

The Arbours Primary Academy

St Gregory's Road, The Arbours, Northampton, NN3 3QF

Inspection dates 10–11 December 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	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.

- The headteacher, with good support from a strong senior leadership team, has succeeded in improving teaching and raising pupils' achievement.
- Pupils from all backgrounds make good progress and, as a result, standards in reading, writing and mathematics are rising rapidly.
- The high level of challenge and support provided by the Local Advisory Body has had a positive effect on teaching and achievement.
- Leaders and teachers carefully check the progress of every pupil to ensure that nobody falls behind.
- Pupils make good progress in the development of early reading skills because phonics (the sounds that letters make) are taught well.
- The academy provides a calm and orderly learning environment in which pupils behave well and feel safe.
- The academy successfully engages increasing numbers of parents and carers in their children's education.
- Good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development prepares pupils well for life in modern British democratic society.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The work that teachers set in some lessons in Key Stage 1 is not matched well enough to pupils' abilities to enable good progress to be made.
- Pupils in Year 2 are not given enough opportunity to develop their writing and numeracy skills across a wide range of subjects.
- The marking of pupils' work in Year 2 does not always provide clear guidance on how to improve.
- The assessments of children's skills at the start of Reception are insufficiently detailed to guide learning.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 15 lessons. Several lessons were observed jointly with members of the senior leadership team. Senior leaders also joined the inspectors in reviewing pupils' written work.
- The inspectors observed the breakfast club and two assemblies, and made a number of short visits to classrooms.
- Pupils' behaviour was observed at break and lunchtimes.
- The inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, staff, pupils, and a member of the academy trust.
- Groups of pupils of different ages were heard reading.
- Inspectors took account of 11 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View) and 23 responses to the staff questionnaire. Inspectors also took account of 62 responses to the school's own survey of the views of parents and carers.
- Inspectors met with some parents and carers at the start of the school day.
- Inspectors looked at the academy's policies, teachers' plans, samples of pupils' work, school improvement planning and records on behaviour and safety. Inspectors also looked at information on individual pupils' progress and teachers' performance, and records of meetings held by the Local Advisory Body.

Inspection team

Kenneth Thomas, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Margaret Dutton	Additional Inspector
Huw Evans	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an above-average sized primary school.
- The Arbours Primary Academy converted to become an academy school on January 1st 2013 and is part of the David Ross Education Trust. When its predecessor school, The Arbours Primary School, was last inspected it was judged to require special measures.
- The Local Advisory Body became the legal governing body in February 2013.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage start school in the Reception Year.
- About half of the pupils are White British. Other groups of pupils have a range of ethnic backgrounds, and just over a quarter of pupils speak English as an additional language; these proportions are above the national average.
- The pupil premium, which is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those in care, provides support for one third of the pupils in the academy. This is above the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is about one in ten. This is below the national average.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The academy provides a breakfast club that is managed by the Local Advisory Body.
- Three members of staff have temporary responsibility for leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure teaching is consistently good and better in Key Stage 1 by making sure that:
 - better use is made of assessment information to plan work that provides pupils with the right level of challenge
 - there is consistency in the use of the academy marking policy so that errors are corrected, guidance is given on how the work can be improved and that pupils have time to respond to teachers' comments.
- Raise standards in writing and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1 by providing more opportunities for pupils to apply and develop their skills in a wider range of subjects.
- Improve provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage by ensuring that more detailed assessments of children's skills on entry to Reception are used to guide the planning of learning and evaluation of children's progress.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is determined that all pupils should achieve as well as they can. With the full support of an effective leadership team, all staff and an experienced Local Advisory Body, she has set a clear agenda for improvement.
- Through rigorous checks of pupils' progress and the quality of teaching, all leaders have a clear understanding of what is going well and where improvements are needed. Successful action to tackle identified weaknesses has underpinned the academy's rapid improvement and demonstrates the academy's good capacity for continued improvement.
- Effective procedures for the management of teachers' performance ensure that teachers are held accountable for pupils' progress. They are also linked to on-going training, so enabling staff to develop their skills.
- All staff are working well together to promote equality of opportunity and eliminate any obstacles to learning and any discrimination.
- Most staff with subject and other leadership roles have clearly defined areas of responsibility. They are able to perform their roles effectively and contribute well to the drive for improvement because they are provided with suitable training and good support. There are weaknesses in the temporary arrangements for leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- The academy has responded to the removal of National Curriculum levels by trialling new assessment procedures; this is part of the process of deciding on a common approach to assessment with other academies in the Trust. However, it is too soon to measure the effectiveness of the new systems that are being trialled.
- Good use is made of pupil premium funding to provide additional staffing and resources. The wide gaps between the performance of disadvantaged pupils and others shown by the 2014 end of key stage tests are not found in the attainment of pupils presently in the academy.
- The curriculum is carefully planned to engage pupils' interest while placing an appropriate emphasis on the development of literacy and numeracy skills, particularly in Key Stage 2. It is enriched by a good range of clubs and visits. For example, residential visits for pupils in Years 5 and 6 help to broaden their experiences, raise aspirations and develop their self-confidence.
- Through assemblies, drama, music, art and the development of pupils' understanding of religious and cultural diversity, the academy promotes pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development well. Pupils gain a good understanding of fundamental British values and are prepared well to take their place in modern society.
- The academy makes good use of the additional primary sports funding to employ specialist coaches to work alongside and develop the skills of teachers and to extend the range of clubs and competitive sports available to pupils. As a result, pupils' participation in sporting activities has increased and they have a better understanding of the importance of physical activity to personal health and well-being.
- The academy's safeguarding arrangements are comprehensive and effective in ensuring the safety of pupils.
- The resources and expertise available through participation in the Academy Trust have been used very effectively to enhance provision and speed improvement.

