

Church of the Ascension CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	103835
Local authority	Dudley
Inspection number	376976
Inspection dates	28–29 May 2012
Lead inspector	David Driscoll

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	281
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sheila Benbow
Headteacher	Richard Green
Date of previous school inspection	26 June 2007
School address	New Street Wall Heath Kingswinford DY6 9AH
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

David Driscoll

Additional Inspector

Nicola Hardman

Additional Inspector

Fiona Arnison

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed teaching in 19 lessons. A total of eight teachers were observed teaching. Inspectors held meetings with parents and carers, pupils, members of the governing body and staff. They observed the school's work, heard pupils read and looked at records of pupils' progress, safeguarding documentation, behaviour and attendance records and the results of the school's checks on the quality of teaching. Inspectors analysed the responses of 124 parents and carers to the inspection questionnaire.

Information about the school

The school is larger than most other primary schools. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. A similar below-average proportion of pupils are disabled or have special educational needs supported by school action plus or have a statement of special educational needs. The school uses the services of a local authority unit to support pupils with speech and language difficulties. Around 90% of the pupils are White British with the rest of the school population made up of small numbers of pupils from a very wide range of minority ethnic heritages. The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 were taking part in a special Shakespeare project during the inspection so were not following their normal timetable of lessons.

The school shares its site with The Church of the Ascension After School Club, which provides childcare before and after school. This is privately managed and is subject to a separate inspection.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school. It is not yet outstanding because leaders do not analyse data on pupils' progress in sufficient depth, and incidents of bullying are not recorded in enough detail.
- All groups of pupils achieve well. They make good progress in both key stages and in Reception. Attainment is above average on leaving Year 6. Almost all pupils at least reach the expected levels for their age and a very high proportion exceed them.
- Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Activities motivate pupils. They are given every encouragement to persevere and work things out for themselves. Teaching is generally well led and has improved.
- Pupils feel very safe at school. They are polite towards adults and get on well with one another. Pupils have outstanding attitudes to learning. They are exceptionally hard working and conscientious. Incidents of bullying are dealt with effectively, but parents and carers are not always told of the outcomes.
- The school has shown good improvement since the previous inspection. Its leaders accurately identify its strengths and main areas for improvement. Actions taken have proved highly successful in managing performance in areas of weakness. However, data on pupils' progress are not used well enough to identify those aspects of teaching which, if improved, could turn good teaching into outstanding practice. Nor are data used enough by the governing body to question the school's performance in detail and hold the senior leadership team to account. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs are identified accurately, but not all those supported by school action have a special educational need. The school provides outstandingly well for pupils' spiritual development. Every day, pupils experience significant moments of awe and wonder.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Analyse information on pupils' progress in greater depth in order to:
 - identify more accurately disabled pupils and those with special educational needs by July 2012
 - target the monitoring of teaching at its weaker aspects and increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by July 2013
 - ensure the governing body monitors and challenges the work of the senior leadership team more effectively by December 2012.

- With immediate effect, maintain comprehensive records of incidents of bullying that are then used to fully inform parents and carers of how such incidents have been addressed.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Parents and carers rightly hold the view that achievement is good. Children join Reception with the knowledge, skills and understanding that are expected for their age. They make good progress in all areas of learning and start Year 1 with attainment that is above average. They continue to make good progress and their attainment moves further ahead of the national average each year. By the end of Year 2, for example, around 40% of pupils are more than a year in advance of the expected level for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. By Year 6, the proportion has increased to around 60% in each subject. There are examples of very high levels of attainment in all year groups. One pupil in Year 2, for example, wrote a three-page letter to the theatre after watching 'Jungle Book'. It was precise in its spelling, punctuation and grammar, praising the performance, but gently pointing out that the 'hippo was clearly two men in a costume'. The books pupils read are diverse and demanding. One pupil in Year 4 had chosen to read *The life of Henry VIII* because, 'It is important to learn about our history.'

The attainment of all groups of pupils exceeds the national average because all make good progress, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. Those supported by school action plus or by a statement of special educational needs learn well in lessons because of the high level of individual support they receive. However, there are a number of pupils supported by school action that do not have any special educational needs at all. They are identified as such simply because parents and carers ask for them to be, when they are already making better than expected progress and their attainment is above average.

Good learning was observed in the very large majority of lessons. It was outstanding in lessons where pupils were allowed the greatest degree of independence, such as in Reception when children developed their own activities using an exceptionally wide

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range of resources, and in the Shakespeare project. Here, pupils had to produce animations of the play or choose and act out five scenes that encapsulated the story. All were totally engrossed in their tasks and demonstrated great attention to detail in order to produce their best quality work. They applied the skills they had learnt previously, with one pupil pointing out to her group 'we can use the skills we learnt about persuasive writing' when producing a poster. Such enthusiasm for learning is common across the school, but the pace of learning is slower when pupils are more constrained by, for example, having to complete worksheets.

Quality of teaching

Inspection findings that teaching is good are fully endorsed by parents, carers and pupils. Teachers expect pupils to work hard and always try their best, and the pupils respond with enthusiasm. The teaching of pupils in 'sets', where they are grouped with others of similar ability, is effective in helping teachers to provide tasks that are well matched to pupils' abilities. Pupils' progress is usually checked frequently during lessons, and tasks adapted accordingly, so that learning can be moved on at the best possible pace. Occasionally, some individuals are left unchecked for too long. Sometimes, when working on a whole-class activity, the pace is a little too quick for the least able and they resort to copying from their friends to keep up, rather than working things out for themselves. This practice does not affect the learning of the few disabled pupils and those with special educational needs because the school employs a large number of well-qualified teaching assistants who sit close to them and make sure they are doing the work on their own. The school works closely with the local authority language unit to provide very effective support for those pupils most in need of specialist support.

