

# Aston by Sutton Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	110993
<b>Local authority</b>	Cheshire West and Chester
<b>Inspection number</b>	378209
<b>Inspection dates</b>	30–31 May 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Sarah Quinn

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	96
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Debbie Coker
<b>Headteacher</b>	C Abbott
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	13 November 2008
<b>School address</b>	Aston Lane Aston Runcorn WA7 3DB
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## Introduction

Inspection team

Sarah Quinn

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector spent six hours and 45 minutes observing direct teaching and independent, continuous learning. Four teaching staff were seen, along with teaching assistants. Meetings were held with members of the governing body, parents and carers, staff and pupils. The inspector observed the school's work and looked at lesson observation, assessment and planning records, policies, and management documentation in relation to safeguarding and health and safety. She scrutinised examples of children's 'learning journeys' in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the school tracking systems for all pupils as well as other documentation relating to pupils' achievement. The inspector heard pupils read and looked at a range of work from all classes. She took account of questionnaires completed by pupils, staff and 43 parents and carers. The inspector took account of the responses to the on-line Parent View survey in planning the inspection.

## Information about the school

This smaller-than-average-sized primary school is in a rural setting but serves pupils who live in a predominantly urban area. Classes are vertically grouped, apart from in the Reception class. There are very few pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average. The percentage from minority-ethnic groups is very low. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The school meets current floor standards which set the minimum standards expected by the government. The school holds Healthy School status and the Activemark. There have been some recent disruptions to staffing, which are now settled, and changes to the environment including a new outdoor area and school hall since the last inspection.

There is separate care provision for children, before and after school, called The Den, which receives a separate inspection and report.

**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

<b>Overall Effectiveness</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>3</b>

## Key Findings

- This is a satisfactory school. The school is not yet good because, despite the recent effective action taken by leaders and managers, the increasingly good achievement has yet to be sustained. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Children start school with skills and abilities that are in line with those expected for their age. By the end of Year 6, pupils reach broadly average levels of attainment. This represents satisfactory progress overall. However, as a direct result of the school’s focused work, an increasing proportion of pupils make good progress, which is leading to rising levels of attainment across the school.
- The improved curriculum provides memorable experiences based upon pupils’ interests. Their behaviour is good and contributes well to the community and family spirit at the school.
- A large majority of teaching observed was good, as new strategies are being implemented. However, over time, its impact on pupils’ achievement is currently satisfactory. Although teachers are increasingly skilled at making assessments of pupils’ learning, pupils do not have the opportunity to contribute to the assessment and marking process.
- The leadership of teaching is effectively driving improvement through careful and regular monitoring, work scrutiny and target-setting. Performance management ensures training for staff is focused on school priorities in relation to achievement and is bringing about improvements, particularly in the teaching of phonics and writing.
- Senior leaders ensure that improvements are continuing although not all staff fully contribute to whole-school and subject-specific monitoring and evaluation procedures and improvement planning. Revised assessment systems ensure that staff are held to account for pupils’ progress although tracking systems are sometimes unclear and targets for pupils are not always sufficiently aspirational. Subject leaders are not yet

given enough opportunity to monitor and evaluate provision and outcomes in their subjects.

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

- Enable leaders at all levels, including subject leaders, to develop the skills necessary to monitor and evaluate their areas of responsibility to improve the quality of pupils' learning by:
  - giving leaders time to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning in classes
  - ensuring leaders analyse information on pupils' performance across the school in their areas of responsibility.
- Involve senior leaders and all staff in whole-school evaluation procedures by:
  - setting clear and measurable targets for improvement, linked to achievement
  - ensuring all teachers are accountable for the achievement of these targets.
- Standardise and improve the assessment and tracking systems to enable leaders to more easily identify pupils' levels of attainment, those who are falling behind and those pupils who require a more aspirational target.
- Enable all pupils to contribute to the marking and assessment of their own work and to have more responsibility for meeting the next steps in their learning.

