

Allens Croft Primary School

Allens Croft Road, Kings Heath, Birmingham, B14 6RP

Inspection dates

20–21 March 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Pupils in Key Stage 2 do not make enough progress in English and mathematics.
- Attendance is below average. It is improving, but the rate of improvement is slow.
- Governors do not check the work of the school closely enough and do not have enough impact on the quality of teaching or pupils' achievement.
- Instability in staffing during the past two years has led to disruption in learning for many pupils in the school.
- Teachers do not make good enough use of visual aids to support learning, especially in mathematics.
- Teachers sometimes talk for too long so that pupils lose concentration.
- Occasionally, teachers' subject knowledge is not strong enough.

The school has the following strengths

- Progress in Reception and Key Stage 1 is good.
- Teaching is improving steadily. Many good and some outstanding lessons were seen during the inspection.
- The headteacher and senior leadership team have a clear idea of the weaknesses that need to be tackled and are active in improving the school.
- Staff and pupils, governors and parents recognise that senior leaders and managers are having a positive impact on pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They are keen to learn and feel safe at school.
- Teachers' enthusiasm for teaching is shown in their responsiveness to the measures taken to improve the school and their own practice.
- Marking helps children understand how to improve their work.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors visited 20 lessons or parts of lessons and looked at work in pupils' books. They listened to children read, visited an assembly and observed playtime activities.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, four members of the governing body, key staff and with pupils. A telephone call was made to a representative of the local authority.
- Documents looked at included the school's self-evaluation summary, information on pupils' progress and documents relating to safeguarding, school management and the curriculum.
- Parents' views were taken into account through the 23 responses to the Ofsted online survey (Parent View), meeting parents on the playground and the school's most recent survey of parents' views. The inspection team considered 31 staff questionnaires.

Inspection team

Mary Le Breuilly, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Terence Payne

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is slightly smaller than the average primary school.
- A higher-than-average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding provided by the government to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children in local authority care and those from service families).
- The proportion of pupils who come from minority ethnic backgrounds is high. Whilst many nationalities are represented, the largest group is of Pakistani origin.
- There are high proportions of pupils who speak English as an additional language, though very few of these are at an early stage of learning English.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is high compared to other schools, as is the proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The numbers of pupils joining and leaving the school outside normal times is higher than in the average primary school.
- Almost all the teaching staff, including the headteacher and her deputy, have been employed in the school for eighteen months or less.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching to become consistently good by:
 - making sure that teachers do not talk for too long so that pupils can get on with their work
 - making better use of visual aids, especially in mathematics
 - strengthening teachers' subject knowledge, especially in English.
- Improve attendance by taking firm action against persistent absenteeism, including legal action where appropriate.
- Make sure that governors carry out all aspects of their role to check the work of the school, particularly in relation to the impact of the pupil premium and the management of performance.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils do not make enough progress in Key Stage 2. Pupils' attainment last year was significantly below that seen nationally in both English and mathematics. Only a very small proportion of pupils gained the higher levels in these subjects.
- Pupils in Years 5 and 6 have made less progress than expected from Key Stage 1. This is because they made very little progress when they were in Years 3 and 4 and they now have to catch up. In mathematics, for example, there are gaps in pupils' knowledge that teachers are working hard to fill. These gaps have hampered pupils' progress.
- Children make a good start to school in Reception. Many start with skills below the levels typical for their age. They make good progress and the majority have average standards by the time they enter Year 1. Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 1.
- Pupils' achievement in reading is good in Key Stage 1 and in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Attainment in reading has risen over the past two years. The systematic teaching of phonics (letters and sounds) helps most pupils to learn to read quickly and accurately. Last year's phonics screening check showed that by the end of Year 1 pupils' reading was above average. Pupils told inspectors that they enjoy reading both in school and at home.
- Pupils eligible for pupil-premium funding made similar progress in English to their peers last year. By the time they leave at the end of Year 6 they are about two terms behind which is similar to the national gap. The school's information shows that the gap for these pupils is narrowing. There were no pupils from service families or children in the care of the local authority in Year 6 last year.
- Similarly, in mathematics, pupils eligible for free school meals made similar progress to their peers and were also about two terms behind. As with English, the gap in mathematics is narrowing.
- Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, including pupils of Pakistani origin, and those who speak English as an additional language make progress that is in line with the other pupils in the school and reach standards that are slightly higher. This is because the school monitors their progress and acts quickly when they fall behind.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs currently make good progress. This is because the school provides effective support and intervention to help them succeed.
- The school's progress information shows that pupils' progress has now sped up sharply, particularly in year 6, as a result of careful intervention and support. Work in books and the school's information confirms that these pupils are on track to make nationally expected levels of progress by the summer. However, because they have come from a long way behind it is unlikely that many pupils will make good progress from Key Stage 1.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching over time has not been good enough. There has been an almost complete change of teachers in the past 18 months and instability in staffing has led to disruption for many classes which has also affected progress.
- In some lessons, teachers spend too long talking so that pupils become bored and lose concentration. In one or two English lessons observed, teachers' subject knowledge was weak and pupils' errors went unnoticed or were accepted as correct. Occasionally, the teachers themselves made minor errors.
- Many of the lessons seen by inspectors were good. Teachers have quickly established good relationships with the pupils and have created a positive learning atmosphere in which many pupils are now thriving.
- Pupils say that teaching has improved in the past few terms, and the school's lesson observation records confirm this. The headteacher has made the improvement of teaching and learning the highest priority for the school, and teachers and teaching assistants have risen to the challenges she has given them. While there is still work to do to make these recent improvements consistent across the school, the enthusiasm of teachers and the great strides they have made so far do them credit.
- Pupils engage well with learning. They look up to their teachers and are keen to please them. They work well in groups and on their own, for example using word lists independently and helping each other when they get stuck.
- Teachers make good use of pictures and other resources in English, but they do not use visual aids or interactive whiteboards enough in mathematics to help pupils understand specific concepts.
- Marking in books is consistently good. It tells pupils what they need to do to improve, and in the best examples pupils routinely respond to extra work or comments that teachers write in their books.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils behave well in school. They show respect for each other and work and play well together. The headteacher has introduced a behaviour strategy that has had a real impact on improving overall behaviour in the past few terms. This strategy has helped a number of individual pupils to improve their behaviour and as a result exclusions, which rose as part of a zero-tolerance policy last academic year, are now uncommon.
- Lessons are rarely disrupted by misbehaviour. Teachers manage behaviour well and teaching assistants make a strong contribution by seeing that those pupils with specific behaviour difficulties do not prevent others from learning.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school. They are able to talk about their understanding of the different forms of bullying and they know the difference between bullying and other forms of misbehaviour. They reported that bullying and any incidents of unacceptable behaviour are infrequent and are dealt with effectively when they occur.
- Attendance is below average. The school has put a wide range of measures in place to improve

