

# The Shirestone Academy

Shirestone Road, Tile Cross, Birmingham, B33 0DH

**Inspection dates** 1–2 May 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	<b>Outstanding</b> <b>1</b>
Achievement of pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management	Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school.

- Pupils make excellent progress from their starting points and achievement is outstanding.
- Children are given an excellent start to their personal development and education in Reception and Nursery.
- Outstanding teaching brings about rapid progress in reading and mathematics. Progress in writing is a little slower because pupils are not given more opportunities to write at length.
- Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve, enjoy excellent relationships with them and know how well they are doing in order to plan learning that they will enjoy and which will challenge them.
- Teachers provide pupils with accurate information about how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.
- The behaviour and attitudes of pupils to learning are outstanding. They talk enthusiastically about their activities and concentrate and persevere with their work.
- The Principal and vice-principal are an inspirational team, dedicated to raising the aspirations of pupils. Through thoroughly checking and improving the quality of teaching, they have had a marked impact on raising the achievement of pupils.
- Pupils thrive in the happy community atmosphere that has been created.
- Governors have a wide range of skills which are used very effectively to provide outstanding challenge and support for the school.
- The school provides a wide range of activities, in and out of school, that contribute to the excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in all classes except the Nursery, which was not open on the days when the inspection was carried out. In all, 13 lessons were visited of which five were jointly observed with the Principal or vice-principal. Short visits were paid to four more lessons, the before-school club, a whole-school assembly and class assembly were observed.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read, looked at work in their books and on display and talked to them about their work.
- Inspectors looked at the information kept by the school which informed them how well pupils are achieving.
- Inspectors checked the school’s evaluation of its work, its improvement plan, minutes of governors’ meetings and visits. They also looked at documentation related to attendance, safeguarding of pupils, behaviour and bullying.
- Discussions were held with two representatives from the academy’s sponsor, eight governors, the Principal and other leaders.
- There were not enough responses to the online survey, Parent View, to provide inspectors with information. Inspectors talked to parents on arrival at school and looked at replies from the parental questionnaire that the school had recently carried out.

## Inspection team

Andrew Bailey, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Judith Tulloch

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is an average-sized primary school.
- The school was granted academy status in November 2012. Its sponsor is the Elliot Foundation.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for support from the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those in the care of the local authority and those from service families, is well-above average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well-below average.
- The Principal and vice-principal have both provided assistance to other schools within the academy chain in the use of assessment, working with the community, school leadership and 'the pupil voice'.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Year 5 are currently being taught by two temporary teachers appointed until the end of the current academic year. Leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is pending appointment and is currently managed by senior leaders.
- The proportion of pupils who either join or leave the school in Years 1 to 6 is above average.
- The school provides a well-attended before-school club.

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

- Speed up the progress of pupils in writing by providing more opportunities for pupils to write at length on a range of topics.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### is outstanding

- When children join the Nursery, their skills and knowledge are well below those typical of their age group. Over the next two years they make outstanding progress because their teachers carefully plan activities to excite their interest and skilfully build upon what they know. By the time they leave the Early Years Foundation Stage, children's skills and knowledge are closer to those expected of their age group.
- Pupils enjoy reading. Skills are developed early and by the end of Year 1 pupils have a good understanding of the sounds that letters make (phonics) which helps them to make rapid progress thereafter. By Year 6, pupils are reading a variety of different books with enjoyment and understanding and a few are able to analyse the work of authors – such as DH Lawrence.
- Pupils rapidly acquire mathematical skills in Year 1 and Year 2. This includes a minority of pupils who join the school during this key stage. By the end of Year 2, the large majority of pupils have made rapid progress. This continues in Key Stage 2 as pupils learn to use their skills and knowledge to solve more demanding problems. By the end of Year 6, pupils are approximately six months ahead of what the majority of pupils are attaining nationally.
- As pupils move through the school they make rapid progress by correctly using grammar, punctuation and spelling when writing interestingly about a range of topics. However, although their progress in writing is good, they lack enough opportunities to enhance their written skills by writing at greater length in a range of subjects so that their progress accelerates even more.
- Pupils who are supported through the pupil premium make rapid progress at the same rate as other pupils. Consequently, they attain as well as other pupils in English and mathematics. The exception to this is Year 5, where staff changes in the past have affected the normal pattern. School leaders have responded effectively, and the success of their actions can be seen in improved progress this year in both English and mathematics for eligible pupils.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make excellent progress because they are identified early to make sure that they receive appropriate support from well-trained members of staff.
- The most-able pupils make excellent progress by the end of Year 2. Rapid progress continues so that by the end of Year 6 they are achieving the highest standards in reading and mathematics.
- Pupils are achieving well across a range of subjects, including science where they make exceptional progress. Performance standards across the school in music are high. Levels of performance in physical education are also improving as a result of the school's effective use of additional sports funding.

