

# Alvaston Junior School

Elvaston Lane, Alvaston, Derby, DE24 0PU

**Inspection dates** 16–17 October 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement.

- Teaching has, until recently, not ensured that pupils achieved adequately. This legacy is particularly reflected in weaknesses in the calculation skills of less-able pupils in Years 3 and 4.
- While the overall quality of teaching is improving steadily, there is not yet sufficient good practice to ensure pupils achieve well.
- Teachers do not consistently use time, questioning or ongoing assessment well enough to move pupils' learning on briskly and to ensure that pupils develop their skills at a fast rate in lessons.
- Most marking does not provide pupils with clear guidance or encourage them to take responsibility for improving their work.
- The effectiveness of the work of teaching assistants is too variable. They are not sufficiently involved in lesson planning and teachers do not regularly make best use of them in lessons to support pupils who need extra help.
- Pupils' attendance is too low. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent is over twice the national average.
- Pupils do not always listen attentively in lessons, and their attention sometimes drifts in lessons where they are not expected to get on with their work quickly.
- Subject leaders are insufficiently involved in checking on the work in their subjects or in driving improvements.

### The school has the following strengths

- Attainment is rising. Pupils' progress is improving steadily. Gaps between different groups of pupils have reduced considerably.
- Pupils mostly behave well in public areas in school and in the playground. Pupils get along well with each other and now take more responsibility for managing their behaviour. They feel safe in school.
- Training and other arrangements for managing staff's performance are being used well to increase staff's accountability for pupils' achievement.
- The executive headteacher and deputy headteacher form an effective partnership. They have driven several recent improvements well.
- The newly formed federation has strengthened leadership and management, including governance.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in 20 lessons taught by 14 teachers. Five of these lessons were observed together with the executive headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- Samples of pupils' work from last year and this year were analysed. An inspector listened to a few Year 6 pupils reading.
- Meetings were held with school staff, a group of pupils, three governors and two representatives from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 17 questionnaires completed by staff and the 35 responses by parents to the online questionnaire Parent View. An inspector spoke informally to a few parents at the beginning of the school day.
- Inspectors looked at a range of evidence including: the work in pupils' books; monitoring records; improvement plans; the school's own data on pupils' attainment and progress; consultants' reports; and policies, procedures and records relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.

## Inspection team

Derek Aitken, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Alan Brewerton	Additional Inspector
Carol Deakin	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is larger than most primary schools.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The remaining pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds. There are no pupils at an early stage of learning English as an additional language.
- An above-average proportion of pupils are eligible for the pupil premium. In this school, this extra government funding is currently received for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is average. The proportion in mainstream classes supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is low.
- The school operates a specially resourced provision for pupils with special educational needs, the Enhanced Resource Unit (ERU), on behalf of the local authority. Currently 11 pupils from Years 4 to 6 attend the Unit. All these pupils have a statement of special educational needs and almost all of these statements are for moderate learning difficulties.
- The executive headteacher was appointed in June 2012 when Alvaston Junior entered into a 'soft' federation with the school of which she was in post as headteacher. This new venture was undertaken primarily to improve leadership, management and teaching at Alvaston Junior. The governing bodies of the two schools joined together in September 2013 to form a 'hard' federation.
- The executive headteacher received the designation of Local Leader of Education (LLE) in May 2013.
- Unvalidated results for 2013 show that the school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

