, consideration, courtesy and communication are known as the '7 Cs' for short and are woven through many aspects of the school's approach to behaviour management. Pupils who exemplify these qualities are rewarded each week and pupils have a say in shaping the school's conduct codes. In addition, through their work as school councillors or playground leaders, older pupils set a good example to others.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6 have fallen quite significantly over the past two years. Pupils who recently left the school were not properly prepared for learning at secondary school because of weaknesses in teaching and assessment. For current pupils, however, standards are on the up but pupils still have some catching up to do if they are to achieve as well as they should.
- In the main, it has been the least-able and middle-ability pupils who have been most affected by the slip in standards. An erratic approach to teaching and learning has left them with gaps in their knowledge and understanding. This is apparent in their current work and in their ability to keep up in lessons.
- In contrast, many of the most able pupils are doing well. At the top end of the school, for instance, at least one third of the Year 6 pupils are well ahead with their mathematics work and also produce some good-quality written work.
- Disadvantaged pupils are not doing as well as their peers nationally. However, there are no significant differences between their achievement and that of other pupils in the school. Whether disadvantaged or not, middle- and lower-ability pupils have some lost ground to make up.
- The progress of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities presents something of a mixed picture. Some pupils with complex needs, for example, are responding very well to the school's supportive and understanding approach. Others, such as those who struggle with particular aspects of learning, are sometimes overlooked in class. Until recently, there has been a reliance on out-of-class help to support their learning which has not then been followed up in class. This is now changing and fresh leadership of SEN has a watchful eye on this.
- Many pupils speak English as an additional language. The support for these pupils is increasingly effective. During this inspection, some striking examples of excellent progress were observed. That said, the huge range of different languages spoken in the school and the high number of pupils who join the school at short notice from overseas

have, in the past, been used as key reasons for the decline in academic results. They are undoubtedly factors but not the whole story. Leaders now understand this and, across the school, this way of thinking is now much less common.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Most children start school with a level of knowledge and skill below that typical for their age. They go into well-organised and resourced Reception classrooms where they are kept safe and busy. Their progress in the early years varies significantly, with some children making strides forwards but others less so. Consequently, many are still behind their peers nationally when they start in Year 1.
- The quality of teaching is improving under new and effective early years leadership. Phonics teaching, for example, is brisk and enjoyable. It is supported by well-chosen resources and equips children with key skills in a sequential and effective way.
- At other times, however, children's learning is slowed because teaching does not make the most of the available resources. For example, when children were 'buying' items of fruit, a few struggled with their counting and did not have anything to help them. In addition, some activities children select themselves are more purposeful than others.
- Teachers' record-keeping is good. In both classes, there is a consistent approach and staff understand how to make accurate judgements about what children can do. An electronic tablet-based approach to gathering information about children's achievements has been introduced. This is used well by staff and allows parents to view and contribute information about their children online. Parents can also come into school to work alongside their children during special workshop events. Leaders are confident that these improvements to assessment will, in turn, improve teaching. They are equally confident that this will lead to a greater proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year.
- Adults treat children fairly and are quick to praise good behaviour. There is some boisterous behaviour from time to time, but this is usually managed well by teachers and teaching assistants.

School details

Unique reference number	103200
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10041535

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	398
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lynda Donaldson
Headteacher	Shaela Good
Telephone number	0121 675 2775
Website	www.georgedixonprimary.bham.sch.uk
Email address	enquiry@georgedixonprimary.bham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	11–12 September 2012

Information about this school

- George Dixon Primary School is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- There is a privately run before- and after-school childcare provider on site. This is subject to a separate inspection at a different time.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils at the school is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above the national average. More than 40 different languages are spoken in the school.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above the national average.
- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about SEN, phonics, the use of the pupil premium and the primary school sport funding on its website.
- In 2016, the school met the government's floor standards, which set out the minimum

expectations for pupils' progress and attainment by the end of Year 6.

- Since the previous inspection, the entire senior leadership team has changed.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all year groups. The inspectors also examined pupils' work in books and considered school test and assessment information.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour and the school's behaviour management procedures at the beginning and end of the school day, at lunch and breaktimes, and when pupils were moving about the school site. Inspectors also saw pupils taking part in PE lessons and watched a whole-school assembly.
- Meetings were held with pupils, staff, school leaders, governors and a local authority representative. The lead inspector had a phone conversation with an educational consultant who is working with the school.
- By the end of the inspection, there were 33 recent responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 20 free-text responses. There were 32 responses to the pupil questionnaire and 18 responses to the staff questionnaire. Inspectors took account of these responses. In addition, inspectors spoke with parents at the beginning of the school day and looked at the school's most recent survey of parents' views.
- A number of school documents were examined. These included information about pupils' achievement, evaluations of the school's performance and several policy statements. Records relating to governance, staff performance management, training, the quality of teaching, SEN, the early years, external support, behaviour, admissions, attendance, safety and safeguarding were also scrutinised. The school's website was checked.

Inspection team

Martin Pye, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Chris Bandfield	Ofsted Inspector
Juliette Westwood	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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