

The Abbey Catholic Primary School

Sutton Road, Birmingham, B23 6QL

Inspection dates 12–13 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
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.

- All groups of pupils achieve well. They make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics, and reach above average standards in each by the end of Year 6.
- There has been good improvement in the last eighteen months, especially in reading and mathematics.
- Teaching is nearly always good and some is outstanding. Teachers have good relationships with pupils, and constantly promote interesting and stimulating learning across a range of subjects.
- Pupils' behaviour, attitudes and relationships with each other are good. They are enthusiastic learners, have a genuine love of reading, and work well together in small and large groups.
- The determined and decisive headteacher leads from the front. She is well supported by a good team of senior and middle leaders, and a highly motivated staff.
- School leaders have been rigorous in promoting better teaching and this has had a positive effect on pupils' learning.
- Pupils are well cared for and safe. There is a positive learning environment in the school which helps the excellent promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural education.
- The governing body has become more challenging to school leaders, and promotes school improvement strongly. Governors are meticulous in their attention to the use of pupil premium funding.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Progress in writing is not yet as rapid as that in reading and mathematics.
- Teachers' marking is inconsistent, and they give insufficient guidance to pupils on how to improve their learning.
- Pupils' presentation and setting out of their work is not always as good as it should be. This sometimes leads to untidiness and mistakes.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 27 lessons. Seven of these were carried out jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with pupils, the headteacher, members of the management team, other staff with significant management responsibilities, four governors and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors discussed teaching and pupils' progress with class teachers. Pupils' books and records of their progress were examined.
- Inspectors listened to pupils reading and discussed their reading experiences with them.
- The inspectors took account of 145 responses to Parent View, the online questionnaire for parents, two letters from parents, and two telephone calls. They talked informally to parents at the start of the school day. The inspectors also examined 34 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- A range of documentation was examined, including the school's development plan and self-evaluation, safeguarding arrangements, school policies, and records of checks made by school leaders on the quality of teaching.

Inspection team

Rodney Braithwaite, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Helen Booth

Additional Inspector

Derek Gardiner

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Two-thirds of the pupils are White British, the remainder coming from a range of other ethnic heritages. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium funding is below average. This is additional government funding provided for children in the care of the local authority, pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals in the last six years, or who are members of families in the armed forces.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.
- The school has 14 classes. There are two parallel classes in every year group from Reception to Year 6.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher have been involved on a regular basis, at the instigation of the local authority, in advising other local schools on aspects of leadership, literacy and numeracy.
- The school belongs to the Erdington consortium of schools, and the Kingsbury Schools Sports Partnership.
- The school holds a National Silver Award for its work in science.
- The school provides a popular breakfast club which is fully subscribed.
- There is a privately managed club for children after school on the school site. This is inspected separately.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further raise pupils' writing skills to match their levels in reading by:
 - leaders ensuring that a greater proportion of teaching becomes outstanding
 - developing more consistency in teachers' marking and guidance to pupils on their next steps in learning
 - establishing a clear dialogue between teachers and pupils about the quality of pupils' work, including pupils' own self-evaluations.
- Encourage pupils to take more care with the presentation of their work in all subjects, and help them to understand the importance of setting out work accurately and checking it carefully to avoid careless mistakes.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- In most years, children start in the Reception classes with skills and experiences below those typical for their age. Although they come from over twenty different pre-school backgrounds, most are very ready to learn. They make good progress in their language and communication skills and in their personal and social skills and enter Year 1 with the expected levels of development.
- Pupils continue to make good progress in all year groups. The large majority of pupils make the progress expected of them and many make more rapid progress. This has been notable in reading and in the much improved achievement in mathematics. By the end of Year 6, pupils reach above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Achievement is not yet outstanding because standards in writing are not yet as high as in the other subjects. School leaders have already taken steps to ensure that the improvement already evident in writing maintains its momentum throughout the school.
- The school is also aware that more pupils could reach above average levels by the end of Key Stage 1 than in the past. Present indications show that pupils are making more rapid progress as a result of good reading standards and their understanding of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) in the first three years in school. Over three quarters of pupils in Year 1 in the phonics check in 2013 reached the standard expected, which was above the national average.
- Achievement is strongest in the school where groups of pupils, frequently less than ten, are involved in intensive and specific learning tasks tailored especially for their needs. This was observed several times in phonics learning in Years 1 and 2, and in mathematics in Years 5 and 6.
- Achievement is good for all groups of pupils. This includes pupils from minority ethnic groups, as well as disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Pupils who speak English as an additional language achieve especially well. More-able pupils are also being challenged more consistently at higher levels, leading to improved achievement.
- Most pupils supported through the pupil premium make good progress. In the 2013 national tests and assessments at the end of Year 6, these pupils reached higher standards than similar pupils nationally in English and mathematics, but not such high levels as other pupils in the school. They were a term behind other pupils in reading and mathematics, and two terms behind in writing. Present evidence shows that these gaps have narrowed considerably in the present Year 6.
- Present evidence shows that pupils in danger of falling behind make good progress and are closing the gap in their performance compared to others. They especially benefit from additional provision before the start of the school day.
- Many pupils take great pleasure in reading. Pupils from Year 6 named a wide range of books and authors as their favourites. These included not just the most well known children's books but also books such as 'To Kill a Mockingbird', 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' and 'Sherlock Holmes'. They discuss very animatedly the merits of books against film versions, being firmly of the opinion that 'the books are better'.

