

# Abbey Infant School

Maurice Road, Smethwick, B67 5LR

**Inspection dates** 8–9 May 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- The school has improved significantly since its last inspection. Leaders, managers and governors have tackled weaknesses very well and this has underpinned improved performance across the school.
- The new deputy headteacher, working closely with the executive headteacher and other school leaders, has made a significant impact on improving the quality of teaching.
- Pupils make good progress from their starting points and enjoy learning. Their standards in English and mathematics are above those expected for their age and are improving.
- The quality of teaching has improved to good. A small proportion of teaching is outstanding, and, when this occurs, leads to pupils making outstanding progress.
- Children get off to a good start in the Nursery and Reception classes. Staff have a good understanding of children's learning needs and meet these well. Teachers plan exciting and engaging learning activities which help children to make good progress in learning new skills.
- Pupils behave well in their lessons and in other areas of the school. They feel safe and well-cared for and are polite and courteous to each other and to visitors. Their attendance has risen consistently in recent years and is now broadly average.
- The federation arrangement, with Abbey Junior School, has helped to raise standards. Through working together, staff have a clearer understanding of what pupils are capable of and what they are expected to achieve.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not outstanding because teachers do not always check pupils' work often enough in lessons. This means that they miss opportunities to adapt activities to provide further challenge to pupils, when this would help them to make even better progress.
- The school's strategies to improve pupils' attendance have not successfully secured above average attendance.
- Leaders do not make it clear to individual teachers, who perform well, exactly what they need to do to improve to outstanding.
- The governing body does not ask enough challenging questions of senior leaders about the progress being made by different groups of pupils. This is because they do not receive termly information about the progress of different groups from senior leaders.

## Information about this inspection

- This was a coordinated inspection. An inspection of Abbey Junior School took place at the same time and was carried out by another team of inspectors. A separate report has been written for Abbey Junior School. The lead inspectors from both inspection teams conducted a joint interview with representatives of the governing body.
- Inspectors observed teaching in 20 lessons taught by 10 teachers and by teaching assistants. Two of these were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents including school improvement plans, documents showing how leaders check teachers' work, school policies, and the school's systems to check the suitability of employees who work with children. Inspectors also checked work in pupils' books and the school's records of pupils' progress.
- Meetings were held with the school's senior leaders, a local authority representative and two groups of pupils.
- Inspectors gathered the views of parents and carers by taking account of 53 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View). They also spoke informally to a number of parents and carers on the playground as they brought their children to school. An inspector held a telephone discussion with one parent at the parent's request.
- Inspectors analysed the questionnaires returned by 22 members of staff.

## Inspection team

Jeremy Spencer, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Jan Connor

Her Majesty's Inspector

Dennis Brittain

Additional Inspector

## Full report

*In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.*

### Information about this school

- Abbey Infant School is in a 'hard-federation' arrangement with Abbey Junior School. Both schools share the same headteacher and operate under a single governing body.
- The school is larger than others of the same type.
- Fewer pupils than average are known to be eligible for free school meals and the pupil premium (additional government funding).
- The majority of pupils are from a White British background. A minority is from a range of different ethnic backgrounds, the largest comprising those of Asian heritage.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, supported at school action, is above average. The proportion supported at school action plus, or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- A before-and-after school club, under the federation's governance, operates on the site of Abbey Junior School, and is included in the inspection report for Abbey Junior School.
- During its last full inspection, in January 2012, Abbey Infant School was judged to be inadequate and the school was given a notice to improve. Although the school was judged to provide an acceptable standard of education for its pupils, there were serious concerns about the capacity of leaders and managers to bring about rapid change, to improve teaching and learning, in order to accelerate pupils' progress.

