

Al-Furqan Primary School

Reddings Lane, Tyseley, Birmingham, B11 3EY

Inspection dates

5–6 November 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- The quality of teaching is variable. Consequently, pupils in Years 1 to 6 do not make consistently good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Not all teachers ensure the most able-pupils make the progress of which they are capable.
- Not enough pupils attain the higher levels at the end of Year 2 and Year 6.
- Activities that pupils complete on their own during 'guided reading' sessions do not always provide pupils with enough challenge.
- When marking pupils' work, teachers do not always provide pupils with the guidance they need to improve their work.
- The teaching of handwriting is not specific enough and teachers do not always have high enough expectations of the presentation of pupils' work.
- School leaders do not always identify the precise actions teachers need to take to help different groups of pupils make faster progress.
- The Interim Executive Board (IEB) is not fully aware of the impact of leaders' actions on the achievement of all the different groups of pupils. This is because school leaders do not provide them with the required information.
- Teachers with responsibilities for year groups are in the early stages of ensuring consistently good teaching and learning in all the classes for which they are responsible.
- There are a number of issues relating to the school's finances, the school building, and some of the 'Conditions of Occupancy' agreed between the previous governing body and Al-Furqan Education Trust that remain unresolved.

The school has the following strengths

- The school is improving. The changes that the interim headteacher, other senior leaders and the IEB are making are strengthening teaching and helping pupils to make faster progress than in the past.
- Early Years provision is good. Children in the Reception classes make good progress because of consistently effective teaching.
- Disadvantaged pupils make better progress than their peers because additional funding from the government is used well.
- The school curriculum successfully extends pupils' learning experiences and enables them to take part in a suitable range of sporting and musical activities.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. Pupils are kind to each other and are keen to learn. They respect the beliefs of others.
- Staff work hard to ensure pupils feel safe. The members of the pastoral team are particularly effective at ensuring pupils experiencing difficulties receive the support they need.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in 20 lessons. They also briefly visited lessons to observe the teaching of sounds that letters make (phonics) in Year 1 and to gather information about the school curriculum from across the school.
- In addition to lesson observations and brief visits to lessons, inspectors listened to pupils read, reviewed pupils' work with the headteacher. They also observed playtime and lunchtime activities.
- Meetings were held with the interim headteacher, senior leaders, teachers with responsibilities for year groups, the Chair and three other members of the Interim Executive Board (IEB) and representatives from the local authority.
- Inspectors analysed questionnaires completed by 40 members of staff.
- Inspectors took account of 19 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). On the first day of the inspection, inspectors invited parents and carers to a meeting in the evening. Inspectors also spoke to parents and carers informally at the start of the second day. In addition to these opportunities, inspectors asked senior leaders to arrange for a group of parents and carers to meet with them.
- A number of documents were examined, including information about pupils' achievement, records relating to behaviour and safeguarding, and minutes relating to IEB meetings.

Inspection team

Usha Devi, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Rachel Howie

Her Majesty's Inspector

Judith Tulloch

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Information about this school

- This is a larger than average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is less than half that seen nationally.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs including those with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is similar to the national average.
- A higher than average proportion of pupils are disadvantaged and eligible for support through the pupil premium (additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or in care).
- The majority of pupils are of Pakistani heritage.
- An above-average proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage is made up of three full time Reception classes.
- There is a privately run Nursery on the school site. This is subject to a separate inspection.
- Al-Furqan is a local authority voluntary aided Islamic faith school. The religious education that pupils receive is inspected separately.
- The 2014 end of Key Stage 2 provisional results show that the school does not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- At its last inspection in November 2012, the school was placed in special measures. Since this inspection the school has experienced high levels of staff absence. There has also been a high turnover of staff, including headteachers and senior leaders.
- The current interim headteacher joined the school in February 2014. Prior to this, the school was led by two other interim headteachers and the deputy headteacher.
- An IEB was appointed in April 2013 to be responsible for the governance of the school. The current Chair of the IEB was appointed in May 2014.
- In February 2014, the IEB engaged the services of two consultants to support class teachers. They work in the school for two days a week.
- Since November 2012, the school has received support from the school's local authority adviser and a range of other local authority advisers. Staff from a number of local primary schools have worked with staff since the previous inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' achievement and improve teaching so that it is good and better by:
 - making sure teachers move the most-able pupils onto sufficiently challenging work as soon as they are ready
 - ensuring that activities that pupils complete on their own during 'guided reading' sessions provide a suitable level of challenge
 - teachers provide pupils with the specific guidance they need to correct their errors
 - improving the teaching of pupils' handwriting and ensuring all teachers have high expectations of pupils' presentation of work
 - sharing existing effective practice with teachers who are not yet consistently good.
- Strengthen leadership by:
 - further developing the role of middle leaders so that they take greater responsibility for improving teaching and learning in the year groups for which they are responsible
 - making sure feedback to teachers following lesson observations and reviews of pupils' work focuses more closely on what teachers need to do to help different groups of pupils make faster progress

- ensuring all leaders, including those responsible for the Early Years Foundation Stage, present members of the IEB with information about the impact of their actions on different groups of pupils.

