

Longwill A Primary School for Deaf Children

Bell Hill, Northfield, Birmingham, B31 1LD

Inspection dates 11–12 September 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Relationships throughout the school are excellent. These help all pupils to develop high levels of confidence and self-esteem.
- All groups of pupils achieve well because they participate in a very wide range of suitable, very practical activities in and out of lessons.
- Teaching is good. Staff use their accurate knowledge and assessments of pupils to plan work precisely to help them make good progress.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress because they are supported well. Their confidence and skill increase and they develop very positive attitudes which help prepare them for learning higher up the school.
- The new leadership team know the school well and have already improved aspects of the school including elements of teaching and achievement.
- Governors are supportive and challenging. Some are extremely new to their current roles but are already extending their knowledge of the school and the precise impact it has on all groups.
- Behaviour and safety are good. Pupils' attitudes to learning are outstanding. Staff manage any unacceptable behaviour consistently and effectively. Consequently, there are rapid and marked improvements in their conduct. All pupils are highly engaged and almost all really try to do their best.
- Pupils are safe because staff know them well and support is effective. Most records are extensive, complete and up to date. Parents, rightly, have great confidence in the ways in which staff care for their children and keep them safe.
- The school's focus on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development helps pupils improve their personal skills quickly. Pupils learn about a range of cultures and beliefs in modern Britain and elsewhere in the world, including about deaf and hearing cultures. They develop very high levels of respect for a range of others and participate fully as active, responsible members of the school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils, including the more able, do not achieve as well in English and particularly in writing, as they do in mathematics.
- Teachers, occasionally, do not provide enough time for pupils to act upon teachers' marking of their work.
- Children in the early years do not have frequent enough opportunities to read and write.
- Not all the required information is on the school's website and records of some essential training are not up to date. Leaders do not always check the fine details of what they do sufficiently well.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed pupils engaged in 17 different learning activities, including lessons. These were taught by eight different teachers. Most of these observations were joint visits with the headteacher or an assistant headteacher.
- A British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter accompanied inspectors on almost all of their visits to lessons and discussions with pupils and deaf staff.
- Discussions were held with parents, pupils, governors, a school improvement partner, a representative from the local authority, senior leaders and staff.
- There were too few responses to the online Parent View questionnaire to generate results. Inspectors received the views of parents and carers from 26 responses to school questionnaires during the inspection and 37 to a school questionnaire which were gathered in March 2014. Inspectors also spoke with current and past parents at the beginning and end of the school day
- Inspectors received written questionnaires from 14 members of staff and spoke to all staff present during the inspection. They also considered a summary of 13 staff questionnaires sent out by leaders in March 2014.
- They gathered the views of pupils through arranged and informal discussions, in and out of lessons.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school's information on pupils' current and recent progress, pupils' work, the school's development plan, planning and monitoring documents and documents relating to safeguarding, as well as records relating to behaviour and attendance.