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

- Make the teaching consistently good or better and help pupils to make faster progress by ensuring that teachers:
  - plan and conduct lessons so that they move at a brisk pace and keep pupils fully engaged in learning
  - make good use of questioning and ongoing assessment in lessons to move pupils, especially the more able, onto harder work when they have mastered a new concept
  - involve teaching assistants more fully in lesson planning and use them carefully to support the groups which are most in need of extra help
  - use marking well to pinpoint areas where pupils need extra practice and help them to improve their work.
- Raise the achievement of less-able pupils in Years 3 and 4 in mathematics by providing them with intensive practice of multiplication tables.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that the roles of subject leaders are fully developed so that they can contribute more effectively to checks on the school's work and to driving improvements in their subjects.
- Work more closely with parents to improve attendance so that it is in line with the national average by July 2014.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics when they join Year 3 is broadly average. In 2012, Year 6 pupils' attainment was well below average. Pupils left the school around a year behind pupils nationally and all groups of pupils, except the more able, made inadequate progress from their Year 3 starting points.
- In 2012, Year 6 pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium underachieved. Their attainment was lower than similar pupils nationally and much lower than that of other pupils in the year group, about two terms behind in English and more than a year behind in mathematics.
- In 2013, Year 6 pupils' attainment improved and the school met the government's floor targets for the first time. Pupils made expected progress in reading, although their progress in writing and mathematics was still below the national average.
- While the achievement of Year 6 girls known to be eligible for free school meals improved considerably in 2013, that of Year 6 eligible boys declined. Most disabled pupils and those pupils who have special educational needs in Year 6 made inadequate progress.
- A legacy of weaknesses in calculation skills, which are apparent, for example, when pupils are working out fractions, slow learning for less-able pupils in Years 3 and 4.
- The current picture across the school is much more positive. Rates of progress in Years 4 to 6 rose steadily last year. There are now few variations in the progress of different groups. Vulnerable groups are now more sharply identified and, increasingly, purposeful use is being made of pupil premium funding to provide effective support for eligible pupils.
- Currently, most White British and pupils from other backgrounds are working at the nationally expected levels and are making adequate progress. However, few pupils can demonstrate good progress over a sustained period of time.
- Improvements to provision have ensured that most disabled pupils and those pupils who have special educational needs in the ERU and in mainstream classes are now making the progress they should.
- The proportion of more-able Year 6 pupils who are working at or towards the higher Levels 5 and 6 has increased significantly this year.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is too variable. While there is some good or better teaching, a significant amount of teaching, especially in Years 3 to 5, requires improvement.
- The pace of learning in most lessons is leisurely because teachers do not consistently use time well enough to make sure that pupils work hard. Their methods are sometimes too unvaried to capture or to sustain pupils' interest fully and to test their thinking.
- Teachers do not always make good use of questioning and ongoing assessment to check on pupils' learning or to judge when more-able pupils are ready to move on to harder work.

- In less successful lessons, teaching assistants are not involved in lesson planning and are frequently not used flexibly or carefully enough to support pupils' learning. Sometimes, they stay too long with a small group of pupils or do too much for individual pupils, while other pupils who would benefit from extra help are overlooked.
- Reading and writing skills are taught adequately. Teachers usually provide pupils with interesting, descriptive vocabulary and direct them regularly to useful sources of self-help but, when the pace of lessons lacks urgency, pupils often do not have enough time to apply their new learning as well as they might do.
- While staff in the ERU provide pupils with a suitable range of short activities which capture their interest, the tasks themselves sometimes lack sufficient challenge, especially for higher attainers, to enable them to deepen their learning. Teaching assistants do not devote enough time to enhancing pupils' speaking and listening skills.
- Marking is inconsistent in quality. Overall, it does not identify weaknesses in pupils' work sharply or provide enough precise guidance for pupils to help them to improve.
- In the lessons where teaching is most effective, pupils develop their skills at a fast rate and are excited by their learning. Teachers ensure that pupils work hard, question them carefully and make excellent use of assessment to spark pupils' imagination and to enable them to apply their knowledge confidently in new situations.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** requires improvement

