

# Abbey Junior School

Barclay Road, Smethwick, B67 5LT

**Inspection dates** 8–9 May 2013

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Attainment and progress in mathematics is weaker than in other subjects.
- In some lessons, the pace of learning is not brisk enough to make sure that pupils learn effectively.
- Leaders and governors are not sufficiently rigorous in checking that their plans for action are ensuring that all pupils are making good progress.
- Teaching does not enable all pupils to make good progress in mathematics because work is not always set at the right level.
- Marking is inconsistent across the school and pupils are not always given clear guidance on how to improve their work.
- Leaders do not always check on the link between the quality of teaching and the progress which pupils are making.
- The governing body does not ask enough challenging questions of senior leaders of the progress being made by different groups of pupils.

### The school has the following strengths

- Pupils across the school make good progress in reading and writing and by the end of Year 6 their attainment is above average.
- Pupils feel safe and cared for and they enjoy coming to school. This is reflected in above average rates of attendance.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well.
- The behaviour of pupils in lessons and around the school is good.

## Information about this inspection

- This was a coordinated inspection. An inspection of Abbey Infant School took place at the same time and was carried out by another team of inspectors. A separate report has been written for Abbey Infant School. The lead inspectors from both inspection teams conducted a joint interview with representatives from the governing body.
- Inspectors observed 18 lessons taught by 12 teachers. Three of the observations were carried out jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors looked at pupils' mathematics, writing and topic books. Pupils from Year 6 were heard read.
- Consideration was given to 23 responses from parents to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and questionnaires completed by 32 members of staff.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, middle leaders, representatives from the local authority and groups of pupils.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation including the school's self-evaluation, plans for improvement, the school's data relating to the progress of pupils and reports from the local authority.

## Inspection team

David Carter, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Wayne Norrie

Her Majesty's Inspector

Enid Korn

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Abbey Junior School is in a 'hard-federation' arrangement with Abbey Infant School. Both schools share the same headteacher and operate under a single governing body.
- The school is larger than others of the same type.
- The majority of pupils are from a White British background. A minority is from a range of different ethnic minority backgrounds, the largest comprising those of Asian heritage.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium funding is similar to that which is found nationally. This is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, in the care of the local authority, or from service families.
- The proportion of disabled pupils or those with special educational needs who are supported at school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- A before- and after-school club, under the federation's governance, operates on the site of Abbey Junior School.

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

- In order to accelerate the progress and raise achievement in mathematics, ensure that the quality of teaching is securely good or better by:
  - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve so that they plan lessons which meet the needs of all pupils and learning moves forward at a brisk pace
  - improving the quality and consistency of marking, so it relates more closely to pupils' targets and provides pupils with guidance on how they can improve their work
  - providing more opportunities for pupils to apply their skills in mathematics in other subjects.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
  - ensuring that checks made on the quality of teaching focus closely on the impact on pupils' progress and provide teachers with precise guidance on how to improve their work
  - developing the role of a specialist leader in mathematics, to ensure that policies for developing pupils' skills are consistent across the school
  - making sure that the plans for improvement identify clearly the next steps and set out how these will be checked by leaders and governors
  - ensuring that school leaders provide the governing body with more information about the progress being made by different groups of pupils, to enable governors to ask more challenging questions of senior leaders.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because pupils' progress is not consistently good across the school in mathematics. Pupils start the school with broadly average skills in mathematics and by the end of Year 6, standards are average. Not enough pupils are challenged sufficiently in order to attain the higher levels.
- Many pupils have gaps in their mathematical knowledge. For instance, older pupils do not always have a secure understanding of the value of digits in numbers, which affects their ability to undertake mental calculations. Pupils have limited opportunities in which to apply their mathematical understanding to solve real-life problems in other subjects. Consequently, their skills are under-developed in this area.
- Attainment in reading significantly improved in 2012. Pupils' progress in reading is consistently good across the school. When inspectors listened to pupils read, they read fluently and said that they enjoyed reading a range of books. The school promotes reading well and pupils have many opportunities in which to read for pleasure and to gather information which helps them to learn in other subjects.
- Pupils' achievement in writing is improving and although it is inconsistent across year groups, it is good overall. Pupils are regularly encouraged to improve the quality of their writing; for instance in a Year 5 lesson, pupils were challenged to find adjectives which would make their story more interesting for the reader.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and who are supported at school action benefit from the additional help provided by teaching assistants. A special educational needs co-ordinator and a shadow coordinator manage the support and oversee the progress of these pupils across the federation. They successfully ensure that pupils' progress is tracked carefully and additional support is provided rapidly if any of these pupils begin to fall behind. As a result, most are making good progress. Pupils who are supported at school action, however, tend to make average progress, as the work is not always pitched at the right level.
- Pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding receive small group support from both in and beyond the classroom. Pupils who are eligible for support reached similar standards to their peers last year because they made similar rates of progress during their time in the school. Currently, the gap between the attainment of these pupils and other pupils is closing; however, this is wider in mathematics than in reading and writing.
- There is no difference between the achievement of pupils from different ethnic groups currently in the school because the school is committed to promoting equality of opportunity.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because it has not been consistent enough to ensure that pupils achieve well over time. Expectations of what pupils can achieve have not been high enough. Inspectors observed too many lessons where the pace of learning was not brisk enough, as teachers talked for too long, limiting the time which pupils had to focus on their own work.
- The teaching of mathematics is weaker than in English. Teachers are not always using the

information they have about pupils to plan lessons which are pitched at the right level. As a result, more-able pupils in particular are not challenged enough.

