

# Inspection of Harborne Primary School

Station Road, Harborne, Birmingham, West Midlands B17 9LU

---

Inspection dates:	20 and 21 May 2025
The quality of education	<b>Inadequate</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Inadequate</b>
Early years provision	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

Until November 2020, the school was exempt from routine inspection because it was judged as outstanding for overall effectiveness at its previous inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The school has not been inspected under section 5 of the Act since December 2014. Since September 2024, schools have not been awarded an overall effectiveness grade.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

A lack of secure leadership due to turbulence in staffing has hampered the school's efforts to identify and make improvements. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) do not receive an acceptable standard of education. They do not achieve as well as they should. However, most pupils achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics.

The school does not routinely involve external safeguarding agencies to support the most vulnerable pupils. The school has been too slow to address these weaknesses. This has put some pupils at risk of potential harm.

Some pupils, particularly some pupils with SEND, are not supported effectively to help them to manage their behaviour. As a result, they have received a high number of suspensions. Despite this, some pupils behave well.

Some pupils are absent frequently and their attendance does not improve. Some pupils have been absent for long periods of time. The school does not check systematically when pupils are absent from school. Consequently, the school does not know if these pupils are safe. However, most pupils attend well despite these weaknesses.

Pupils' personal development is a positive aspect of school life. Extra-curricular activities are inclusive and broaden pupils' experiences. These include football, choir and crochet club.

## **What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?**

The school has not acted decisively or with urgency to address weaknesses. This includes weaknesses in safeguarding arrangements. The school does not act effectively to keep pupils safe from harm. It does not ensure that pupils with SEND receive the quality of education they deserve. Some staff's workload is not managed well and/or their well-being is not supported. Governors do not have a secure understanding of their duties. While governors are aware of some areas that need to improve, they have not held leaders to account for some important areas of the school's work.

Overall, pupils attend well. However, the school does not check routinely on the safety and well-being of pupils who are absent. This means they are at risk of harm. The reasons for pupils' absences are sometimes not recorded correctly. The school does not have effective strategies to improve pupils' attendance. Some pupils are absent frequently and miss too much learning.

The school does not identify, assess or meet the needs of pupils with SEND accurately. Strategies to support pupils with SEND are not effective. Staff do not have the expertise needed to support pupils with SEND. The school has not sought the advice of external agencies in a timely manner. As a result, pupils with SEND do not achieve well.

The school has introduced a new curriculum for some subjects recently. Some staff have the expertise to teach the curriculum as it is set out. However, in some subjects, the curriculum is not taught as intended. Staff, including in the early years, make checks on pupils' understanding. However, they sometimes do not spot gaps in understanding or address them. As a result, some pupils do not know and remember important knowledge.

Phonics is taught daily from the beginning of the Reception Year. Staff possess the right knowledge to teach phonics. Most staff accurately model how to read unfamiliar words. Typically, they match books to pupils' phonics knowledge. Pupils who need extra support with reading receive it. Most pupils successfully catch up with their peers and become fluent readers. Pupils are encouraged to read at home. However, some pupils do not read widely or often.

The school has introduced a new approach to teaching early writing. This includes teaching the knowledge needed to form letters correctly and write fluently. This starts in the early years. However, these improvements are not consistently implemented. Some children in the early years do not develop their fine motor skills well. Consequently, some pupils do not learn to hold a pencil or form letters correctly. This hinders their fluency when writing.

Most pupils behave well. However, some pupils who find it hard to manage their behaviour do not get the help they need to do so. This includes some pupils with SEND. These pupils are sometimes suspended from school repeatedly and miss out on learning.

The school's work to promote pupils' wider development is a strength. Visits enrich the curriculum. For example, pupils visit a farm to learn about animals. Visits to the theatre and a local museum, and hearing authors read, help to build pupils' cultural awareness. Pupils learn about potential careers from an early age. They learn how to be responsible citizens by taking on a range of leadership roles, such as school councillor, reading buddy and playground leader. Pupils understand and practise democracy, for example by electing school councillors. Several year groups take part in residential visits, which build pupils' confidence and resilience.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

The school has incoherent systems and processes for keeping pupils safe. Some staff do not know what signs to look for that indicate a pupil may be at risk of harm and do not know how to report safeguarding concerns. There are two different systems for reporting safeguarding concerns. School leaders were not aware of this and the risk this poses in terms of reporting, acting on and recording safeguarding concerns. These weaknesses in practice put pupils at risk of harm.