- Pupils achieve well across a range of other subjects, including science and information and communication technology (ICT). The school is particularly proud of its sporting prowess and high standards of performance in physical and health education. The primary school sports funding is being used very effectively to enhance pupils' achievement.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching has improved strongly in the last eighteen months and is now consistently good throughout the school, and occasionally outstanding. Evidence of this was seen widely in lessons and pupils' work in books, and in the school's own data, records of pupils' progress, and observations of teaching and learning by senior leaders.
- Throughout the school, relationships between pupils, teachers and support assistants are good. Staff manage pupils' behaviour well. Much mutual respect is apparent, which enables pupils to be confident and secure in their many varied learning opportunities.
- The most effective learning occurs when teachers have high expectations of their pupils, set challenging tasks for pupils of all abilities, have excellent subject knowledge and provide stimulating and imaginative opportunities that stretch pupils to the full. For example, in a Year 3 lesson pupils learned how to write interesting starts to sentences, such as those promoting a holiday destination. One pupil said that he had learned that he could start a sentence with a command such as, 'Come to Amsterdam!'
- Since the last inspection teachers have developed a much greater understanding of the data showing pupils' progress and use this effectively in their planning.
- Children in the Reception classes make good progress because there is an effective balance of guidance and support by adults. Children have many opportunities to make their own learning and personal decisions. They successfully learn to focus and concentrate, and apply these skills in other sessions such as when they learn phonics.
- Teachers have had good success in raising standards and progress in reading and mathematics. New initiatives in the teaching of reading have helped many pupils to develop a real love of books.
- Teachers are working hard to increase pupils' standards and progress in writing. This was observed to be effective in Year 4 classes when pupils enthusiastically explained and gave examples of how they would use personification in poems. They talked very seriously about their understanding of similes and metaphors.
- Pupils' knowledge of how to improve their learning is not always so well developed, particularly in writing. Teachers are not consistent in the guidance they give in their marking of pupils' work, particularly as to how to improve. There is not sufficient interaction between pupils and some teachers in evaluating the work pupils are doing and their understanding of their next steps in their learning.
- Pupils' presentation of their work is inconsistent, and could sometimes be better. There is insufficient rigour in pointing out errors in pupils' written work and what the teacher expects from the pupil.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. This is evident both in lessons and around the school. Pupils are especially careful in the school buildings, which have stairways and many narrow corridors. Pupils are polite and friendly. They are always happy to talk with each other and adults about their learning and many different activities.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school. They have great pride in it and in the school's achievements locally, especially in sport. A very high percentage of parents think the school manages behaviour well, and staff report no issues with pupils' behaviour.
- The school works closely with external professionals and services, particularly 'The Big Community', in supporting pupils and families whose circumstances make them vulnerable.
- Pupils talked eagerly of the school 'takeover' day when the older ones change places with their teachers and 'manage' the school, encouraging responsibility and giving an insight into the demands of their future lives.
- Other pupils talked enthusiastically about their visit to the SS Great Britain in Bristol, and pupils in Year 4 could barely contain their excitement about their residential visit to Conover.
- Pupils cooperate well together when working in class, and also in the playground and dinner hall. Most pupils are attentive and keen to learn in their lessons. Occasionally, some show insufficient urgency in completing their work or lose concentration and consequently their learning is not as good as it should be.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. They have great confidence in the adults in the school and say they are very well looked after. One commented, 'Teachers are always telling us how to be safe especially when using equipment in PE (physical education) lessons'. One or two younger pupils think that some footballers in the playground could be more aware of others.
- Pupils have a good understanding of different types of bullying including through the internet and mobile phones. One said: 'Kids here might sometimes be mean but they don't bully and always get back as friends.'
- Attendance has been good for several years and is especially high in this school year. Since the school introduced new procedures for encouraging punctuality, notably through the well-managed breakfast club, late arrivals have fallen dramatically.