Teachers use their good subject knowledge to improve pupils' vocabulary and ensure that it is used in writing. Technical vocabulary, such as 'pH' and 'glucose' in science, is used accurately by pupils when analysing high-energy drinks, for example. Such activities also provide opportunities for pupils to wonder at their findings. Pupils were amazed to find out what excess acid can do in their stomachs. Pupils have developed a love of reading. Children are given every encouragement to read from the moment they join Reception. Reading diaries are used very effectively. They are checked daily and show that pupils read a great deal every day, typically 30 to 40 pages of a demanding novel by Year 4. The quality of marking varies from class to class. Some is very clear in explaining what pupils need to do to improve, while others, as pointed out by the pupils themselves, consists simply of ticks with encouraging comments.

Pupils are given plenty of opportunities to work in groups, which helps to develop their social skills. Pupils listen well to others' opinions and take account of them when reaching a consensus. They wait patiently for their peers to finish before responding in discussions.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

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Behaviour is typically good. There have been no exclusions since the previous inspection. Pupils say they very much enjoy coming to school and feel very safe there; this is a view that is strongly supported by parents and carers. This is evident in pupils' above-average attendance and consistent punctuality. They sit quietly reading as soon as they arrive and are quick to respond to their teacher's instructions to pack up and prepare for the next lesson. Pupils concentrate fully and are keen to produce the best quality work. In doing so, they demonstrate great perseverance when overcoming obstacles, such as how to modify an animation when the character appears to jump rather than move smoothly. Such occasions also demonstrate their highly effective skills in teamwork and attention to detail.

While parents and carers, like their children, express few concerns about behaviour, a small minority raise issues about the way that bullying is dealt with. Incidents of physical and verbal bullying do occur, although they are relatively few. Almost all parents and carers agree that the school works well to support the victim and that reoccurrence is rare. Nevertheless, some rightly feel that they are not well enough informed by the school about what is being done to help or punish the bully. This is because the records of such incidents are not detailed enough for their questions to be answered satisfactorily. Behaviour around school is good. In lessons, there is very little need for teachers to discipline pupils. Pupils are polite and considerate of others. They are respectful towards adults and confident in their dealings with them.

Leadership and management

Leaders have led improvement well since the last inspection. Attainment is higher, attendance has improved and weaknesses in Reception have been eliminated. Achievement and behaviour are good. The school's strong track record demonstrates its capacity to improve still further. Good arrangements for teachers' performance management ensure that teaching is improving. The monitoring of, and support for, newly qualified teachers is highly effective in quickly developing their skills. Most of the teaching across the school is of at least a good quality, and some is outstanding. The school's leaders, including the governing body, have an extensive knowledge of pupils' attainment, but the analysis of their progress is not as detailed. It is not used to measure the impact of teaching in different classes, for example, so that checks on more experienced teachers can be targeted at finding out what causes any differences in rates of progress in order that training needs can be pinpointed. The school leaders have an accurate picture of the school's effectiveness, but the governing body does not have all the information it needs to question the senior leadership team in depth. The inaccurate identification of pupils with special educational needs leads to inefficient use of management time and resources. Good attention is paid to safeguarding, which meets requirements.

The staff share the headteacher's high expectations. His knowledge of individual pupils is extensive and used to ensure that all are treated equally. Good attention is paid to ensuring that discrimination is tackled well. The school has an ethos that encourages respect for others and an interest in different faiths and cultures. The curriculum is broad and balanced, with a wide range of trips to different places of

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worship, theatres and museums. The daily assemblies are planned to provide a moment of wonder for all, such as the beauty of the pattern in a prayer mat or how the water stays in the glass when inverted with just a piece of thin paper to stop it. The curriculum provides many opportunities for pupils to practise their reading, writing, mathematical and computer skills in other subjects.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



30 May 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Church of the Ascension CofE Primary School, Kingswinford, DY6 9AH

Thank you for all the help you gave us when we visited your school. We felt very welcome because you were so polite and confident when speaking to us. You told us that you go to a good school, and we agree. You make good progress and leave with knowledge, skills and understanding that are considerably higher than the national average. You learn well in lessons because your teachers give you difficult tasks to do that they know you can succeed at if you try your very best – and that is what you do. You have excellent attitudes to your work. You concentrate hard for long periods and pay great attention to making your work as good as it can possibly be. Some of you get extra help when you do not really need it, so we have asked your headteacher to make sure that this is corrected.

You usually behave very well around school. However, there are a few instances of bullying. While you told us that these are quickly sorted out by your teachers, some of your parents and carers are not told what is being done about it. We have asked your teachers to keep more detailed records so that they can tell your parents and carers exactly what has been done. You can help though, by always being as considerate to each other as you can, so that bullying will be eliminated.

Your school is improving every year. The headteacher and other school leaders quickly spot any weaknesses and make sure they are dealt with. They have a lot of information on how much progress you are making, but do not always analyse it in enough detail to make good teaching even better. We have asked them to do this and also to use the results to make sure all the school's leaders know how well you are doing.

With all best wishes for your future

Yours sincerely

David Driscoll
Lead inspector

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