Inspection team

Jo Curd, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Beverley Strange

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Longwill is a small special school which caters for the needs of severely and profoundly deaf pupils for whom BSL is their primary means of communication. The school follows a sign bilingual approach, which aims to develop pupils' skills and abilities in both BSL and spoken and written English and to prepare pupils equally for their future lives in both Deaf and hearing communities.
- All pupils have either a statement of special educational needs or an Education Health and Care Plan. About half also have additional needs including learning difficulties, physical disabilities and/or autism spectrum disorders. Almost two thirds of the pupils are boys. A new class had been recently established to meet the needs of a small group of pupils with the most complex learning needs.
- At more than half, the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding is much higher than the national average. This is additional funding for specific groups of disadvantaged pupils, in this case those who are known to be eligible for free school meals. The number of pupils in each year group is very small. Precise differences in the attainment and progress between eligible pupils and others, nationally or in the school, is not being reported as this could lead to identification of individuals.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is much higher than in most other schools. Most of these pupils come from families who speak English as an additional language; this proportion is higher than in most other schools. About a third of the pupils are of Pakistani heritage. Almost all pupils have significant language and communication delays on entering the school and particularly in English.
- About 16 per cent of the pupils have one or more parent who is deaf. Almost all of these pupils have BSL as their first language.
- In this special school no pupils typically reach the highest attainment levels seen for all pupils nationally. Therefore, the attainment and achievement of the most able is not reported on.
- The headteacher was promoted from her previous position of deputy headteacher in January 2014. The two assistant headteachers took up these new posts in May 2014. Four new teachers joined the staff in September 2014 to meet the needs of a growing school with a diverse school population. The school employs a diverse range of staff including some who are deaf.
- The school shares its site with Victoria all-age school for students with profound and multiple learning difficulties and James Brindley Centre for secondary aged students with medical conditions. The school is part of the Brays Teaching Special School Alliance.
- Some governors have retired very recently. The Chair of Governors took up her position this term.
- The school has gained a range of awards, including Investors in People and the Basic Skills Agency Quality Mark.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve achievement in English and in writing in particular by:
 - making sure that teachers take every opportunity to extend further pupils' written and spoken English in English and in other subjects
 - ensuring feedback given to pupils challenges all, including the more able, to achieve even more
 - providing even more opportunities for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage to develop and practice their early reading and writing skills
 - ensuring pupils respond to written marking and their work shows how they have done this.
- Ensure that the website and all training records are kept up to date and checked on regularly.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Leaders have a good understanding of the school, know its strengths and areas which they are striving to improve. Systems to check and develop what they provide are in place and effective. Their relentless drive for development has successfully improved aspects of teaching and raised achievement, especially in reading and mathematics
- Leaders have successfully maintained the quality of teaching as good through all the changes at the school. New ways of organising classes are already paying off, enabling for example those with the most complex needs to benefit from highly individually planned activities. Senior staff's increased focus on spoken English is also accelerating pupils' progress in speaking and listening, although sometimes pupils are not challenged to extend this further.
- Leaders at all levels, including governors, observe teaching carefully and frequently. They successfully use their findings to manage the performance of all staff, address weaknesses and drive improvements. Processes to reward teachers financially for their work are rigorous and robust. Practical research and evaluation, including strong links with universities, underpin school development.
- Staff present positive role-models and encouragement for each other as well as for pupils. Parents, staff and pupils respect and appreciate the headteacher. She is pivotal in maintaining and developing this ethos throughout the school.
- Teamwork is effective. Staff provide positive role models to each other and to all pupils. The school's ethos is very encouraging and supportive. A wide range of staff, including those who are new to the school, report how much they appreciate this. As one new teacher said, 'I cannot speak highly enough of the positive support provided by all members of staff'.
- Senior staff work effectively with a range of professionals to meet the different needs of pupils. These include researchers in universities, audiology departments, social care professionals and speech and language therapists. They have trained and deployed a full-time teaching assistant to support spoken language across the school. This is all having a positive impact on pupils' English skills.
- The curriculum is well designed to meet pupils' needs and excites and interests them. Pupils develop very positive attitudes to work and to other people, as well as resilience and responsibility; they are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders use pupil premium funding well to meet pupils' specific needs, including paying for staff to support pupils' participation in activities out of school, such as Brownies and church services. These are successfully helping pupils' social skills as well as expanding their language, helping them develop interests and relationships now as well as for later life.
- Primary sports funding is used well to increase teachers' skills, extend the range of sports offered to pupils, provide competitions with other schools and provide additional equipment. This is helping pupils' enjoyment and health, extended their experiences of activities and people outside the school and providing opportunities for them to develop new hobbies and interests such as golf.
- Local authority staff monitor the school extremely lightly because they are confident of its positive impact on pupils' achievement. They know that school staff are in close contact with colleagues in other schools locally and nationally and that their advice and support is used well elsewhere.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors undertake frequent training and have a good understanding of the school, pupils' achievement compared with others nationally, the quality of teaching and of their responsibilities. They are very involved with the school, visit frequently and help guide the strategic direction for improvement. They are well informed and know how budgets, including pupil premium and primary