■ The governance of the school:

- The Local Advisory Body has made a significant contribution to the academy's improvement. Members have a high level of expertise and an excellent understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the academy. They fully understand how its results compare with those of other schools and hold leaders to account for pupils' performance.
- Members are fully informed about the quality of teaching and make sure that pay and promotion are justified by the impact of teaching on pupils' progress and achievement. They are able to draw from an excellent range of professional skills that allow them to review key aspects of the academy, including the impact of pupil premium and primary sports funding on performance. Financial management is secure and members make sure that all statutory requirements with regard to safeguarding and child protection are met.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. From the time children first enter Reception they quickly learn that they are part of a caring community. They accept the academy's expectations of behaviour and show respect for their peers and adults alike.
- Pupils' good behaviour in lessons and around the academy contributes well to the calm and purposeful learning environment. Parents and carers, staff and pupils endorse inspection findings that behaviour is typically good.
- The distracting behaviour of a very small number of pupils is managed well by adults and so learning is rarely disrupted. Because most pupils conform to adults' consistently high expectations of behaviour, exclusions from the academy are rare.
- Pupils are provided with an excellent range of opportunities to contribute to the academy community, for example, as head boy and girl, house captains and prefects. They take their responsibilities seriously and contribute much to the life of the academy.
- Attendance is much improved. It is now above average because of the success of a number of actions taken by the academy. Regular attendance is celebrated and given a high profile in academy assemblies.

Safety

- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils have total confidence in the adults who look after them. Particularly good support is provided to families and pupils who may be at risk of not doing well. This enables all pupils to play a full part in the life of the academy and make progress in line with that of others.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in the academy and their parents and carers agree. Pupils have a reasonable understanding for their age about different kinds of bullying, including physical bullying, cyber-bullying and persistent name calling. While they say that there have been a few incidents of bullying in the past, they are confident that adults will deal promptly with any of their anxieties or concerns.
- The breakfast club is well supervised and provides the large number of pupils who attend with a very welcoming, friendly and nutritious start to the day.

The quality of teaching is good

- Good and better teaching ensures that all groups of pupils make good progress and achieve well.
- Teachers' effective classroom management is based on good relationships with pupils. This promotes good

attitudes to learning and makes a real contribution to pupils' progress because they listen and try their best for their teachers. This is one of the reasons why the achievement of pupils has risen rapidly since the academy was formed.

- The improvement of teaching over time is evident in the work in pupils' books and in the many colourful displays of their work around the academy. Excellent displays of pupils' topic, writing and number work make classrooms bright and stimulating environments for learning.
- In most lessons, teachers make good use of their subject knowledge and knowledge of pupils' attainment levels to plan work that is suitably demanding for all groups of pupils, including those capable of reaching higher levels.
- Teachers provide pupils with clear outlines of what they are going to learn and routinely check their understanding as the lesson develops. This enables them to correct any misconceptions or to provide more demanding tasks.
- The effective teaching of phonics underpins pupils' good progress in reading. Well-structured small-group and guided reading sessions are stimulating pupils' interest and enjoyment of reading. This is supported by the academy's scheme for rewarding pupils for reading regularly at home. As one boy, who had previously been a reluctant reader, said, 'I now love reading because it opens up a whole new world'.
- As part of the academy strategy to improve writing, pupils are given more opportunities to discuss their work and organise their thoughts before writing. This is helping to raise standards, particularly in Key Stage 2.
- Teaching is less consistent in Key Stage 1 where, in a few classes, progress slows because the work set is either too easy or too hard for most pupils; and pupils do not have enough opportunity to write at length in subjects other than English to reinforce their written skills.
- Effective support is provided for pupils who are at the early stages of learning to speak English. This means that these pupils make rapid progress in spoken English from the time they join the school.
- The teaching of mathematics has improved because pupils are given more opportunity to apply their mathematical skills to interesting real-life problems. However, pupils insufficiently apply and develop their basic numeracy skills across a wide range of subjects.
- Teachers' marking and feedback is generally effective in helping to accelerate pupils' learning and progress. Most teachers provide clear advice to pupils about how to improve their writing and number work and make sure that pupils respond to this advice. In a few instances in Key Stage 1, the expectations communicated through marking are not high enough and pupils are not required to correct errors. As a result, in such cases, the accuracy of pupils' work does not improve.
- Physical education and sport are taught well. Specialist coaches work alongside class teachers and share their specialist skills. This helps to improve teaching and increases pupils' enjoyment of physical activity.
- Pupil premium funding is used well to supplement teaching support and resources for pupils for whom the funding is intended. This action helps to make sure that disadvantaged pupils' progress is at least comparable to that of others in English and mathematics.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs benefit from the well-planned individual and small group support from teachers and teaching assistants. Together they ensure that appropriate work is provided for these pupils.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6 have risen from well-below average to