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

- Improve pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching to outstanding by:
  - ensuring that teachers check pupils' progress in lessons more often, to identify more efficiently when further challenge is required
  - working closely with parents and carers to improve attendance to be consistently above average.
- Improve leadership and management by:
  - ensuring that leaders set clear and concise targets to identify exactly what each individual teacher needs to do to become outstanding
  - ensuring that school leaders provide the governing body with more information about the progress being made by different groups of pupils, to enable governors to ask more challenging questions of senior leaders.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Most children start school in the Nursery with skills broadly in line with those expected for their age. They make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes because staff expectations are high and teaching is effective in meeting pupils' needs.
- Pupils enter Year 1 with skills slightly above those expected for their age. Due to good quality teaching, they continue to make good progress in Years 1 and 2 and are well-prepared for their move to the juniors. They leave Year 2 with standards above those normally expected for their age in reading, and well above in writing and mathematics.
- The school's information about pupils' progress, backed by inspectors' checks on work in pupils' books, indicate that pupils' standards this year are improving further on the high standards achieved in 2012.
- Different groups of pupils, including those supported through the pupil premium and those from different backgrounds, achieve well and are making good progress in closing the gaps between themselves and others. The decision of leaders to use pupil premium funding to employ additional, well-trained, learning support assistants to target individuals requiring extra support, combined with improved teaching, have been key factors in supporting the improved progress of these pupils and closing the gaps between their achievement and that of others.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress. This is because staff ensure that learning tasks are appropriately adapted to meet their needs. A special educational needs coordinator and a shadow coordinator oversee the progress of these pupils across the federation. They successfully ensure that pupils' progress is tracked carefully and additional support is provided rapidly if any of these pupils begin to fall behind.
- A school focus on improving reading has successfully raised achievement. In the Year 1 phonics (the sounds that letters make) screening check in 2012, taken by pupils currently in Year 2, the proportion achieving the expected result was broadly in line with average. The school responded well to this by taking action to group pupils by ability for phonics lessons in Years 1 and 2. As a result, pupils' standards in reading have improved and the 2013 phonics screening check is expected to show strong improvement. During the inspection, pupils of different abilities were observed decoding complex words with confidence.
- Most parents and carers who responded to Parent View, or who spoke with inspectors during the inspection, believe that their child makes good progress at the school. One parent told inspectors that the school had worked hard to improve since its last inspection and her daughter had 'come on leaps and bounds' as a result. Others made similar comments.
- Pupils' achievement, over time, is not outstanding because there is not enough outstanding teaching in the school. During the inspection, pupils made outstanding progress in only a very small minority of lessons.

### The quality of teaching is good

- A very large majority of parents and carers who responded to Parent View believe that their child is taught well at the school. Inspection findings support this view. Teachers build strong and trusting relationships with pupils. They know the pupils in their class very well and set appropriate work to match their differing abilities. As a result, different groups of pupils make

good progress.

- Teachers question pupils well during lessons to check their understanding. However, they do not always check pupils' work as frequently as they could do. This means that they sometimes miss opportunities to extend pupils' thinking further, with more challenging work, to help them to make outstanding progress.
- Learning support partners are professional in their approach and play an important role in supporting pupils' improved achievement. They are well trained and skilled in identifying when best to intervene and clarify learning for pupils, without allowing pupils to become too dependent on them. They question pupils well and have high expectations of their work.
- Teachers mark pupils' books consistently well. They use agreed marking symbols, which are understood by pupils, and write helpful comments to help pupils understand the next steps of learning they need to take. Teachers also set individual targets for pupils in Years 1 and 2 to help them to improve their writing skills. Pupils value and understand these targets. There is evidence that they are making an impact on learning as the quality of pupils' writing is well above average. For example, during the inspection, pupils in Year 1 showed good understanding of where to position apostrophes and commas in words and sentences.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage classes, staff organise learning areas creatively and imaginatively to capture pupils' interest. Good use of space is made in indoor areas and the newly reorganised outdoor area. At the time of the last inspection there were inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and children's progress between the Nursery and Reception classes. Good leadership has successfully ensured that the inconsistencies have been removed and children now make equally good progress between these classes.

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

- Pupils behave well in lessons and in different areas of the school. This is because they understand the high expectations of staff and are keen and eager to learn. It is also because they enjoy coming to school. During the inspection, pupils were observed joyfully singing and dancing, led by the deputy headteacher, as they entered the hall for a singing practice. They behaved very well and the singing was the best the inspector had heard in an infant school for a long time.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and play safely in the playground. Pupils were able to tell inspectors who they could go to in school if they were worried about anything.
- School logs indicate that incidences of bullying are very rare. Pupils have an understanding appropriate to their age of what constitutes bullying but told inspectors that they had not seen it happen in their school.
- Pupils show good learning behaviours and have the confidence and skills to work independently. During the inspection, pupils used their learning target cards independently, without prompting from their teacher, to help them make good progress. On rare occasions, pupils become distracted when lessons do not fully engage them or if work is too easy or too hard for them. This is why behaviour is not outstanding.
- Most parents and carers who responded to Parent View, or who spoke to inspectors during the inspection, believe that children behave well at the school. Inspection findings support this view.