The leadership and management are good

- The determined and ambitious headteacher, well supported by the deputy headteacher, has led improvement well since the last inspection and managed staff changes and retirements effectively. As a result, the progress of most pupils has risen and teaching shows continuous improvement.
- Improvements led by senior leaders have included better attainment and progress by pupils in reading and mathematics; more relevant and well-understood methods of tracking the progress pupils make; excellent attendance and punctuality by pupils; and more effective professional development and training for staff, resulting in consistently good teaching.

- Leadership and management are not outstanding though because not enough teaching is yet outstanding so that all pupils are able to make exceptional progress. In addition, pupils are not yet making such good progress in writing as they do in reading and mathematics.
- Senior management is enhanced by the good leadership of other school leaders across all year groups who share the high aspirations of the headteacher. This is also reflected by excellent staff morale. Teachers and the many competent support assistants in the school work very well in small and large teams, and help to give the school a strong sense of purpose.
- The checking of teaching and learning is rigorous and constructive, and gives very detailed guidance on how teachers can improve their skills. Teachers comment very positively on the many training opportunities they are given to improve both their teaching and leadership skills.
- School leaders are continually broadening the range of learning opportunities across all subjects, resulting in high standards in several of them. Allied to pupils' good behaviour, these make a strong contribution to the excellent promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education.
- The school promotes equal opportunities well in a multi-ethnic society, and is fully inclusive. This results in no discrimination through gender, ethnic heritage, disability or special educational needs.
- The local authority has high regard for the school and its leaders. It has worked closely with the school in recent years, especially on the provision for mathematics, and has played a positive role in supporting school improvement.
- A considerable majority of parents and carers indicate through Parent View and the school's own survey late last year that they are happy with the education their children are receiving. They are particularly pleased with the many workshops provided for them to understand their children's learning so that they can help them.
- A small minority of parents and carers express concerns with how the school leadership deals with issues they raise, and the communication between leaders and themselves. Inspectors found a wide range of school methods of communication including regular use of the internet, excellent regular newsletters and an exceptionally informative and regularly updated website.
- School leaders have realised that with some issues it is not always possible for people to see eye-to-eye, but are endeavouring to do all they can at present and in the future, to satisfy any parental concerns. All share the common goals of providing the best possible education and care for the children in the school.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governance has improved since the last inspection. The new Chair of the Governing Body has a broad educational background and a good understanding of the school's strengths and priorities for improvement. Governors are taking an active role in challenging leaders because they have a good working knowledge of the school performance. This is coming through regular training, individual governors linking with school leaders, and frequent visits to the school. Governors set challenging performance targets for the headteacher and are developing a thorough understanding of policy guidelines for the pay progression of staff, especially relating to the quality of teaching in the school and its impact upon the achievement of pupils.
- Governors monitor pupil premium spending and have a good knowledge of the performance of these pupils compared to others in the school. They also have a good understanding of the use of the new sports funding and its impact upon the fitness and health of pupils. Governors ensure that safeguarding arrangements meet requirements and that school policies are regularly reviewed.

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	103422
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	431117

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

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	415
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mary Baines
Headteacher	Julie-Anne Tallon
Date of previous school inspection	25 June 2012
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