### The quality of teaching

### is outstanding

- Teachers have excellent understanding of what pupils know. This awareness enables them to plan learning that helps pupils to learn quickly and confidently, increase their knowledge and deepen their understanding. Successful learning was evident in mathematics and literacy lessons observed across the school. The work in pupils' books showed how teaching ensures their impressive rate of progress in these key skills.

- Teachers are skilful at judging when to give help to individual pupils. However, pupils were also seen to enjoy the challenge of researching new subject knowledge and gaining understanding for themselves. They actively discussed topics together to help direct their efforts.
- Effective use is made of teaching assistants and other adults in classrooms. They are skilled in providing support in reading, writing, mathematics and in developing pupils' speaking and listening skills. In Reception, teachers deploy teaching assistants very effectively, and they play an important role in checking what children know and pass this information back to teachers during lessons so that additional help can be given to children who need it.
- Teachers make sure that more-able pupils are stretched and challenged in learning in lessons. In addition, older pupils receive specialist teaching out of class. For example, they are introduced to some advanced skills and ideas, such as calculating the volume of solids or evaluating the effectiveness of classic authors' use of dialect for effect in their novels.
- Pupils and teachers form a very successful learning partnership. For example, pupils are often challenged to make their own decisions about learning. For instance, when they have been taught a skill in mathematics, they are given the option of practising the skill at a basic level, a more challenging level or a very challenging level. Pupils are remarkably competent at judging the best level for themselves to begin working at, and never settle for the 'easy' option. This successful learning partnership with teachers helps pupils to progress rapidly.
- Pupils are questioned very effectively by adults to find out what they know and understand. Teachers and other adults working in classrooms do not just accept an answer, but ask for more information in order to challenge pupils to think more deeply.
- Teachers give pupils clear feedback about how well they are learning. This happens frequently during a lesson and often encourages pupils to try even harder or to try something different. When they mark pupils' work, they provide them with helpful comments about how they can improve it. Consequently, pupils have a clear idea of how well they are doing and what they need to do to reach the demanding targets that are set for them.
- Pupils are given clear targets to improve their writing and are provided with some interesting subjects on which to write, as when Year 3 were asked to write a job description for a monarch. However, teachers sometimes do not give pupils enough opportunity to write at length.
- Teachers make learning more exciting by asking pupils to practise skills in interesting, and often real-life situations. For example, Year 4 pupils used addition and subtraction skills to help them run an Indian restaurant.

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

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. They are very proud of their school and are very positive about their own learning and working with others, and this helps them to learn and make outstanding progress.
- The school has been very successful in building pupils' confidence and valuing their achievements. This was demonstrated by the pupils in the celebrations assembly, who positively skipped out to receive their awards. Their delight was genuinely shared by other pupils, staff and parents who were present.
- Pupils know they are valued highly by their teachers and this inspires them to try their best.