- Pupils' behaviour requires improvement because their willingness to learn is not developed in lessons where teaching is uninspiring and so they do not make good progress. In most lessons, staff manage pupils well. Pupils usually focus well, but occasionally lose interest when the teacher talks too long or when they have to listen to other pupils answering the teacher's questions.
- A very few instances of pupils behaving unsuitably in public areas outside or in school were observed during the inspection. This involved a few boys, play-wrestling in the playground, not recognising when their 'game' had gone too far.
- Over time, pupils' behaviour has not been good. School records indicate that exclusions have been regularly above average, and staff have had to detain or isolate pupils to deal with their poor behaviour.
- Pupils' attendance rose a little last year but remains too low. In particular, the percentage of pupils who are persistently absent is over twice the national average. Leaders have very recently introduced raffle prizes and certificates to encourage pupils to understand the importance of good attendance. Over time, the school has not worked closely enough with parents to ensure pupils attend as regularly as they should.
- Pupils report that conduct has improved since leaders introduced a new behaviour policy earlier this year. Pupils understand that their actions have consequences and now take more responsibility for their behaviour. They appreciate the new rewards system. Incidents of misbehaviour have reduced and exclusions have halved. Nearly all pupils behave sensibly, including in the dining hall during wet playtimes.

- Pupils get along well with each other, feel safe in school and say that bullying is rare. They understand the dangers of cyber-bullying. Most parents whose opinions are recorded on Parents View are satisfied with pupils' behaviour and safety in school.

### **The leadership and management** requires improvement

- Although pupils' progress is improving steadily, leaders have not succeeded in carrying out most of the improvements requested at the previous inspection. Frequent changes of personnel at senior levels and delays in appointing key staff have reduced the school's capacity to drive improvement quickly.
- Subject leaders do not closely analyse weaknesses in pupils' skills and take strong action to improve the curriculum or influence teaching within their subjects.
- Until this year, expectations for pupils' progress, as reflected in targets for Year 6 pupils, were much too low and contributed to pupils' underachievement.
- The executive headteacher provides strong leadership and works very effectively in partnership with the deputy headteacher and other senior leaders in the federation to set clear goals. Although teaching overall is not yet good, the proportion of inadequate teaching is much reduced and there is now more practice which is good.
- School self-evaluation conducted by senior leaders is largely accurate. High expectations, coupled with effective procedures for checking on teachers' performance, have increased teachers' accountability for pupils' progress and behaviour and are contributing to pupils' improving achievement. Training has been used effectively to improve the skills of individual teachers.
- The achievement of different groups of pupils is tracked effectively by senior leaders and, increasingly, good strategic use is being made of this information to ensure equality of opportunity.
- While the federation is still taking shape, the new arrangements are already having a significant impact on improving the school's effectiveness. The coaching skills of senior leaders in the partner school are helping to improve teaching.
- The school fosters pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development adequately. Pupils learn to empathise with the plight of many children in Victorian times. Some opportunities are, however, missed to increase pupils' understanding and regard for other faiths and cultures.
- Systems for safeguarding pupils meet current requirements, and thorough checks are made before new staff are appointed.
- The local authority has provided useful support in helping with the federation processes, in checking up regularly on the school's work and in clarifying for leaders what the school needs to do next to improve further.
- Recent funding intended for the development of physical education has not been received, but plans are well advanced to use this money to improve provision and monitor its impact on pupils' fitness and physical well-being.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Prior weaknesses in governance have been eliminated. The new federated structure is making very effective use of the skills, knowledge and expertise of governors from the partner school to drive improvement. New practices have been introduced quickly to strengthen governors' monitoring role.
- Governors are checking pupils' progress closely. They have a secure overview of strengths and weaknesses in pupils' achievement at this school. They know how and why pupil premium funding is spent in particular ways and can point out accurately where it is making a difference to outcomes for eligible pupils.
- Governors are acquiring a good understanding of the quality of teaching and know how well the arrangements are working for ensuring that pay rises and promotion for teachers are linked to their pupils' progress. There are appropriate procedures for reviewing the headteacher's effectiveness.

## 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>	112743
<b>Local authority</b>	Derby
<b>Inspection number</b>	424972

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	304
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Claire Thomas
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jane Green (Executive Headteacher)
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	15 November 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01332 571321
<b>Fax number</b>	01332 571321
<b>Email address</b>	admin@alvastonj.derby.sch.uk

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