

Shireland Hall Primary Academy

Montague Road, Smethwick, West Midlands B66 4PW

Inspection dates	11–12 May 2016
Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The quality of leadership at this school is superb. Leaders expect and get the best from everyone.
- Everyone’s talents and skills are noticed and nurtured. Teachers’ and teaching assistants’ expertise is used to excellent effect to help others improve their practice. Pupils’ many and varied learning needs are met and their interests and abilities are seized upon and encouraged. Everyone gets the support and challenge they need in order to do their best.
- Teachers and adults at the school are excellent role models. They make sure pupils are kept safe, provide help when it is needed, and instil a sense of self-belief, optimism and ambition in the pupils.
- Across the school, there is plenty of fabulous, often inventive, teaching that captures and holds pupils’ attention with remarkable success.
- Pupils’ behaviour and attitudes to school are exemplary. Those who find it hard to cope with aspects of school life get high-quality guidance and help. Pupils who do well get the recognition they deserve.
- The school is a calm, orderly place in which to work and learn. Mutual respect operates at all levels. Everyone gets on well and bullying of any sort is rare.
- Provision in the early years is good. Strong well-informed leadership is driving further improvements, especially in the Nursery.
- From starting points that are generally below average, pupils do exceptionally well and reach standards that are in line with, and increasingly above, age-related expectations at the end of Year 6.
- Leaders actively seek parents’ and pupils’ views and involve them in decision making and school improvement planning.
- The vast majority of parents hold the school in high regard. They receive regular information about their child’s progress and are frequently invited into school to find out about how they can support learning at home.
- Governance is capable and informed. Governors display a deep-seated belief in making sure every child gets the best possible deal. As the school has grown in numbers, they have been keen to make sure the culture of knowing each individual has been preserved. They keep a close eye on standards and have guided continual school improvement. The support from the multi-academy trust has been highly effective.
- Across the school, there is a climate of trust. Leaders listen to staff and encourage new ideas. There is a strong culture of accountability yet no fear of failure. Teachers and pupils know they will get constructive guidance when required and recognition when deserved. Everyone has every opportunity to succeed and feel successful.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to develop and refine practice in the early years, especially in the Nursery, so that all children do as well as possible as soon as possible.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding

- Leadership at every level, within and beyond the school, demonstrates a kind, supportive, purposeful authority, underpinned with high expectations and an ambition for all to do their best. They have established a culture of trust and respect that is understood by staff and pupils alike. This is a key factor in the school's success.
- The executive principal provides excellent leadership and has built further on the successful legacy of the previous postholder. He has a proven record of success as the principal of the federated partner school and now oversees a highly effective and capable senior leadership team across both schools in the federation. The vice and assistant principals have clearly defined roles and responsibilities and perform these with diligence, commitment, efficiency, good humour and flair.
- Within the school and the federation, there is a focus on talent spotting and innovation. Leaders welcome new ideas, find solutions to problems, recognise success and actively search for ways to get the best from everyone. In all that they do, leaders keep the needs of the pupils at the forefront of their thinking and bring imagination and energy to their work.
- Leaders' systems for managing the performance and training of staff work brilliantly. It is clear that the working arrangement with the school's federated partner school strengthens the school's capacity for continual improvement. Senior staff provide regular feedback about the quality of learning in classes. Staff with particular expertise work alongside staff in both schools to share expertise and raise expectations. All staff regularly watch others at work, or themselves at work through video recordings of their teaching. All of these activities and processes have contributed to the creation of a highly reflective and evaluative school team where all are given the guidance, support and challenge to do their best.
- The school curriculum is a model of excellence that provides scope and range for the development of pupils' artistic, creative, academic and sporting interests and skills. It is also enriched by special days in school and activities that take pupils out to new places to give them experiences that broaden their horizons and build self-esteem. In addition, there are after-school clubs and regular day trips to educational sites. All key stage 2 pupils get the chance to take part in residential visits to outdoor activity centres.
- Woven through the school curriculum, and also captured and displayed in inspirational photographs and quotations around the school site, are many worthwhile observations and comments about life and the values that guide people to 'do the right thing'. Pupils spoken to during this inspection could explain how the school community lives by the values it promotes and provided some telling examples of how the staff had helped them to overcome problems in their own lives. In other conversations, pupils explained how messages given in school have given them a clear insight into the dangers of ignorance and prejudice. Pupils at this school are helped to develop an outlook on life that will serve them and society well in their future lives.
- Specific funds, such as the pupil premium and primary sport fund, are put to excellent use. The fact that, in 2015, 86% of disadvantaged pupils reached level 4+ in reading, writing and mathematics is testimony to the effective use of funds. As for disadvantaged pupils currently in school, they are racing ahead in their learning. Sports teaching at the school is top-quality and teaches pupils to enjoy physical exercise, develop healthy lifestyles and aspire to, and respect, excellence.
- Parents describe leaders as 'good listeners' who actively seek parents' and local views and respond to their questions, suggestions or concerns in a positive and interested fashion. Consequently, parents feel confident to approach school staff and trust them to do their very best for their children.
- The support provided by the multi-academy trust has been highly effective at Shireland Hall Primary. The trust aims to nurture talent and provides high-quality training. School staff spoken to by inspectors, including three newly qualified teachers, spoke very positively about the support and training provided to them.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governance is highly effective. Governors' decisions are driven by the needs of the pupils and the community served by the school. Their stated vision is to create a school that 'enables every child to be safe, happy and reach their potential'. They are clearly realising this ambition yet there is no sense of complacency. They are always looking ahead and anticipating the next challenge and opportunity.
 - Governors trust the judgement of school leaders but also make sure that they get plenty of information about standards, so that they can make informed decisions and set future strategy.