- With a matter of urgency resolve the remaining issues relating to the school's finances, the school building, and some of the 'Conditions of Occupancy'.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership requires improvement because further work is necessary to ensure pupils in all classes and across different subjects achieve equally well, and make good progress. Although each interim headteacher and other senior leaders have taken appropriate action to address weaknesses in the school, overtime they have been hindered by instability with staffing.
- Middle leaders are in the early stages of ensuring teaching and pupils' learning is consistently good in the year groups for which they are responsible. They have checked teachers' planning, reviewed pupils' work and identified the pupils that are capable of reaching higher standards. In order to strengthen middle leadership further, senior leaders have organised for middle leaders to receive further support and training from staff at local primary schools.
- Opportunities for staff to share existing good and outstanding practice with each other are underdeveloped.
- Following lesson observations and reviews of pupils' work, school leaders do not always identify the precise actions teachers need to take to help different groups of pupils reach higher standards.
- The interim headteacher, with strong support from the deputy headteacher and the two assistant headteachers has effectively built on the work of the previous interim headteachers. The current school leadership's calm and determined approach has brought about steady improvements in teaching, achievement and pupils' attitudes to learning.
- Senior leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and priorities for improvement. Plans to continue to raise pupils' achievement and improve teaching are appropriate. The systems for managing teachers' performance have been recently strengthened and are contributing to more rapid improvements in teaching. Senior leaders are effectively tackling weaknesses in teaching. They are also ensuring individual teachers receive appropriate support and training. Teachers are benefiting from the training provided by the two consultants working with the school.
- The school's actions to promote the development of pupils' social, spiritual and cultural development are effective and having a positive impact in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stages 1 and 2. Pupils talk confidently and respectfully about faiths and cultures that are different to their own. They were keen to tell inspectors that they enjoyed making Diwali cards and sharing these with members of their local community and their neighbours. Pupils are aware of what is right and wrong and have a growing awareness of the British legal system.
- The assistant headteacher with responsibility for leading developments with the curriculum has successfully helped teachers to plan activities that broaden pupils' experiences and capture pupils' imagination. Boys and girls have equal access to the full range of curriculum activities. Pupils in Year 3 for example, as part of their 'scrumdiddlyumptious' topic, visited Cadbury's World, considered Fairtrade issues, created and made their own healthy drinks, solved food related mathematical problems and wrote about the 'journey' of a banana.
- Pupils enjoy the opportunity to develop their musical skills. Specialist music teachers effectively teach pupils how to play djembe drums, learn about rhythm and write their own music.
- The primary school sport funding is used well. The sports coaches are good role models. They have helped pupils to develop positive attitudes to a range of sporting activities and helped pupils to understand the importance of keeping healthy.
- The school uses pupil premium funding to provide individual and groups of pupils with targeted support and to purchase resources to support their learning. This is helping disadvantaged pupils reach higher standards than their peers.