- The quality of marking is inconsistent across the school, particularly in mathematics. It does not always provide clear guidance to pupils on how they can improve their work linked to their targets. Pupils are not always provided with enough time in which to respond to the advice that is given.
- Where teaching is most effective, teachers constantly check on how well pupils are doing through asking them questions, as well as deepening their understanding through additional explanations. For example, in a Year 6 lesson, pupils were challenged to consider how they would write an interesting story which resolved a dilemma in the plot.
- Pupils across the school are provided with many opportunities in which to work together as well as on their own. They are being taught how to judge for themselves how well they are learning. However, in some lessons, pupils were not entirely sure what they were expected to learn, as teachers did not make this clear.

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

- Pupils' attitude to learning is good. They are motivated, keen to learn and co-operate well with each other during lessons. They enjoy learning and all the school has to offer, as shown by the high take-up rates of those attending the before-and-after school clubs.
- Pupils behave well during the school day. They are polite, well-mannered and courteous. Parents, staff and pupils themselves are positive about behaviour in school.
- Pupils feel safe in school because of the caring environment. Pupils are aware of different types of bullying, but say that it is rare in school. If bullying does occur, pupils say that it is always sorted out quickly.
- The school has good systems in place to check on pupils' behaviour and to manage behaviour when required. The school has been successful in managing the behaviour of a few pupils who have challenging behaviour.
- The school works well with parents and carers to encourage regular attendance and it is above average.

### **The leadership and management requires improvement**

- Leadership and management require improvement because actions have not ensured that teaching and achievement are good over time. Teaching is observed regularly, but this does not sharply focus on the difference it is making to the quality of pupils' learning and the progress which they are making. Teachers are not always provided with clear steps to help them improve.
- Leaders have drawn up plans for improvement which are based on the correct priorities; however, these do not give clear steps on how improvements will be made. The plans do not contain milestones or sharp enough criteria based on pupils' progress to see if they are being successful. As a result, it is difficult for leaders and governors to make sure that actions are making a difference.

- Although the federation partnership has helped to improve the quality of teaching and raise achievement in English, this has not yet improved provision in mathematics. Leaders have identified the need to put in place a single approach to the teaching of calculation across both schools. This has already raised standards at Abbey Infant School, but it has yet to impact on the junior school. Leaders recognise the need to ensure that a specialist leader oversees development in mathematics in order to ensure that policies are being implemented across the school.
- The executive headteacher has played an important role in organising the distribution of leadership responsibilities across the school. As a result, year group leaders are beginning to take responsibility for their part of the school and feel empowered to make decisions. The year group teams are beginning to work well, being reflective about their work, for example, through recording and sharing the impact of their work in 'leadership logs'.
- The curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well through assemblies and its links with other schools and organisations. It is particularly strong in the opportunities which are provided for sport, music and the performing arts. For instance, many pupils are encouraged to learn an instrument. Pupils were keen to tell inspectors about the school's sporting success. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to use their mathematical skills in other subjects.
- The school involves parents in their child's learning through inviting them into school on a regular basis. Parents have received information about the new calculation policy so they can support their child at home. Parent View and the school's own surveys shows that the vast majority of parents are supportive of the school.
- The local authority has provided good support to the federation, particularly through working with a 'core group' of governors to ensure that school improvements are on track. Initially, the local authority support has helped to secure improvements at Abbey Infant School. However, the focus of support is now targeted on ensuring that pupils at Abbey Junior School have similar levels of achievement.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Due to the federation agreement, the governing body oversee the work of both schools in the partnership. The governing body has prioritised its work to focus on improvements in the infant school, due to the inadequate overall effectiveness grade received by the infant school at the time of its last inspection. Consequently, inspection evidence shows that the infant school has improved more strongly than the junior school.
  - Governors have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas to improve and how well the school's standards compare with those of other schools nationally. They visit the school frequently and gather information for themselves about how well the school is performing. Although governors have a clear understanding of the standards pupils achieve in each year group, their understanding of the progress made by different year groups and other groups of pupils is less well developed. This is because school leaders do not provide them with enough information to ask challenging questions about these groups. Governors know what the school is doing to reward good teaching and how it tackles underperformance. The governing body is aware of how pupil premium funding is used and agrees with leaders how it will be spent. This funding is targeted with increasing effectiveness; however, governors recognise that the achievement of these pupils in mathematics should be improved still further. The governing body meets its statutory requirements, including for safeguarding.

## 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>	103929
<b>Local authority</b>	Sandwell
<b>Inspection number</b>	402809

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	353
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Patrick Redmond
<b>Headteacher</b>	Pauline Smart (Executive Headteacher)
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	21 February 2008
<b>Telephone number</b>	0121 4292700
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