Governors have given careful thought to the school's long-term aims. They are mindful that the future increase in pupil numbers will need to be managed carefully so that the culture of knowing each and every individual and their needs is not lost.

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school complies with all statutory requirements and record keeping is up to date and managed properly so that the right people get the right information. The attention to pupils' safety and well-being cannot be faulted. The leadership from the assistant principal with responsibility for well-being is excellent. She makes sure everyone knows what to do if they have a concern about a child and takes swift and appropriate action when necessary. The site is secure and very well maintained. All the proper checks are carried out on staff and visitors.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding

- Pupils succeed at this school because teaching doesn't just provide them with the skills and knowledge they need. It also helps them to develop the self-belief, resilience and values that enable them to give and do their best.
- In all classes, highly effective teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants shines out as a notable strength. Not only do the staff within this school work well together and learn from one another's expertise, but they also benefit from the help and expertise of staff from the federation's partner school. During this inspection, a striking example of this was observed in two classes, where the current class teacher was working alongside a member of staff from George Betts Primary. This partnership working brings benefits all round; teaching staff learn from effective practice, staff coaching and working alongside others develop their leadership skills, and the pupils benefit from a culture whereby teachers are constantly looking for ways to improve the quality and effectiveness of their teaching. There is no doubt that teaching across the school, and especially in key stage 1, has been strengthened by this partnership.
- A particular feature of teaching in the school is the inventiveness that leaders and staff bring to lessons and learning. In recent years, Shireland Hall staff have kept a close eye on new ideas and innovative practice within national initiatives, but have also injected a wonderfully quirky dose of imagination to shape methods to their own pupils' needs. In order to inspire pupils' writing, for example, a superhero character called POW (power of writing) has been introduced. POW fights literacy villains such as the Flerb or the Puncueater, and it is clear that this larger-than-life fun superhero character has generated an interest, excitement and a joy about language and writing. This has helped to inspire writing and lift standards. In a similar vein, pupils can be BAM (brilliant at mathematics) or WAM (wonderful at mathematics) and displays around the school provide plenty of celebratory evidence of pupils' mathematical activities and achievements that have come about as result of such motivational tactics.
- While some of these creative approaches are quite sophisticated, others are very simple. Phonics sessions include fun, brisk and purposeful games. Snappy mathematics sessions make the most of spare moments that might otherwise be lost. In one class, for example, the time between the end of one lesson and the start of an assembly was put to excellent use as the teacher played a 'game' that put pupils' mental mathematics skills to the test. These simple, but skilfully managed, activities captured and held the pupils' attention, made them think hard and enabled them to experience the benefits of effort and the joy of achievement. Such practice is typical.
- Adults working at the school display an excellent understanding of how pupils learn and go out of their way to find ways to hook their interest and create feelings of success. Teachers do not fall into routines or ways of working, but instead are constantly on the lookout for ways to adjust and refine their teaching to meet pupils' learning needs with the maximum possible precision and success.