- Behaviour around school is exemplary. All pupils get on well together and younger and older pupils enjoy playing together. They are polite and considerate towards one another and adults.
- During the inspection there were very few occasions when staff needed to question the behaviour of any pupil. However, the behaviour policy is clear and the school has shown in the past that it will exclude pupils if the situation so demands. However, as records show, this step is taken only after everything has been done to help and support the pupil and the family to take full advantage of the opportunity of the excellent education the school provides.
- Pupils insist that there is no bullying in the school. They have a very clear idea of what bullying is, know who to go to if they are anxious and are confident they would be helped.
- The exceptionally positive school ethos creates a happy family atmosphere, which encourages pupils to come to school. When, on a few occasions, this is a personal problem for some pupils and their families, the school is quick to help and, as a result, attendance has improved. Most pupils are regular attenders, including disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and those who are eligible to the pupil premium.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils feel safe as a result of the care that staff and governors take for their welfare. For instance there are regular health and safety inspections of the school site by governors and the before-school club provides good care for pupils. The staff with management responsibilities for behaviour and the personal care of pupils are very effective in their roles and their work is highly appreciated by parents.

### **The leadership and management are outstanding**

- The leaders have high ambitions for pupils and their community, and believe that only the very best quality of education is good enough for them. These aspirations are shared by staff and can be seen in all aspects of the school's work.
- Leaders are constantly checking on the work of staff and how effectively they are helping pupils to do well. They are particularly skilful in making use of information about the progress that pupils are making. They visit classrooms regularly and look at pupils' work. They use the evidence they assemble to make the right decisions that have led to impressive improvement in the school's performance.
- The leaders are continually improving teaching. They carefully allocate staff to classes, manage performance well and provide training and development to make them more effective.
- Subject leaders regularly check that their high expectations for pupils' achievement and personal development are being met. As a result, they are well informed and respond quickly to make sure that high standards are maintained.
- Leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is currently effectively managed by senior leaders, pending a permanent appointment. The training and support for current staff in Reception were seen during the inspection to ensure teaching of the highest quality.
- Pupils learn well through enjoyment of the wide range of subjects and topics that excite them. Many activities are designed to capture their interest, such as when Year 3 visited Hampton Court while they were learning about the Tudors. Pupils are helped to use their literacy and mathematics skills in other subjects, in real-life situations and to pursue their own interests.

However, additional opportunities to write at greater length have not yet been provided to take pupils' achievement even further forward.

- A number of very successful partnerships have been established to widen the horizons and interests of pupils. These include a technology project with the Jaguar car company, a singing initiative with Birmingham and Solihull music services, a music link with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra and an association with a photographic company.
- Parents hold the school in very high regard. They greatly appreciate the care and concern that the school has for their children and its desire to help them succeed in their learning. They feel that they are valued as partners by the school's leaders.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very well promoted across a range of subjects. Links with organisations such as the Muslim Student House have built a growing understanding of the lives and cultures of people from varied groups within the United Kingdom.
- The school is well supported by the Elliot Foundation through their network of schools and other links. The school's performance is regularly checked. However, school leaders are given autonomy to make decisions based upon their skills and local knowledge.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors have a detailed knowledge of the school and its community. They use this very effectively when implementing their ambitious vision for the school. They want pupils to realise that there is nothing that they are not capable of achieving. They are able to interpret the data available on pupils' attainment and progress so they know how well the school is doing compared with others, nationally. Consequently, they are well equipped to challenge leaders and staff to do even better. Governors make sure that resources, including the pupil premium, are used effectively to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. They make sure that the pay of the Principal and other staff is closely linked to performance in enabling pupils to achieve highly. They know what the quality of teaching is across the school and make sure that staff performance is managed effectively to improve its quality. The governing body makes sure that statutory requirements are met, including those for safeguarding pupils.

## 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>	138425
<b>Local authority</b>	Birmingham
<b>Inspection number</b>	440046

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>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	237
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Allan Middleton
<b>Principal</b>	Clare Lucas
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	0121 6754686
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