

# Aston Tower Community Primary School

Upper Sutton Street, Aston, Birmingham, B6 5BE

**Inspection dates** 10–11 October 2012

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Pupils achieve well because teaching is consistently good. Some teaching is outstanding.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Their outstanding behaviour and extremely positive attitudes helps them to learn well and make good progress in lessons.
- Teachers' marking gives excellent support to pupils so that they are very clear about how well they are doing and how to improve.
- The headteacher's excellent leadership has built a whole-staff team that is focused on raising achievement and improving teaching.
- There has been outstanding improvement to pupils' achievement in writing because leaders check their progress very well and the subject is taught better with more interesting work for pupils to do.
- The governing body keeps a close eye on the school's work to make sure that the school runs smoothly for teachers to be free to teach and pupils able to learn.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Work is sometimes too easy or too hard for pupils and they are not given enough real-life problems to solve in mathematics.
- Adults in the Nursery and the Reception classes do not do enough to help children to talk about what they are doing when playing.
- The outside area for children in the Reception classes does not offer them a wide enough choice of what to do covering all areas of learning.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 30 lessons taught by 18 teachers. In addition, inspectors made a number of short visits to lessons.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at pupils' work in books and on display, past and current information about pupils' progress, and documents relating to behaviour, monitoring, school improvement planning and safeguarding.
- Inspectors held meetings with small groups of pupils, staff and representatives of the governing body.
- The inspectors talked to parents and carers informally at the start of the day and took into account the school's recent parent survey in conducting and reaching judgements. No results were shown in the online questionnaire (Parent View) because there were an insufficient number of responses.

## Inspection team

Georgina Beasley, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Edgar Hastings	Additional Inspector
Christina Page	Additional Inspector

# Full report

## Information about this school

- Aston Tower Primary School is larger than average.
- Pupils come from a number of minority ethnic backgrounds with Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Black African pupils being the largest groups.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is over twice the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action, and those supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, is above average.
- Children start in the Nursery in the September following their third birthday and move to one of two Reception classes in the September after they become four.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expected standard for pupils' attainment and progress.
- There is a breakfast club at the school managed by the governing body. This was part of this inspection and is included in this report.

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

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by ensuring that teachers consistently:
  - check early in lessons that tasks are not too difficult when pupils are expected to complete them on their own or too easy for more-able pupils
  - give pupils plenty of real-life problems to solve in mathematics and make sure they explain how they solved them
  - check that adults in the Reception classes and particularly the Nursery join in with the children's independent play to develop the children's talk.
- Develop the outside environment for children in the Reception Year to provide an effective learning space that supports all areas of learning and which gives the children the choice of whether to learn inside or outdoors.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

is good

- Children's knowledge and skills when they start in Nursery are low. Nearly all speak a language other than English. Many lack the confidence to talk. Children soon settle to the routines. By the end of the year, children play amicably with each other, sharing and taking turns with the space, equipment and toys. Many talk to adults and each other about their personal needs and experiences but most still need support with this.
- Children's progress speeds up in the Reception Year and for the last two years, most have reached the levels expected for their age in all areas of learning. Attainment over the last three years has risen steadily in Years 1 and 2 due to consistently good progress. At the end of Year 2, attainment is average in reading, writing and mathematics. A good number of pupils do better than this. This is good improvement since the previous inspection when children started Year 1 and Year 3 significantly below average.
- Children make rapid progress in their reading and writing skills. Children are confident readers and writers by the end of the Reception Year. In Years 1 and 2, pupils' good knowledge of letter sounds helps them to work out unknown words and to speed up their reading. Younger pupils who are still learning to speak English sometimes struggle to talk about the characters and what is happening in the stories when they read on their own.
- Pupils make good progress in Years 3 to 6 from their different starting points. The proportion of pupils doing better than this in reading, writing and mathematics compares favourably with national averages. The strong push to raise the proportion of pupils reaching at least expected levels in these subjects has been successful. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 read widely. Attainment in writing has improved particularly well across the school.
- Topic work helps pupils to improve their reading, writing and mathematics skills. Pupils use computers and electronic tablets confidently to support their learning and progress.
- Pupils of different abilities and from different ethnic groups achieve well due to the individual and targeted support they receive from the moment they start school. Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils learn to speak English well by the end of Year 2 to help support their learning in Years 3 to 6. Pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium catch up any learning by the end of Year 2 and achieve as well as their classmates by the time they leave for secondary school.
- The proportion of more-able pupils reaching above average levels in reading, writing and mathematics varies. Different numbers of pupils exceed expected progress in different subjects across year groups each year. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good and sometimes excellent progress to reach at least average levels.

