

Ash Green Primary School

The Lea, Trentham, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, ST4 8BX

Inspection dates 21–22 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Achievement requires improvement. This is because not enough pupils are making good progress over time. This is particularly the case in writing and mathematics in Years 3 and 4.
- The quality of teaching requires improvement. It is inconsistent across Years 3 to 6. The quality of marking is variable and does not consistently help pupils to improve their work.
- In some lessons, pupils, particularly the more able are not provided with enough challenge to get the best out of them.
- In Years 3 and 4 especially, the quality and accuracy of work in pupils' mathematical books is not good enough.
- Across Years 3 to 6, there are not enough records of pupils' work in literacy to help teachers and pupils check what the strengths and weaknesses are in skills over time. There are not enough opportunities for pupils to write at length.
- Subject leaders do not rigorously check the work done by teachers and pupils.
- School plans and the management of the performance of staff do not make enough use of measurable targets linked to increasing pupils' rates of progress.
- Governors do not know enough about pupils' progress to provide the challenge and support needed to drive the school forward.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders, including governors, have ensured that outstanding levels of care, safety and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development have been maintained.
- Pupils in Years 1 and 2 make good progress across all subjects, and particularly in improving their writing skills.
- There is good, and sometimes outstanding, teaching throughout the school, and consistently so in the Nursery and Reception classes and in Years 1 and 2.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. Their attendance is high and they have excellent relationships with each other and staff.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 15 lessons and made nine short visits to lessons.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read in Years 1 and 2.
- Inspectors took account of 112 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and responses to a parental questionnaire recently carried out by the school.
- Meetings were held with two groups of pupils and inspectors spoke to pupils at break and lunch times.
- Inspectors also held discussions with the Chair and vice-chair of the Governing Body, two parent governors, a representative of the local authority and school staff.
- The inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at a number of documents, including the school’s own data on pupils’ current progress, documents relating to the school’s plans for improvement, its procedures for checking the quality of teaching, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to safeguarding.
- Pupils’ books were checked by inspectors.
- Inspectors visited the school’s breakfast club.

Inspection team

Clarice Nelson-Rowe, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Geoffrey Lawrence	Additional Inspector
Elaine Murray	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is much larger than the averaged-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- A very low proportion of pupils are supported by the pupil premium. (The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children that are looked after.)
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is below average.
- The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is low.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- A breakfast and after-school club that is managed by the governing body operates on the school site.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, in order to raise achievement in Years 3 to 6, but especially in Years 3 and 4, by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils, especially the more able, can achieve in lessons
 - improving the consistency of marking and feedback to pupils, in order to show them more effectively how to improve their work to the next level
 - sharing the good and outstanding practice that is evident in the school more widely
 - making sure that lesson time is always used well, so that pupils are always learning.
- Raise achievement in writing and mathematics in Years 3 to 6, but especially in Years 3 and 4, by ensuring that teachers:
 - plan more lessons where pupils' written work is recorded and organised so as to provide an overview of the strengths and weaknesses in their writing skills over time
 - plan more opportunities for pupils to write at length
 - raise their expectations of pupils' overall presentation and accuracy when working in mathematics.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - further developing the skills of subject leaders and providing them with more frequent opportunities to check pupils' progress and the quality of teaching in their subject areas
 - checking more closely both the quality and consistency of teachers' marking in all classes
 - using data more precisely to set whole-school targets in school plans and performance-management targets of staff that increase pupils' rate of progress year on year
 - providing training for governors on understanding data on pupils' progress, in order to help them to push and monitor school improvements.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because pupils are not consistently making as much progress as they could be. Progress is variable across Years 3 to 6 in all subjects, but particularly weak in writing. Overall progress is weakest in Years 3 and 4 in writing and mathematics, leaving much to be done in Years 5 and 6.
- In Years 3 and 4 pupils are only, at best, making the progress expected of them. Pupils of higher abilities sometimes do not even make the progress expected of them in writing and mathematics, due to lack of challenge in the work.
- Evidence from lesson observations and close inspection of pupils' books shows that, mainly in Years 3 and 4, mathematics skills are not consistently well developed. For example, work is poorly presented and sometimes inaccurate, such as in the way that pupils present proportions of fractions or identify types of angles. However, in the Nursery and Reception classes and in Years 1 and 2 classes, a wide range of mathematical skills are developed well, due to good teaching.
- Achievement in writing, particularly, requires improvement in Years 3 to 6. While generally well presented, the quality of writing is variable and progress is difficult to track. This is partly due to the regular use of resources, such as whiteboards, where pupils are asked to rub out work after use and so they and teachers do not have a permanent record of what pupils achieve, or not, over time.
- Pupils are also sometimes limited in writing creatively at length, due to the regular use of worksheets that mainly require pupils to write in boxes or to give answers in limited sentences. Sometimes different worksheets are in different places for different subjects; this makes it difficult to track the quality of writing and to set and check targets for improvement.
- In Years 1 and 2, the quality of writing is consistently good. Pupils consistently use joined up handwriting and write clearly in sentences with good levels of punctuation, in books which demonstrate pupils make at least good progress overtime. Adults in these year groups consistently model writing well.
- Pupils' ability to read has been improving for younger pupils, due to improved programmes of support and reading resources. Pupils attained above average results in the most recent Year 1 phonics (linking letters and sounds) check as the result of good teaching. Some older pupils, such as in Year 6, show good comprehension skills and the ability to read information quickly, such as through 'skimming'. However, school records on pupils' progress demonstrate that good achievement in reading is not consistent across year groups in Years 3 to 6.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs achieve in line with their peers but sometimes better, especially in reading, due to extra support in class as well as through small-group work.
- The numbers of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is very small compared to other groups so it would be statistically unreliable to compare their attainment with that of others on a year to year basis. However, across the school, such pupils make the same variable rates of progress as their peers.
- From starting in the Nursery class with skills that are typically expected for their age, the expected levels that pupils reached in reading and mathematics at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 in 2012 were broadly average, although weaker in writing.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Despite the most recent efforts of school leaders, teaching is not consistently good enough to ensure that all pupils make good progress. Nonetheless, there are examples of good and outstanding teaching across most year groups.
- Where teaching requires improvement, pupils tend to sit and listen to the teacher for too long.