sports funding, are spent. Although they know that these have a positive impact on pupils some of the newer governors do not yet have a detailed knowledge to challenge specific areas of the school's work and raise outcomes even more rapidly. Governors oversee the performance of the headteacher and other teachers well and make sure that they are suitably rewarded for their effective work and input into the school. They carry out all their statutory duties, including those for safeguarding, effectively and do all they can to ensure all pupils behave well and are safe.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils of all ages and groups are very confident, purposeful and eager to learn and behave very well indeed around the school. They have all the resources they need and respond very quickly to staff requests. Pupils' progress is slightly slowed because teachers do not always capitalise on these highly positive attitudes and challenge pupils to achieve even more.
- Rare occurrences of poor behaviour are managed and supported extremely effectively. Detailed behaviour logs show that pupils with behaviour difficulties, especially those who might have had unsuccessful starts elsewhere, are supported very well by learning mentors. These pupils respond quickly to effective support, consistent guidelines and clear communication of what is expected so that their behaviour improves rapidly. Disruptions in lessons and very short fixed-term exclusions are extremely rare.
- Parents are highly appreciative of all that the school does for them and their children. As one said, 'This school is more than just a place for education. It is a unique community, like an extended family'. They are pleased with how behaviour and relationships at home improve because they themselves feel so well supported. Their own communication with their child improves as they are taught sign language and because they know about their children's experiences at school.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Relationships are very positive. Pupils report that they feel very safe because they know that teachers are always there to help them and because 'we're all friends together here'. Pupils are very considerate, respectful and caring to each other. Pupils learn to keep themselves safe for example learning to cycle safely and using computers wisely and well.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. This includes lessons about a range of faiths and cultures, links with a school in Gambia, social and aesthetic experiences in gardening, music, art and dance. Pupils greatly enjoy music lessons, such as drumming, and create beautiful art such as some impressive African art. They also grow fruit and vegetables in the school grounds.
- Bullying is extremely rare and dealt with rapidly when it arises. Pupils have very high expectations for behaviour. They recognise that a very few pupils find this difficult and say that behaviour is usually very positive in and out of lessons.
- Attendance has risen greatly recently and, for pupils of compulsory school age, is now broadly in line with that seen nationally. Some pupils have extended time away from school due to ill health or operations, but the school goes to great efforts to keep these pupils in touch with what is happening in school.
- Pupils are safe because staff know them all very well and are vigilant in watching what they are all doing. Some records, such as a small number of written risk assessments and training logs, are not fully completed because leaders do not always check rigorously enough that procedures have been followed.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good. New staff have settled in well because the leadership team has skilfully supported them, deploying more experienced staff effectively. Staff have a good understanding about how to enable pupils who are deaf to learn and make good use of technological and other resources available to enable this.
- This means that all the pupils now achieve well, including those with the most complex needs. Effective teaching in lessons is successfully enhanced by strong partnerships with parents, excellent relationships

and a wide range of popular lunchtime clubs.

- Pupils achieve well because staff generally have high expectations and aspirations for them. They plan carefully to meet the needs of each pupil. However, they do not always extend learning even further, for example, challenging them to write even more, or to extend the range of numbers which pupils work with.
- Teamwork is strong and a range of staff, including those who are deaf, work effectively together to meet pupils' practical, physical and learning needs. In a Year 1 mathematics class pupils developed their understanding of three dimensional shapes well as they worked in small groups each supported by a member of staff. Individual differences are met well and equal opportunities are strong because teachers think carefully about how each pupil will be enabled to join in.
- Pupils learn to communicate well and have high levels of confidence in this, because staff are so skilled in encouraging pupils contribute. Occasionally, they do not extend pupils' spoken language contributions or model responses to questions so that pupils hear and see even more effective responses and can adapt their own.
- Staff make good use of home-school logs and the family link worker to inform parents of any particular achievements or difficulties. The provision of sign language classes for parents, 'Escort Guides' (school transport staff) and members of the local community all help others to understand and communicate with pupils out of school.
- Assessments of pupils' progress and attainment are thorough, robust and frequent. Leaders analyse data carefully using electronic systems which they have developed to evaluate achievement, compare outcomes for different groups and to improve teaching and achievement. Leaders have addressed some earlier over-generous assessment in Key Stage 1 so that staff now are very clear as to what pupils' levels are and what they must achieve if their progress is to be even better.
- Teachers' marking of pupils' work is generally up to date, positive and helpful, often clearly showing pupils how to improve. The impact of this varies between classes however, and overall pupils are not given enough time to act upon teachers' comments, especially about their writing, or to learn from their mistakes.

