

The Avenue Infant School

The Avenue, , Wellingborough, NN8 4ET

Inspection dates 25–26 April 2013

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| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Outstanding | 1 |
| | This inspection: | Good | 2 |
| Achievement of pupils | | Good | 2 |
| Quality of teaching | | Good | 2 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | | Good | 2 |
| Leadership and management | | Good | 2 |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils achieve well because teaching is good.
- The school caters consistently well for disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and those who have English as an additional language.
- Children in Reception make good progress, particularly in developing their communication and language skills. Staff constantly promote good speaking skills and teach phonics (linking letters and sounds) well.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school because behaviour is good, pupils are friendly and everyone feels safe.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher have managed the period of staff changes effectively. They identify the right priorities for improvement by rigorously checking on teaching and pupils' progress.
- The well-trained governors offer a wealth of relevant expertise and are keen to help the school to improve. Their regular visits ensure that they know how well the school is doing.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In Reception, teachers' planning does not give equal importance to the different areas of learning. This leads to some variation in pupils' achievement by the end of Reception.
- Achievement in writing and mathematics is not yet as good as in reading. Too little teaching in these subjects is of the highest quality.
- Work in lessons is not always hard enough, particularly for the more able, and pupils do not get enough chance to develop their writing and mathematical skills in other subjects.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 13 lessons taught by six teachers. Two of these lessons were seen together with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the pupil learning council, a group of five Year 2 pupils, three governors, the headteacher and the Year 1 leader.
- A discussion took place with a representative from the local authority about the support and advice they give to the school.
- There were 23 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) by the end of the inspection. The inspectors took account of these and also sought the views of parents and carers as they arrived at school with their children.
- The inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at a range of documents, including the school’s own information on pupils’ recent and current progress, planning for school improvement, and records of governing body meetings, checks on teaching and behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Joseph Peacock, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Colin Lower

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school and there are two classes for each year group from Reception to Year 2.
- The proportions of minority ethnic pupils and those who speak English as an additional language are both well above average. Many are at the early stages of learning to speak English.
- The proportion of pupils supported by additional government funding through the pupil premium is average. In this school, it only applies to pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is well above average. The proportion who are supported at school action plus or have a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The school has had a lot of staff changes over the past two years involving four of the six class teachers