attendance, but the rate of improvement is slow. For a very small number of families, the persistent absenteeism of their children has reached a level that may warrant prosecution, but the school has not yet taken this step. Punctuality however, is very much improved.

- The school pays very good attention to equality of opportunity by keeping a close eye on the progress and well-being of every child, whatever their circumstances. Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.

The leadership and management are good

- The new headteacher, supported by senior leaders, has improved many aspects of the school, especially the behaviour, progress and attainment of pupils and the quality of teaching. All sections of the school community told inspectors that the school is getting better.
- Senior leaders know the strengths and weaknesses of the school and plan accordingly. Staff are very clear what is expected of them and they are held to account for the progress of pupils and for any responsibilities they may hold.
- Pupils' progress is tracked systematically through the collection of information and meetings are held each half term with staff to discuss teachers' assessments and to check if pupils are doing well enough.
- The headteacher, senior staff and external advisers undertake regular observations of teaching. This has helped to bring about improvements because any issues identified are followed through effectively.
- There is increasing involvement of parents in the life of the school through regular parent assemblies and through special events such as the recent 'Parent Pamper Day'. Most parents feel that their children are happy in school and that they are making progress.
- Teachers report that the management of their performance has helped them to improve. They find the process supportive and report that training is available to help them meet their targets.
- The local authority provides some effective support for this improving school, for example in making sure that assessments are accurate. It recognises the improvements that have been made recently and consequently is gradually withdrawing this support as the school's leadership capacity strengthens.
- Safeguarding requirements are met in full.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - New governors have brought important skills to the governing body that complement those of existing governors and there is now a good range of experience that is used to support the school. Governors are supportive of the school and keen to see it do well. They know about the quality of teaching and the achievement of pupils and are very pleased with the recent improvements. These have also affected the way they do their work. Governors are increasingly involved in the school and the committee structure has been changed. Whilst governance is improving as a result of the improved information that senior leaders are providing, governors are not yet giving consistent challenge to the school. They do not have a clear view of the impact of some important aspects such as the pupil premium or

the way in which the management of teachers' performance is supporting school improvement. They are not clear what the school is doing to reward good teaching or to tackle underperformance. In addition, governors make too little use of the training available to them.

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	103243
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	400598
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	201
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jean McEwan
Headteacher	Paula Weaver
Date of previous school inspection	1 December 2009
Telephone number	0121 675 2611
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