The achievement of pupils is good

- The number of pupils in any year group is very small. Individual differences are considerable as pupils have a very wide range of starting points and additional needs. Attainment at the beginning of Year 1 is consistently below national expectations for this age, especially for all aspects of language and literacy.
- Achievement has fluctuated over recent years. There have been pockets where it has been slower, especially in writing. Leaders have tracked this carefully and this is beginning to pay off. In 2014 almost all pupils throughout the school made good or better progress in a wide range of subjects including English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology. More able pupils are now more consistently on track for making good progress in writing.
- Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 fluctuates considerably, particularly due to individual differences. Because of some very low starting points and some significant additional needs, especially in language, attainment remains below the national average and well below in the national check in phonics (the sounds that letters make) in Year 1. Pupils develop positive, robust attitudes and try hard. An improved focus on reading skills, including phonics, is helping to raise standards quickly in reading, although writing levels remain much lower than those for reading and mathematics.
- Attainment at the end of Year 6 also fluctuates. In 2013 some pupils on National Curriculum levels reached Level 2 or 3 in English and mathematics from their starting points but none of these made better than expected progress in English. Individual pupils did achieve more highly in mathematics, as they did in 2014. Lower attaining pupils in both years made good progress overall from their very low starting points. All groups of pupils, including those from minority ethnic groups and those whose families speak English

as an additional language, now achieve well overall.

- Progress in reading is enhanced by the use of portable personal consoles, programmed to show signs for text in books, which all pupils are given. These successfully enable parents and pupils to share books at home and to develop reading and communication skills together. Very practical, visual methods, and suitable resources, contribute to good and sometimes better progress in mathematics. Older pupils were seen using very practical mathematics resources well to develop and extend their understanding.
- Although their attainment remains lower than pupils nationally, more able pupils achieve well because staff have high expectations and often work separately with those who can do or understand more than others. A more able pupil in Year 2 was seen working with tens and units to 100 while others in the class ordered numbers to ten.
- The achievement of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium has improved dramatically recently because additional funding is used effectively to provide extra support to enhance pupils' learning in and out of school. This is now successfully helping to close any gaps between their attainment and that of others at the school.
- Disabled pupils and those who have additional special educational needs, such as those with autistic spectrum disorders, achieve well because staff understand and meet their needs carefully and skilfully. Some of these pupils who found it very difficult to settle and concentrate now focus well in lessons, working well with staff and their peers.
- Parents are very happy about how very well their children achieve. One said, 'My son has attended this school since he was three, at this time he could not speak, sign or walk. The staff here have worked tirelessly to help him become the boy he is today giving him communication, language as well as physical support.'

The early years provision is good

- The Nursery and Reception classes are well led and managed by experienced skilled staff. They use their extensive understanding of the needs of deaf children to set up a stimulating environment and activities to help them all thrive.
- Children start Nursery and Reception classes with a wide range of skills, knowledge and understanding. These are generally much lower than expected for their age, especially in language and communication. All groups of children progress well, especially in their personal and social skills of confidence, social relationships and attitudes to learning. Although some children reach some of the early learning goals, especially in understanding of the world, physical development and attitudes to learning, by the time they leave the Reception class, none have completely caught up with expectations for their age and in particular their communication and language and early literacy skills remain low for their age.
- Teachers plan and provide an interesting range of activities which cover all the required areas of learning. Children have lots of opportunities to work inside and outside. Classrooms and the outdoor area are suitable and secure. Although activities include reading books and making marks with paint, chalk and water, opportunities for them to develop and extend their early reading and writing are more limited.
- At the time of the inspection some of the children had only been in school for a short time. Some, who initially found it difficult to separate from parents, quickly began to play with others and approach new adults. They had progressed well in an extremely short time.
- Activities and expectations are effectively varied to help all children achieve well. More able children, develop their confidence and ability to express themselves and show their creativity. Their progress, especially in writing, is slightly slowed, however, because staff do not always make the most of opportunities to extend learning further. For example, making sure that children are watching when staff write their names on work.

- Disabled children and those who have additional special educational needs achieve well because staff work well with other professionals and parents and act quickly to meet their individual needs. Some with physical disabilities who joined the Nursery with limited movement and communication were seen, a year later whizzing around on standing frames, communicating with adults and asking questions about the world around them.
- Some children have had high levels of absence due to illness and operations. The school works well with parents, especially through the family link worker, to maintain contact and provide work for children when this happens.
- Children are safe because there is a high ratio of experienced, skilled adults to children and staff make sure that the learning areas are suitable, secure and extremely well supervised.

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	103603
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	448132

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	2–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	57
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Emma Cook
Headteacher	Alison Carter
Date of previous school inspection	21–22 June 2010
Telephone number	0121 4753923
Fax number	0121 476 6362
Email address	head@longwill.bham.sch.uk

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