- The majority of parents that spoke to inspectors are positive about the school. They state their child is happy, safe and making better progress. Some commented on the improvements that have taken place, such as with their child's reading and writing. A few parents raised a number of issues, including concerns about school dinners and homework. Senior leaders are in the process of changing the supplier that provides school dinners. Middle leaders will be making sure that all teachers set homework on a weekly basis.
- Some senior leaders and teachers continue to receive unjustified criticism from a few parents and carers. It is to their credit that staff are not allowing these criticisms to detract them from implementing actions that are helping pupils to make better progress, keep safe and prepare them for life in modern Britain.
- The school has received a good level of support and challenge from the local authority since its previous inspection. This support has enabled the school to tackle a range of complex issues and it has helped the school to improve. Senior leaders and members of the IEB are benefiting from the school adviser's regular visits and the useful advice offered by a range of other local authority officers. They are providing senior leaders and the IEB with pertinent guidance.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The Chair of the IEB is resolute in her determination to help Al-Furqan Primary becomes a 'good' school. She has been forensic in getting to the heart of the issues relating to the school's finances, premises and the 'Conditions of Occupancy' agreed between the previous governing body and Al-Furqan Education Trust. She is rightly continuing to work with local authority advisers to tackle a number of issues that remain. By concentrating on these wider issues, the Chair with support from other IEB members is enabling senior leaders to devote their time and attention to pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching.
 - The IEB has a clear understanding of the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. Conversely, they are not fully aware of the impact of senior and middle leaders' actions on other groups of pupils, such as the most able. This is because school leaders are not currently providing them with the necessary information.
 - Members of the IEB are supportive and challenging in relation to the school's budget. They use their expertise well, for example to check the impact of pupil premium and sports funding.
 - The IEB know about strengths and weaknesses in teaching and use information about teachers' performance well to reward and determine teachers' pay progression. They are becoming increasingly proactive in challenging senior leaders to take swift action once weaknesses in teaching are identified.
 - The IEB ensure that the school's systems for keeping pupils' safe meet current statutory requirements.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils of all ages are well mannered and polite. They demonstrate good attitudes to learning.
- In lessons, pupils respond enthusiastically towards their activities. Pupils are keen to talk about their work and what they are learning. During group discussions, they take it in turns to share their views and they listen carefully to each other's ideas.
- Incidents of unacceptable behaviour have reduced significantly. The 'good to be green and great to be gold' system of rewards and consequences is extremely popular with pupils. They enjoy collecting 'coins' in exchange for prizes and going to the 'pastoral parties' that recognise their good behaviour.
- The sports coaches and play coordinators have a key role in ensuring break times are calm. Pupils play together well and enjoy taking part in organised games. They take pride in ensuring the school is tidy and equipment is well looked after.
- Pupils state that bullying is infrequent and that any incidents of unacceptable behaviour are dealt with promptly. Most of the parents and carers that spoke with inspectors confirmed this to be the case. Pupils

know who they can talk to if they have any concerns.

- The work of the pastoral team is a strength of the school. The assistant headteacher and members of the pastoral team use a good range of strategies to promote positive behaviour and tackle any perceived discrimination. They keep a close eye on the behaviour of pupils in lessons and during break times and work well with different agencies to provide support for individual pupils experiencing difficulties.
- Younger pupils walk around school quietly and calmly. This is not always the case for older pupils who occasionally make too much noise as they use the stairs and walk along corridors.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Staff are suitably trained. They are vigilant to possible signs of extremist behaviour and are alert to cultural practices that may put pupils at risk of potential harm, such as female genital mutilation. Staff follow up concerns relating to safeguarding rigorously and keep a watchful eye on individual pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable.
- The assistant headteacher and general assistant work together well to make sure staff are kept up to date with individual pupils' medical conditions and allergies.
- Pupils confirm that they feel safe in school. They understand the importance of staying safe in a range of situations, such as when using the internet. Each half term different classes take it in turns to present an assembly on e-safety to pupils in their key stage.
- While older pupils have a high understanding of how to keep safe in different situations, younger pupils are less secure.
- Attendance has improved. Last academic year it was in line with the national average for primary schools. Attendance since September this year is above average. Staff keep a close check on the attendance of individuals. Absence is followed up through telephone calls and if required home visits.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Previous weaknesses in teaching, numerous changes in class teachers and high levels of teacher absence affected pupils' achievement over time. Teaching is now improving, but is not yet consistently good.
- Teachers plan a suitable range of activities for pupils of different abilities. However, they do not move the most-able pupils on to these pre-planned challenging activities quickly enough.
- During 'guided reading' sessions, the activities that pupils complete on their own do not always provide a suitable level of challenge. This restricts the progress pupils make with their reading skills.
- Teachers' marking is variable. The strongest marking provides pupils with the specific guidance pupils need to correct their errors.
- Handwriting is not taught well by all teachers and not all teachers insist on high standards of presentation. Consequently, pupils in some classes produce work that is untidy.
- Teachers are benefiting from the support of consultants. The actions they have taken to improve the teaching of writing and mathematics are having a beneficial impact on pupils' achievement.
- Teachers are increasingly planning mathematical activities which build on what pupils already know. Pupils also have regular opportunities to solve problems that deepen their thinking.