As a result, the pace of learning slows. Also, sometimes teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough. This particularly relates to the amount and quality of work produced by the more-able pupils. Some teachers are not making full use of the information they collect about what pupils can already do, to plan lessons.

- Marking is of variable quality and requires improvement. Where it is good, teachers offer clear guidance on how pupils can improve their work. However, some teachers do not consistently inform pupils how to improve further.
- Where teaching is good or better, teachers are lively and engaging and plan lessons very well to promote high levels of skills, including pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, across a range of subjects.
- For example, in a Year 6 dance lesson, pupils reflected exceptionally well on the impact of Dr Martin Luther King's speech on racial equality. Through dance, they expressed aspects of his speech and discussed well with each other about what may have been the thoughts and feelings of those present during his speech. As a result of the teacher closely monitoring pupils' dance work in groups, pupils were encouraged to perform in front of each other and to assess their strengths and weaknesses. When given the opportunity to work again on their performances, they improved to much higher levels of expression.
- Teaching assistants help to support well pupils in the classrooms. They use resources and questioning well, to check and develop pupils' understanding.
- In the Nursery and Reception classes, children's welfare needs are catered well for, which means the children are happy and settled. Early letter sounds and combinations (phonics) are taught systematically and to good effect. The vibrant classroom areas help to promote children's creative skills. There are also now a good range of opportunities for children to direct their own learning, an improvement since the last inspection.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils' real enjoyment of school has a positive effect leading to high levels of well-being and pupils feeling safe. An overwhelming majority of the parents who responded to Parent View agreed that pupils were happy and safe. Pupils' high attendance is consistent, and is in the top 20% of schools nationally.
- School records show that behaviour is typically excellent. Pupils have outstanding attitudes to learning and are highly motivated and keen to learn. Pupils speak very highly of the staff and respond well to their high expectations of behaviour. This results in outstanding behaviour in lessons, assemblies, breaktimes and in school clubs.
- Systems for recording and for following up any incidents of misbehaviour are consistent and secure. There are very few incidents of poor behaviour. Instances of racism or bullying of any sort are extremely rare events.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and its effect is evident in their excellent relationships with staff and each other. Pupils show high levels of enjoyment and interest when talking about visits to places of worship or of historical interest. They enjoy helping to support the school, such as by setting up equipment for assemblies and taking part in musical performances. Their deeply reflective skills and sense of awe and wonder about the world around them are evident in assemblies and in lessons such as observed in a Year 5 lesson on planets in space.
- Pupils' knowledge and understanding of the risks when using the internet, drugs and alcohol are very good. They also have clear views about how to avoid them. This is due to the way that the school promotes their knowledge of these issues in lessons.

The leadership and management **require improvement**

- Leadership and management require improvement because, although senior leaders now drive through improvement with a greater sense of urgency, not enough has been done in the past to drive up pupils' achievement.
- The lack of frequency of checks on teaching and its impact on progress, has meant the school has taken its 'eye off the ball' in relation to driving up achievement. As a result, pupils are not achieving as well as they should. While staff have valued a range of training to improve teaching, there have not been enough opportunities for teachers to learn from the good and outstanding practice in the school.
- The leadership of literacy and numeracy require improvement. This is because teachers have not been sufficiently challenged and supported enough with regard to the quality of marking, challenge of work and the progress of pupils. While teachers are now held more to account for pupils' progress through new performance-management procedures, targets for teachers are still not linked well enough to expectations about the rates of pupils' progress, particularly in writing.
- While some aspects of self-evaluation are accurate, particularly in relation to behaviour and safety, other aspects of self-evaluation and improvement planning are not sufficiently robust. For example, school plans for improvement lack measurable targets to ensure good progress for all pupils, particularly in Years 3 to 6.
- The strength of the curriculum is that it helps to promote high levels of personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. However, the curriculum does not impact well enough on pupils' literacy and numeracy skills.
- The school demonstrates the capacity to improve further. School leaders, including governors, have ensured that outstanding levels of care, pastoral support, behaviour, attendance and safety have been maintained since the last inspection. Leaders have also been successful at improving learning opportunities for pupils in the Nursery and Reception classes and quickly addressing weak levels of writing by the end of Year 2 so that these are now good.
- The local authority provides light-touch support for the school. However, it has supported the school with its expansion of building premises.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Members of the governing body have a fairly accurate view of the school's performance, including the quality of teaching and how pupils' test results compare to those of other similar schools. However, their knowledge of pupils' progress is not sufficiently detailed to help them to hold the school to account more rigorously for the progress in raising pupils' achievement. They have ensured that appropriate systems are in place to manage the performance of staff and their salaries. They pay high attention to the welfare needs of pupils in the school, including to safeguarding, and ensure that financial resources are well spent.

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	124028
Local authority	Stoke-On-Trent
Inspection number	411875

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	499
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	G Leary
Headteacher	N Addison
Date of previous school inspection	19 March 2009
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