- The school's system for checking on pupils' progress now that national curriculum levels have been removed has been very carefully thought through. In anticipation of the national changes to assessment, school leaders put plans in place early on. Over the past three years, staff have refined and adjusted their new system so that it works in a manageable and reliable way. In fact, it has been named MAP for short: manageable, accurate and purposeful. All staff express confidence in the system and inspectors' checks on teachers' assessments of pupils' work and progress found them to be spot on.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Pupils' needs are attended to, their curiosity is fed and their talents are nurtured.
- A significant proportion of pupils have faced difficulties in their lives or have found it hard to cope with aspects of school life. The support provided to these pupils is second to none; it is exceptional. Staff invest time and expertise in each and every pupil and work with families to provide guidance and help to support pupils' learning and well-being. Indeed, the partnership between school, parents and the local community is a key part of the school's work. If ever there is conflict or upset, staff bring a calm and listening ear to find out how the school can help. Parents report that school leaders actively seek their views about what will help their children to make the most of school.
- Pupils, too, report that they have a voice in shaping school policy and a role in checking on its work. Some pupils have particular responsibilities and are proud of the different coloured sweatshirts they wear to identify their special roles. Members of the junior leadership team join senior staff to observe teaching and learning in different classrooms. They make suggestions about how school life and lessons could be improved and, during conversations with inspectors, provided examples of changes that have come about as a result of their input. Other pupils act as prefects or peer supporters. In both these roles, pupils seek to help others and to provide support and helpful advice when needs be.
- Pupils understand the difference between right and wrong. They are well informed about different types of bullying and how to recognise it and what to do it happens. Pupils know that it can happen but they also know that it is unacceptable. They understand that it is everyone's responsibility to challenge it and stop it. Consequently, bullying or unpleasant behaviour of any kind is extremely rare in school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. When moving around the school site, working in class or playing outside, pupils get on very well with one another. They show respect for others and interest in their views and beliefs.
- Pupils learn a lot from the many different cultures, religious beliefs and languages in the school. The diverse mix at the school has enriched the school curriculum and helps pupils to gain a greater understanding of others and how they live. In conversation with an inspector, one pupil captured this sense of harmony with simple eloquence when he glanced around a school room and said, 'Look at the pupils here, there are many different nationalities, backgrounds, cultures and beliefs just in this one room. We all get on so well and we learn so much from one another.'
- Pupils' attendance has improved year on year and is now above average. Pupils and parents report that school leaders give consistent and regular messages about the importance of good attendance at school and are quick to challenge unexplained or unnecessary absence. In addition, a range of rewards help to encourage punctuality and regular attendance. When weekly attendance figures are announced in class or assembly there are audible gasps of interest and excitement.
- Pupils work hard in lessons, are attentive and responsive to their teachers, and are supportive to their peers. They notice and celebrate the talents and achievements of others and develop the confidence to try new things, ask questions and persevere when necessary. In short, their attitudes to learning are superb. Those who need help, support and encouragement to manage and improve aspects of their behaviour get the guidance they need in order to make the most of lessons and school life.