**The leadership and management are good**

- The appointment of the new deputy headteacher since the last inspection has been a key turning point for the school. She has worked successfully with the executive headteacher and other leaders to inspire staff to improve their teaching. She has also played a lead role in improving the quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage and in improving systems to teach reading skills. These developments have ensured rapid gains in the quality of teaching and in pupils' achievement.
- The executive headteacher has played an important role in organising the improved distribution of leadership responsibilities across the school. As a result, staff feel empowered to make decisions and their morale is high. Leadership teams work well together and leaders have become more reflective about how they can improve their work, for example, through recording and sharing the impact of their work in 'leadership logs'. The executive headteacher has also raised her expectations of learning support partners and has helped to train them to become more effective in supporting teaching and learning.
- Teaching is carefully checked and actions are taken both to support and to challenge teachers to improve their practice. Leaders successfully tackle underperformance. On rare occasions when a teacher's performance dips to less than good, leaders identify clear steps to outline how they can improve. However, teachers who are consistently good do not receive clear and concise targets to help them understand what they need to do to be outstanding.
- Leaders successfully ensure that the subjects and topics taught in the school, and the broad range of after-school clubs, are interesting for pupils and help them to make good progress. They also underpin the good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.
- The federation partnership has helped to improve the quality of teaching and raise pupils' achievement in the school. Staff have benefited from opportunities to share expertise, for example, through special educational needs leaders working together across both sites. The partnership has also helped to develop consistency of staff expectations of pupils as they move through different year groups. For example, staff from both schools have worked together to devise a calculation policy in mathematics.
- The local authority has provided good support to the school since the last inspection, particularly through work with a 'core group' of governors, to ensure that school improvements are on track. The support from the local authority has been greatly reduced recently, because school leaders have shown that they have the necessary skills to drive strong improvement without relying on external support.
- Leaders have implemented appropriate systems successfully to improve pupils' attendance. As a result, attendance has improved from below average to broadly average in the last three years. However, despite improvements, attendance is not above average and leaders recognise that they need to work closely with parents and carers to achieve this.
- Safeguarding requirements are met. This includes the correct checks on adults working with pupils in the school. Appropriate policies are in place to support the safety and well-being of pupils, including an anti-bullying policy. Consequently, there are very few reported cases of bullying at the school.
- The school promotes equality of opportunities effectively. This is demonstrated through the school's good work to close gaps in achievement between pupils from different backgrounds and with different needs.

- The large majority of parents and carers who responded to Parent View, or who spoke to inspectors during the inspection, believe that the school is well led and managed.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Due to the federation agreement, the governing body oversee the work of both schools in the partnership. The governing body has prioritised its work to focus on improvements in the infant school, due to the inadequate overall effectiveness grade received by the infant school at the time of its last inspection. Consequently, inspection evidence shows that the infant school has improved more strongly than the junior school. Governors know the school well and successfully hold leaders to account. The formation of a governing body 'core group' to focus sharply on the school's improvement priorities has played a key role in this. As a result, governors have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas to improve and how the school's standards compare with those of other schools nationally. They do not demonstrate an overreliance on reports from school leaders and visit the school frequently to check for themselves how well the school is performing. Although governors have a clear understanding of the standards pupils achieve in each year group, their understanding of the termly progress made by different year groups, and other groups of pupils is less well developed. This is because school leaders do not provide enough information to enable them to ask challenging questions about these groups. Governors know what the school is doing to reward good teaching and how it tackles any underperformance. The governing body has a good understanding of how pupil premium funding is used and agree with school leaders how it will be spent. The governing body meets its statutory requirements, including for safeguarding.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>



## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	103930
<b>Local authority</b>	Sandwell
<b>Inspection number</b>	399746

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	332
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Patrick Redmond
<b>Headteacher</b>	Pauline Smart (Executive Headteacher)
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	11 January 2012
<b>Telephone number</b>	0121 4291689
<b>Fax number</b>	0121 4291689
<b>Email address</b>	headteacher@abbey-inf.sandwell.sch.uk

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