- Writing activities motivate pupils because they allow pupils to be creative, while also helping pupils to improve grammar, punctuation and spelling. Pupils in a Year 2 class for example were thoroughly enjoying writing instructions for sandwiches with interesting fillings. One pupil was keen to tell inspectors about his sandwich that contained 'bats' and 'eyeballs'! As the pupils worked, the teacher successfully encouraged the pupils to write in complete sentences and to spell correctly.
- The most-able pupils respond enthusiastically towards activities that extend their thinking. In one Year 6 class for instance, pupils were asked to examine a range of graphs before answering questions that required them to retrieve pertinent information. Pupils were excited by this activity and commented, 'we have to think more now'. This effective practice is not evident in all classes.
- Teachers and teaching assistants make sure that disadvantaged pupils and those that speak English as an additional language receive immediate advice and guidance as they work. By keeping a close eye on these pupils, adults are able to provide them with extra support or challenge them further.
- Adults that work with disabled pupils and those who have special educational are skilled in providing pupils with specific guidance and support. As a result, their rates of progress are improving with an increasing proportion of pupils making good and outstanding progress.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are positive. Pupils are encouraged to learn from their mistakes and not to give up when they find an activity difficult.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- The 2014 provisional Year 6 test results indicate that standards were well below the national average and that pupils in this year group made less than expected progress from their starting points in Year 2. This was the result of significant changes in staffing and previous weaknesses in teaching.
- At the end of Year 1, standards were similar to the national average in reading and mathematics and well below average in writing.
- The most-able pupils did not attain the higher levels of which they were capable in both Years 2 and 6. This was because teachers did not set them sufficiently challenging work.
- The 2014 provisional tests results show that the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and pupils nationally increased. They were approximately one term behind pupils nationally in mathematics, one and half in reading and two terms in writing. In contrast, disadvantaged pupils were approximately one term ahead of other pupils in the school in mathematics, two and half in reading, and half a term in writing. Similar to their classmates, disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 did not make enough progress.
- Pupils are making up for time lost from inadequate progress in the past. Work in pupils' books and the school's latest information indicates that standards are rising. The gap between the standards attained by different groups of pupils in the school and pupils nationally is closing. Current Year 6 pupils are expected to reach the standards expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Rates of progress are improving but are not yet good in all classes and subjects because of inconsistencies in teaching. For instance, pupils in Year 6 are making better progress in writing, while pupils in Year 5 are making better progress in mathematics.
- Most-able pupils make variable progress. In some classes, they make less progress than they could because teachers do not always move them on to challenging activities quickly enough during lessons.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make the progress expected of them. Increasing proportions are making good and outstanding progress. This is because the senior leader with responsibility for this group of pupils and members of the pastoral team work together well to ensure the needs of individual pupils are identified early and relevant support provided.

- In general, disadvantaged pupils and those that speak English as an additional language make better progress than their classmates. This is because they receive additional tailored support from teachers and teaching assistants with reading, writing and mathematics.
- Children enter the Reception classes with skills and knowledge that are well below those expected for their age. They make good gains in their learning. The proportion that achieve a good level of development by the end of Reception is just below the national average.
- Pupils enjoy reading and use their knowledge of the sounds that letters make (phonics) to read unfamiliar words with confidence.
- In 2014, the proportion of Year 1 girls reaching the required standard in the national phonics check was similar to the national average. In contrast, it was below average for boys. In response to this, class teachers are taking greater account of pupils' interests and learning styles. Inspectors observed boys responding just as enthusiastically as girls during phonics sessions.
- Pupils that do not meet the required standard in the national phonics check by the end of Year 1, do so by the end of Year 2.

The early years provision is good

- All children, including the most able and disabled pupils and those who have special educational, make good progress in the Reception classes because of consistently good and better teaching.
- Teachers and teaching assistants make sure that children are safe and cared for well. Children's behaviour is good. They share and look after equipment, take turns when working with other children and play together well.
- Teachers use information about children's achievement well to plan activities, which successfully extend children's learning. Children are motivated and enthusiastic because their activities are interesting and successfully promote all key areas of learning. For example, staff used the story, 'The ginger bread man' to plan a range of activities. Children sequenced the events in the story, they looked for and counted the gingerbread men in the sand and they measured different sized ginger bread men.
- Children's speaking and listening skills has been identified as weak when they join the school. As a result, staff place a strong emphasis on this aspect. Teachers and teaching assistants ask probing questions, which encourage children to give extended responses.
- Activities are regularly adapted in response to children's interests. For instance, children wanted to learn about the poppies worn by staff. Teachers provided children with relevant information and organised an art activity on the theme of poppies. One pupil commented, 'we wear a poppy so that we remember those that have died'.
- Senior leaders have suitable plans in place to further develop the outdoor area.
- The teacher with responsibility for the Early Years Foundation Stage has a good understanding of strengths and relative weaknesses in the Reception classes. Prior to September there were strong systems in place for recording the progress of different groups of children and for ensuring that 'learning journals' in all classes clearly showed how children were progressing. These systems have lapsed since September. Senior leaders are aware of this and planning to help the teacher with responsibility for the Early Years Foundation Stage re-establish the previously strong systems.

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

Unique reference number	131465
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	450925
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	516
Appropriate authority	Interim executive board
Chair	Sylvia Fry
Headteacher	Andrew Moore-Stow
Date of previous school inspection	15 November 2012
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