Outcomes for pupils are outstanding

- Pupils do remarkably well at this school. As soon as they start school, staff are quick to find out about their needs, abilities and backgrounds and to provide the teaching, support, care and attention they need. Consequently, the vast majority of pupils make exceptionally strong progress and accomplish much at Shireland Hall Primary Academy.
- The majority of pupils start school with a level of knowledge and skill below that typical for their age. It is also worth noting that a significant proportion of pupils start school with some complex learning, emotional and behavioural needs. On top of this, many pupils enter school with little knowledge of spoken English. Nevertheless, for the vast majority of pupils, academic progress across the whole school is excellent. By the time they reach the end of Year 6, most reach standards in reading, writing and

mathematics that are in line with the national average or, in an increasing number of cases, above age-related expectations.

- In recent years, pupils' progress has tended to be stronger in key stage 2 than in key stage 1. This is because, over time, key stage 2 teaching has had the edge on key stage 1. As teaching has strengthened over time, progress has accelerated and pupils currently in the school are doing better than ever. While the new assessment systems in place this year make it less straightforward to compare assessment information from this year with previous years, the work in pupils' books and the efficiency and accuracy of the school's assessment system paint a very clear picture of high expectations and excellent achievement. This is not just in English and mathematics, but across the curriculum.
- In 2014, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils that reached the old national curriculum level 4 or above in reading, writing and mathematics was in line with that of non-disadvantaged pupils nationally. In 2015, it was higher than that of others nationally. This is a commendable achievement.
- Inspectors' examination of the 2015 progress data for disadvantaged pupils found that it had dipped slightly from the exceptionally strong progress data seen 2014. On closer examination, inspectors found that this was mostly due to a very small number of girls not reaching the highest possible standard, and mainly in reading. Having said this, the proportions of disadvantaged pupils who reached the old national curriculum level 4 or above were still higher than those of non-disadvantaged pupils nationally in both English and mathematics. As for disadvantaged pupils currently in the school, they are making excellent progress and standards are at least in line with those of other pupils.
- While the proportions of pupils reaching age-related expectations has increased year on year, the proportions reaching above age-related expectations (the old national curriculum level 3 at key stage 1 and level 5 at key stage 2) have been below those seen nationally and have fluctuated from year to year. This led inspectors to question whether the most able pupils have been getting the challenge they need. Inspectors' extensive examination of work in the books of current Year 5 and 6 pupils found standards in writing and mathematics to be high. Observations in class and discussions with pupils also discovered that the brightest pupils are given every opportunity to excel; and they do. There is no doubt that the most able pupils currently at this school are racing ahead in their learning.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability receive expert attention and support. At the time of this inspection, over 200 pupils were receiving some sort of extra provision, much of it tailor-made for individual needs. Parents spoken to praised the quality of this support and gave some telling examples of how the school had helped their children to overcome difficulties. Pupils, too, can explain how the school staff have taken the time and effort to find out what they need to help them learn, and have then provided it. The school's work to support pupils who have special educational needs or disability is highly effective.
- Results in the Year 1 phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) screening check have been just above average for the last three years running. This is remarkable progress, given pupils' starting points, and a reflection on the excellent quality of phonics teaching in the school.
- Pupils who attend Shireland Hall Primary Academy get a fantastic deal. By the time they leave, they are equipped with a sense of success, purpose and optimism that will serve them, and the communities where they live, very well.

Early years provision

is good

- During the course of this inspection, inspectors gave careful consideration to whether the early years provision was good or outstanding. It has several outstanding aspects, notably the quality of leadership and the excellent and successful attention to children's behaviour and safety. However, it falls short of being outstanding provision overall at this time because of two key points. Firstly, the quality of teaching and adult support in the Nursery is not yet at the same standard as that in the Reception classes. Secondly, the early years curriculum – again, more so in the Nursery than in Reception – is not as well organised as it could be. Consequently, while children get a good start to school, the early years is not yet operating with the same efficiency seen elsewhere in the school. Children make good, rather than excellent, progress in this early part of the school.
- When children first come to school the vast majority have a level of knowledge and skill below that typical for their age. Within the most recent cohort to start school, around three quarters arrived with skills below what would typically be expected, with about half having some significant needs, especially in their early literacy and numeracy skills and managing their feelings. Early years staff are quick to identify

particular needs and put support in place. Observations in all the early years classes found that children's behaviour was managed exceptionally well by staff. Children soon come to understand the school's expectations and respond positively to the firm, yet kind, support and guidance.