### The quality of teaching

is good

- Teachers' high expectations and well-planned tasks have resulted in a steady increase in the proportion of pupils reaching average and above average levels across the school. Sometimes more-able pupils are given work to do that is too easy and less-able pupils find tasks too difficult

to complete without help.

- Teachers and teaching assistants ask questions that probe pupils' thinking so that they can work out how to do the task themselves. In mathematics, questions help pupils to explain their work and to investigate number problems. There are too few word problems to support their English and not enough real-life problems for them to solve.
- Teaching assistants give good support to small groups of pupils. Disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and those who just need a bit of extra help can tackle the task due to the support they receive in lessons. In Nursery and Reception, teachers and teaching assistants talk to specific groups of children, often in their home language to develop their vocabulary and understanding. They do this less often when children play on their own.
- Teachers' marking has improved significantly and gives pupils' clear guidance about how to improve their work. Teachers' use of pink and green highlighters helps pupils to see straight away what they have done well and what they could improve. Pupils make the improvements themselves and know when they have made good progress. 'I couldn't do this yesterday but I can do it today', one Year 5 pupil said after successfully using the 'chunking' method to divide a three-digit number by seven.
- The teaching of reading is good. Parents of pupils in Reception to Year 2 enjoy shared reading time with their children every week. Positive relationships build pupils' self-esteem and confidence to have a go when they find work difficult. This 'I can' attitude by teachers and pupils makes learning successful in the great majority of lessons and in well-planned tasks that pupils complete at home.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are outstanding

- Pupils have excellent attitudes to their learning in lessons. Pupils take full responsibility for improving their work, checking against what they were supposed to learn and making improvements to previous work in response to their teachers' comments.
- Pupils have an excellent outlook on life. House captains, prefects, peer mediators and older pupils set an outstanding example for younger pupils to copy. As a result, pupils manage their own behaviour and are keen to take on important leadership roles, such as acting as school and eco- councillors, at a young age. All pupils make the school's positive and supportive learning environment the strength it is today.
- Pupils' conduct is exemplary. Behaviour is consistently good in lessons and when they are outside playing. Relationships are extremely positive. Pupils are always polite and courteous when talking to adults and to each other. Pupils know to say 'please' and 'thank you' when asking for something or when someone does something for them.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school. They learn how to keep themselves safe in the local community and at home, including when using the internet to research for information. They know the school's system for checking visitors' identities and so know which adults it is safe to approach. They have a clear understanding of different forms of bullying and are confident that should any incidents occur the adults will sort them out quickly.
- Attendance has improved well since the previous inspection and is above average. The

'attendance race-track' involves pupils in tracking their own and their class's attendance. Pupils have clear ideas about the equipment they would like to buy with the money they have earned for good attendance. Classes are proud to display certificates on their doors for being the class with the best attendance.

## **The leadership and management** are good

- The headteacher's leadership to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement has been highly effective. Plans to make the school even better are crystal clear. Pay increases for staff are linked to their performance in helping pupils to do well. The school has made good progress since its last inspection and is well placed to improve further.
  - The senior leadership team, phase and subject leaders play a big part in leading improvements and checking the quality of teaching, learning and planning across the school. Regular meetings with teachers make sure everybody is clear about what is expected. The new Nursery outdoor area helps children to learn well. The outside area for children in the Reception Year is not so well-organised or easy to get to.
  - The school ensures pupils have equal opportunity to succeed. The pupil premium budget is allocated and monitored extremely well on focused individual tutoring, booster groups and specialist teaching. The governing body and the school's leadership check to ensure that this results in higher attainment for the pupils who benefit from the support.
  - The rich curriculum helps pupils to achieve well and leads to their excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Improvements to cultural development since the previous inspection have resulted in pupils' good knowledge and understanding of different religions, cultures, communities and countries. Diversity is celebrated and discrimination not tolerated. The school fosters good relations with parents and outside agencies.
  - **The governance of the school:**
    - Governors ensure that all staff follow agreed policies and procedures consistently, including those relating to safeguarding. They check that the school's finances are allocated in a way that continuously supports pupils' learning and progress.
    - Governors ask the school challenging questions when progress slips or attainment and/or attendance for different groups dips. They ensure that the breakfast club provides a healthy and positive start to the school day.
  - The local authority supports the school well through providing training for governors and staff. It recognises that the school has good capacity to improve. Nevertheless, regular conversations ensure the school has a contact point if it needs support.
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## 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>	103370
<b>Local authority</b>	Birmingham
<b>Inspection number</b>	400614

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	426
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Alison Graham
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jonathan Moore
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	20 October 2009
<b>Telephone number</b>	0121 3270339
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