When concerns are reported, the school does not routinely and swiftly involve external agencies when this is necessary. For example, the school has not made appropriate referrals to external agencies when it has received concerns about pupils with known

risks, such as links to criminal exploitation or harmful sexual behaviours. As a result, the school does not ensure that pupils get the right help to address safeguarding risks or receive this in a timely fashion. This does not ensure that pupils are kept safe.

The school does not have practices to ensure that pupils who are absent from school are safe. Checks on whether absent pupils are safe are not always made in a timely manner. Sometimes they are not made at all. The school does not make connections between pupils' absences and potential safeguarding concerns.

The school does not understand some of its safeguarding duties. For example, there is confusion between when advice should be sought from external services and when a referral should be made. The school has not acted on an external audit that identified weaknesses in safeguarding culture and practice. This has contributed to safeguarding arrangements at the school being ineffective and indicates a lack of capacity to improve them.

The school does carry out the statutory checks required to ensure that adults are suitable to work in schools.

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

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective. This leaves pupils at risk of harm. The school should make sure that staff have the necessary knowledge to know what to look for and how to report concerns. It should make sure that any concerns are swiftly referred to external agencies as necessary. This is so that the school keeps pupils safe.
- Governors do not understand and carry out their roles and responsibilities effectively. They do not hold leaders to account fully. The school should ensure that governors have the expertise to fulfil their roles effectively and hold leaders to account fully.
- Pupils with SEND are not accurately identified, assessed or supported effectively. As a result, pupils with SEND achieve poorly. The school should make sure that pupils with SEND are identified swiftly and that effective support is put in place to enable them to achieve their full potential.
- The school lacks a coherent system for checking on pupils' absences. As a result, some pupils miss too much school and may be at risk of harm. The school should ensure that it checks routinely on pupils' absences to make sure they are safe. It should implement strategies to help pupils who are persistently absent to attend school more regularly.
- Some pupils who find it hard to manage their own behaviour do not get the support that they need to do so. This means that they miss school through being suspended. This impacts negatively on their learning. The school must ensure that pupils receive appropriate support to help manage and improve their behaviour.
- The school has not ensured that the curriculum is delivered as intended in some subjects. Gaps in pupils' knowledge are not accurately identified and are sometimes left unaddressed. This means that some pupils continue to have misconceptions, which

inhibits their learning. The school should consistently implement the recently introduced curriculum and make sure that any gaps in pupils' knowledge are identified accurately and addressed fully.

- The school's approach to teaching early writing is inconsistently implemented. Some pupils do not hold a pencil correctly or form letters correctly. The school should ensure its approach to teaching writing is implemented consistently and effectively so that pupils acquire the knowledge and skills required to form letters accurately and write fluently.

The school may not appoint early career teachers before a monitoring inspection. The position regarding the appointment of early career teachers will be considered again during any monitoring inspection we carry out.

## How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

## Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	132261
<b>Local authority</b>	Birmingham
<b>Inspection number</b>	10343926
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	806
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Kully Samra
<b>Headteacher</b>	Nicholas Whitehouse
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.harborne.bham.sch.uk">www.harborne.bham.sch.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	11 and 12 December 2014, under Section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.
- The school is set over two sites.
- The substantive headteacher was not in school during the inspection. An interim headteacher joined the school just prior to the inspection.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading,

managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the governing body and a representative from the local authority. They held meetings with the interim headteacher, deputy headteacher, subject leaders, other leaders, teachers and pupils. They also talked informally to pupils and staff to gather general information about school life.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, physical education, geography and art and design. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. They also looked at other subjects to check how they are planned and taught.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of school documents. These included information about behaviour, attendance, the school curriculum and improvement planning. The school website was also checked.
- Inspectors observed informal times of the day to evaluate safeguarding and pupils' behaviour.
- Inspectors considered responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and free-text comments. They also considered responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

### **Inspection team**

Emma Titchener, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Nina Sangha

Ofsted Inspector

Tim Bassett

Ofsted Inspector

Mary Maybank

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2025