- During their time in the early years the majority of children make good progress. Even so, by the time they reach the end of the Reception Year, the proportion reaching a good level of development is still some way below the national figure. Having said this, the proportion has risen steadily each year; from 39% in 2013 to 48% in 2015. The school's current assessment information shows that standards have risen again this year. While standards are likely to still be below the national figure, they are rising quickly and more and more children are entering Year 1 well prepared for learning in key stage 1.
- Communication with parents is a strength. Parents are invited into school regularly to find out about teaching and ways to support learning at home. Parents spoken to by inspectors praised this aspect of the school's work, not just in the early years but across all year groups.
- As already mentioned, the teamwork and quality of teaching is currently more effective in the Reception classes than in Nursery. There have been a few staff changes in the Nursery and this has slowed the pace of development, and adults working with children are not as focused on maximising learning opportunities as they could be. Children are kept safe and productively occupied, but some opportunities to push learning on, or to grasp a piece of evidence about a child's early steps in learning, are missed.
- Across the early years, the same inventiveness seen in the rest of the school is apparent. The learning dinosaurs, for example, whereby children have to identify whether they have been a Thinkosaur, a Tryosaur or an Explorosaur, strike just the right note with children. These amusing fictional dinosaurs spark the development of thoughtful and reflective learning behaviours from the moment they first start school; learning behaviours that will – and do – serve the children well throughout their later years at the school.

School details

Unique reference number	139875
Local authority	Sandwell
Inspection number	10011174

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.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	637
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Nargis Bostan
Executive principal	Mr Allan Shephard
Telephone number	0121 558 6331
Website	www.shirelandhallprimaryacademy.com
Email address	enquiries@shirelandhall.sandwell.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Shireland Hall Primary Academy is considerably larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The vast majority of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and more than two thirds speak English as an additional language.
- The number of pupils on roll has grown considerably over recent years.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils at the school is above the national average. The term 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to describe those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority. These pupils receive additional support from pupil premium funding.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is below the national average.
- In 2015, the school met the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school offers morning or afternoon early years provision for nursery-age children and full-time early years provision for reception-age children.
- The school converted to an academy in 2013. When its predecessor school, Shireland Hall Primary School, was last inspected in 2011 it was judged to be good.
- Shireland Hall Primary Academy is federated with George Betts Primary Academy. An executive principal leads both schools. The current postholder took up his post on an acting basis in September 2015 and his post was made permanent in February 2016. Prior to his appointment, he was the principal of George Betts Primary Academy.
- There is a federated governing body of 11 members, six of whom are appointed by the Elliot Foundation Academy Trust.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in all year groups. Some of these observations were carried out alongside school leaders. Inspectors also attended a school assembly, examined pupils' work in books and on display, and considered school test and assessment information.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour, and the school's procedures, at the beginning and end of the school day, at lunch and breaktimes, and when pupils were moving about the school site.
- Meetings were held with pupils, staff, senior and middle leaders, the chair and vice-chair of the governing body, and the regional director and chief executive officer from the multi-academy trust.
- By the end of the inspection, there were 13 recent responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View) and seven written comments. Inspectors looked at these and also took account of the school's own survey of parents' views. Inspectors talked to some parents at school and looked at responses to Ofsted's online survey of staff and pupils' views.
- A number of school documents were examined. These included information about pupils' achievement and evaluations of the school's performance. Records relating to governance, support from the multi-academy trust, staff performance management, behaviour, attendance, safety and safeguarding were also scrutinised. The school's website was also checked.

Inspection team

Martin Pye, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Rowena Green	Ofsted Inspector
Nicola Harwood	Ofsted Inspector
Peter Box	Ofsted Inspector
Michael Onyon	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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