## Main Report

### Achievement of pupils

Children join Reception with skills and knowledge which are in line with expectations for their age. Well-managed induction procedures help children to settle quickly from a wide range of pre-school settings. Children make steady progress and enter Year 1 at the levels expected for their age, although some children make better progress in some areas of learning. For example, the school's focus upon phonics and communication enables children to make better progress in the areas of communication, language and literacy.

Since the previous inspection, progress across the school from Reception to the end of Year 6 has been inconsistent. Attainment at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 is broadly average and has been variable over time, reflecting satisfactory achievement. The headteacher and staff are improving pupils' achievement through better teaching; progress is now accelerating and attainment is rising quickly and securely. While most parents and carers believe that their children make good progress, inspection evidence indicates that it is currently satisfactory, although it is improving strongly.

Attainment in writing for high-achieving pupils is improving steadily because of the strong focus the school has given to teaching writing skills, which includes a progressive, whole-school approach, including a focus on technical aspects and extended pieces of creative writing. One pupil said, 'I prefer writing as you have a freedom that you do not get with other subjects to make the work your own'. This typifies pupils' positive attitudes towards writing across the school.

Pupils' attainment in reading by Year 2 and Year 6 is typically above average. The grouping of pupils for more systematic teaching of phonics is effective although the timing of some sessions, at the end of the day, makes it hard for some of the younger pupils to maintain their engagement. The school is addressing this issue. The inspector observed pupils making strong progress as they linked the new sounds they were learning to spelling and writing, and then finding other words which used the same sound and spelling.

Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are supported well and make improving progress across all aspects of their work so that their attainment is rising quickly. This is due to the rigorous analysis of their specific needs, the careful tracking of their achievement, small group and one-to-one teaching, close work with parents and carers and the development of learning opportunities that appeal to pupils' interests. These actions enable this group of pupils to make progress in line with, and sometimes better than, their peers, thus closing the attainment gap for some pupils.

### **Quality of teaching**

Almost all parents and carers agreed that their children are well taught and this is what the inspector saw in most lessons observed, although the impact of teaching over time on pupils' progress is no more than satisfactory. Relationships in all classes are positive, resulting in pupils who ask and answer questions confidently. Teachers share their expectations well so that pupils know what to do in lessons. Most of them use effective questioning techniques and challenge pupils to help them to make sense of their learning. Pupils' willingness to work together and their cooperation and consideration for others are strong features promoting their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There are many opportunities for pupils to use their imagination, for example, when writing to the Queen about the Diamond Jubilee or devising a creative way to cross the ocean.

Pupils are familiar with the levels at which they are working and the marking of pupils' work is regular and supportive. Marking does not always identify the most important features for pupils to improve and pupils are not always encouraged to respond to teachers' comments to enable staff to identify those who may not have understood. Pupils are not yet adept at assessing their own work and that of their peers against criteria that will enable them to identify what they need to do to improve their work, although some teachers successfully show pupils how to improve the quality of their writing through their 'up-leveling' strategy.

Following changes to the curriculum, activities are more purposeful and interesting. This term, for example, birds nesting in the outdoor area provide a rich source of stimulation and inspire pupils to write letters to the birds and create a wide variety of gifts for them. A range of visits, including residential opportunities, and visitors to the school have resulted in a curriculum that provides interesting enrichment for pupils, supports their understanding of problem solving, team working and healthy living, and extends their experiences.

The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is increasingly effective with the provision of personalised input to enable all pupils to make progress. Teaching assistants provide effective support, enabling pupils to have full access to the range of learning opportunities provided. Pupils respond well to all staff. For example, when painting portraits of the Queen they listen attentively to advice about colour mixing and different painting techniques.

## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Pupils are polite and courteous and the good behaviour, particularly of older pupils, helps create a positive climate for learning. A very large majority of parents and carers agree that behaviour is good and the inspector found that behaviour is good over time with well-embedded strategies for promoting mutual respect throughout the school. Nearly all pupils are attentive and respond quickly to changes of activity in lessons, enabling time to be used well. Pupils reported that the staff listen to any concerns raised and respond promptly and appropriately and this results in very few incidents of inappropriate behaviour or bullying in any form. Improved attendance is increasing pupils' chances of success.

Pupils demonstrate respect for difference and show thoughtful attitudes about the diverse cultures in the world around them. Pupils know how to stay safe, to recognise danger and consider risk, particularly when playing in the wooded area and on the field. 'We must not go past the trees.' one pupil explains as he guides a younger child to the correct play area. This enables pupils to feel safe and secure. Pupils have a keen understanding of right and wrong and of their rights and responsibilities within the school and local community. They talk of the importance of helping others, charity events that they have organised and they enjoy their time in school. Pupils thrive on the responsibilities given to them, for example, in acting as a playground buddy. The school promotes good attendance and punctuality very well.

## **Leadership and management**

Following the last inspection, disruptions with staffing and changes to the school environment had an adverse impact on the ability of senior leaders to monitor improvements as they had increased teaching responsibilities. The whole staff team is now stable, there are more teaching assistants to support individuals and classes, building work has improved the outdoor area for the younger children and a new school hall is nearly finished. The headteacher is now successfully bringing about steady improvements.

Effective professional development has enhanced teachers' confidence in tracking pupils' progress although the targets set for the pupils are not always sufficiently aspirational, taking into account their starting points. The different assessment systems used do not permit an easy analysis of the extent of the progress made. Performance management is effective and now involves the more regular observation of lessons, scrutiny of pupils' work and analysis of assessment data. Subject leaders are starting to develop their skills in monitoring and evaluating their areas, but have not had enough opportunity to use these skills in practice or to fully contribute to overall evaluation procedures and improvement planning. High-quality professional development, for example that related to literacy, and the commitment of all staff to improve their practice, is now leading to a greater proportion of teaching that is good. The school demonstrates a capacity for continuing improvement.

The effective engagement of parents and carers, alongside links with the local community, contributes to school improvement. The governing body is increasingly holding the school to account and carries out all its statutory responsibilities including the procedures for safeguarding, which follow recommended good practice in all respects.

The curriculum is interesting and improving. Strengths lie in the continuing development of the range of enrichment activities to develop pupils' sporting, musical and artistic talents, and promote their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school promotes

equality of opportunity effectively so that gaps in attainment between boys and girls and disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs and their peers are closing quickly and securely.

This is a school where pupils are warmly welcomed and valued. Parents and carers describe the school as a, 'hidden treasure' where their children are treated as part of a family'.



## 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](http://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.**



1 June 2012

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Aston by Sutton Primary School, Runcorn, WA7 3DB**

Thank you for making me so welcome when I inspected your school recently. I very much enjoyed meeting you and particularly appreciate how helpful you were when you spoke with me and read to me, shared your work or explained what you were learning during lessons.

You go to a satisfactory school. This means that there are some things that your school does well and others that need improvement. Your teachers are always trying to make your learning fun by thinking of more exciting ways to help you develop your reading, writing and mathematics skills. This is helping you to make even better progress in your learning. You love the trips that you go on and, in particular, the residential visits. Your behaviour is good and you told me that you feel safe. I like the way the older children support the younger children. Your school feels like a big family!

All of the adults who work with your headteacher care for you well and want to make sure you do the best that you can. They are determined to make sure that your school keeps getting better and better. To help your school to do this, I have asked your headteacher, teachers and governors to do the following things:

- give you lots of advice about your work so you know exactly what you have to do to make it better and to let you assess and mark your own work
- share the leadership and management of the school more widely with other members of staff so that they develop the skills they need to improve your learning.

You can help your school to improve further by continuing to work hard for your teachers so that you all achieve the very best that you can.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Quinn  
Lead inspector

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