average, with more pupils reaching above average standards in all subjects. This represents good achievement when standards on entry are taken into account.

- Progress is most rapid in Years 3 to 6, where there is more consistently good teaching. As a result, in 2014, the proportions of pupils who made the expected rate of progress in reading, writing and mathematics during Key Stage 2 matched the national figures, with a higher proportion than nationally making more than expected progress.
- Although there has been a year-on-year improvement in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1, the rate of improvement has been behind that in other years, and standards at the end of Year 2 are below average. Reviews of pupils' work and academy monitoring information show that this is because of inconsistency in teaching and work not being well enough matched to pupils' differing ability levels.
- Phonics (letters and the sounds they make) are taught systematically. As a result, younger pupils sound out letters and blend them successfully to read unfamiliar words. Pupils' performance in the Year 1 reading check rose in 2014 to match the national average. Older pupils demonstrate enjoyment in reading and read regularly both for research and pleasure.
- The good progress made by the most-able pupils is reflected in the results of the 2014 end of Key Stage 2 tests and assessments. The proportions of pupils reaching the higher Level 5 rose sharply to above average in reading, and average in writing and mathematics.
- While the progress of disadvantaged pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding was generally similar to that of their classmates in 2014, it was not enough to make up for underachievement in previous years. As a result, they were about three terms behind their classmates in reading and mathematics and four terms in writing. The gaps between disadvantaged pupils and all pupils nationally were about the same. However, more rigorous checks on pupils' progress and more effective teaching are raising standards. Reliable school assessment information and scrutiny of pupils' work show there are now no significant differences in the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and others in any year group.
- Pupils from different ethnic backgrounds achieve equally well. Pupils who are at early stages of learning to speak English, particularly those who are new arrivals, generally make good progress in acquiring English. The methods and resources used help pupils to develop their vocabulary and understanding quickly.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress because their needs are well known and support from teachers and teaching assistants, either in lessons or in small withdrawal groups, is well matched to their attainment levels.
- Good use is made of the additional funding for sport to provide a much wider range of physical activities and competitive sport. As a result, there has been a rise in the number of pupils taking part in physical activities, with beneficial effects on their health and physical fitness.
- Pupils learn and achieve well in a range of other subjects, including music, art, French and history.

The early years provision

is good

- Children start in Reception with skills that are generally well below those typically seen for their age. Communication, language and social development are particularly weak.
- All staff are vigilant in keeping children safe. Children settle quickly and feel safe and secure because they receive good care and support from adults and links with parents are very good. They quickly learn and accept the academy's routines, and this lays the foundation for the good behaviour seen throughout the academy.
- Good teaching provides children with a secure start to their learning. They are provided with many

stimulating and exciting learning activities in the classroom and outside, and adults take every opportunity to develop their language and social skills. However, although children make good progress, particularly in personal and social development, a substantial minority do not reach the expected levels by the time they join Year 1.

- The school does not have detailed assessments of children’s skills across the seven areas of learning when they first enter the Reception classes. The lack of more detailed information of children’s skills on entry makes it difficult for teachers to plan to meet children’s specific learning needs.
- Leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is temporarily shared by three members of staff. This arrangement is effective in maintaining smooth day-to-day management of provision, but less so in bringing about further improvement. This has been recognised by the school and a member of the senior leadership team is about to take over responsibility for early years.

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	139061
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	447832

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	361
Appropriate authority	Local Advisory Body
Chair	Danielle Hill
Headteacher	Katrina Johnston
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01604 410242
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