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Revise lesson planning in Reception to ensure that there is a better balance between the different areas of learning in the early year's curriculum.
- Raise standards in writing and mathematics by the time pupils transfer to the junior school by:
 - ensuring teachers have higher expectations of what pupils can do in lessons and set more challenging tasks, especially for the more-able
 - planning more opportunities for pupils to write and use their mathematics skills in topics and other subjects
 - regularly checking the quality of teaching in order to increase the proportion which is good and outstanding in literacy and numeracy lessons.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children start school with skills and understanding that are well below those typical for their age, and particularly low in communication and language. Staff encourage children to ask and respond to questions, helping to improve their English and speaking skills. All enjoyed finding 'wow' words about a tortoise, for example. Despite making good progress, their attainment does not represent a good level of development in all areas when they move into Year 1.
- Children make particularly good progress in learning letters and the sounds they make (phonics) due to the effective arrangements for the teaching of this key skill. Children grouped by ability and taught in small groups. A dog agility course with cuddly toy dogs on leads, encouraged children to use their phonic knowledge and write short sentences about the activity. Children make very good progress in developing early reading and writing skills.
- Children enjoy well-planned fun activities and work well together both indoors and out. They wait patiently for their turn on the agility course or to use the interactive whiteboard to sequence numbers. They are well supported by teaching assistants, many of whom speak children's home language.
- Pupils' good progress continues in Years 1 and 2 because teaching is effective. The proportion achieving the standards nationally expected by the end of Year 2 is average in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion achieving above average is in line with national average in reading but below in writing and mathematics. Minority ethnic pupils, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are well-supported and make good progress.
- Attainment and progress in reading is especially good because of the strong emphasis placed on learning 'phonic' skills throughout and encouraging reading in guided reading sessions. This gives pupils, including the few who speak English as an additional language, good strategies for reading and spelling words. Parents often listen to their children read, and this too is helping to raise standards. Adult reading is encouraged through initiatives such as world book night and free books being provided for parents.
- Most pupils are making good progress in writing and mathematics, but fewer than in reading are achieving above average standards. This is because learning is sometimes not as well-planned as it is in reading. More able pupils do not make as much progress as they could because they do not always have work that is hard enough. In one lesson, for example, some pupils found subtracting numbers to ten very easy as they were able to count to one hundred and subtract two digit numbers. In a geography lesson, pupils enjoyed locating countries and continents but opportunities to write were not planned.
- Disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and pupils who have English as an additional language are provided with appropriate tasks and supported closely in lessons by teaching assistants, many of whom speak the first language of pupils. This ensures that these pupils achieve as well as others.
- The school uses its additional pupil premium funding effectively to provide support staff and individual help for pupils known to be eligible. This helps to improve pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics. Most make better than expected progress in Year 1 and Year 2 and reach nationally expected standards.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is usually good but some requires improving. Typical features of effective teaching include planning which provides tasks that are challenging and are matched well to the ability of pupils and interesting practical work such as sorting food to make a healthy diet. Pupils remember exciting activities such as making an Alka Seltzer rocket.
- Staff manage behaviour consistently well, and normally deal with any incidents of inappropriate behaviour immediately and effectively.
- Where teaching requires improvement, pupils work in mixed ability groups and the same tasks for all do not provide sufficient challenge for more-able pupils. On occasions, teacher introductions are too long and not all pupils are able to maintain their concentration.
- In Reception, the current planning format with a literacy focus in the morning and a numeracy focus in the afternoon makes it difficult to check that all areas of learning are given equal emphasis. It is not clear, for example, that developing skills in mathematics or understanding the world has the same emphasis as in other areas of the curriculum.
- Teachers make frequent and accurate checks on pupils' rates of progress in reading, writing and mathematics, so any pupils who are falling behind are quickly identified and supported. Tracking progress in writing and mathematics has recently been given a higher profile in order to raise standards to the level they are in reading.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress because their individual learning needs are recognised and catered for well in teachers' lesson planning. Seven of the teaching assistants are from minority ethnic backgrounds and their language expertise ensures excellent support for pupils who speak their language and those who find understanding instructions in English difficult.
- Reading is taught well with pupils building effectively on their phonic knowledge to read accurately and to spell most simple words correctly.
- In writing and mathematics, progress is limited when teachers do not plan sufficiently challenging tasks that build on pupils' previous learning, and they do not make the most of opportunities that arise in different subjects for pupils to practise their literacy and numeracy skills. Teacher expectations of more-able pupils are generally not high enough as they find work too easy. This limits the progress that they make.
- Most use computers competently and visit the junior school to further develop these skills and become prepared well for the next stage of their education.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' good behaviour in lessons is a key feature helping all to do well. In lessons, there is usually a quiet industrious atmosphere and pupils work together well. They help one another by sharing ideas and usually trying to do their best. There have been no exclusions in the past two years.
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- All pupils spoken to say that they feel safe and that they 'make friends quickly'. They say that teachers are kind and helpful, and summed this up by saying, 'Everyone is friendly in this school'.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and attendance is in line with all other schools nationally. Lateness has been improved largely through the efforts of the family link member of staff who alerts parents to the consequences of their children being late for lessons.
- One in seven parents responded to the inspection questionnaire and the vast majority were positive in their views. They say behaviour is good and feel their children are safe in school. Those spoken to during the inspection agree that their children enjoy school because 'It is small and has a family feel' and 'the headteacher and staff are wonderful'.
- Pupils have a good understanding of different types of bullying for their age. They know that name-calling and hitting or pushing others is wrong. They say that bullying sometimes happens but they know to tell their teacher or parents as soon as it happens. School records show very few incidents of bullying or racist behaviour occur.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is 'rock solid' according to parents spoken to during the inspection. She is ably supported by the experienced deputy headteacher. The senior leadership team is being strengthened by the inclusion of the Year 1 leader. All share responsibility for helping new teachers to settle in and for checking on pupils' progress. The deputy headteacher's expertise in analysing data is invaluable in identifying how well individuals or groups of pupils are performing. This enables support to be targeted effectively on specific pupils or groups of pupils.
- Leaders check teaching in detail through termly lesson observations, and this is helping to make sure that teaching is effective in promoting good learning. These checks identified that some teachers' expectations in writing and mathematics are not consistently high enough, particularly for more able pupils. As a result, senior staff are advising all teachers, especially new ones, on how to increase their expectations of what more able pupils can do.
- The leadership of the teaching and support provided for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is good. Parents and carers are fully informed about their children's progress and involved in regular reviews with outside specialists brought in to help. Teaching assistants, who are fluent in English and other languages spoken by some pupils, give valuable support in helping pupils who speak English as an additional language to access learning.
- Leaders and the governing body make sure that teachers' pay rises are closely linked to their performance. The national Teachers' Standards are used effectively to judge the quality of teaching so secure judgements are made on how well teachers are doing their jobs.
- The local authority increased its monitoring visits during the last academic year when standards dipped. Staff changes and a lower attaining year group were identified as the main cause for the lower standards. Decisive action by senior staff has resulted in an upward trend with pupils achieving higher standards. Monitoring visits to school are being reduced but checks are still routinely made to ensure improvement is maintained.

- The curriculum contributes to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Religious studies and topics about the rainforest support effectively pupils' achievement and help their spiritual and cultural development. Links are being developed through the school council with communities in India and Africa. These, along with the many diverse cultural backgrounds of pupils and adults at the school, are giving pupils a good understanding of other cultures and faiths. Effective management of behaviour and the school's successful promotion of community support their moral and social development.
 - The school has good relations with parents and carers. Virtually all agree that staff treat every pupil equally, their children are well-looked after and that discrimination is not tolerated in any form. Most support school fund raising events such as regular bingo sessions and many enjoy the gardening club they attend with pupils. Bengali and Gujerati coffee mornings help integrate Indian parents with others and advise how all parents can help pupils at home.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors know the school well from their regular visits. These visits give them a good understanding about the quality of teaching and how well pupils are doing. All study performance data and are able to see how well different groups of pupils are doing compared to others nationally. They are beginning to focus their attention on helping the school to check how well it is tackling the areas identified as priorities for improvement. Currently there are five but these correctly focus on raising standards in writing and mathematics. All governors produce visit reports, which highlight things that are going well and areas for further improvement. The governing body reviews the performance of the headteacher and teachers each year to determine pay and promotion. Governors are well trained with most attending training events each year. Their personal expertise is used to good effect to support the work of the various committees and to challenge the school with a view to improving aspects such as health and safety and child protection. All current national requirements relating to employment and safeguarding are met. They manage financial resources well and carefully check the impact of pupil premium funding on the achievement of eligible pupils.
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What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
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| 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

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| Unique reference number | 121871 |
| Local authority | Northamptonshire |
| Inspection number | 412281 |

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

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| Type of school | Infant |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 5–7 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 180 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mark Ryan |
| Headteacher | Gillian Thomas-Hancock |
| Date of previous school inspection | 9 July 2009 |
| Telephone number | 01933 276366 |
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