

Arden Primary School

Baker Street, Sparkhill, Birmingham, B11 4SF

Inspection dates 2–3 July 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- The headteacher, senior leaders and governors have successfully driven the school forward since the last inspection. As a result, the quality of teaching is now consistently at least good and is frequently outstanding.
- Pupils of all abilities make rapid and sustained progress throughout the school. Pupils are making progress in reading, writing and mathematics at a much faster rate than usually seen.
- Pupils do very well in a wide range of subjects, including physical education and information and communication technology.
- Strong teamwork contributes to the consistently high-quality teaching and learning that pupils receive both in and outside the classroom.
- Pupils supported by the pupil premium do very well, but they have not yet caught up with their classmates, notably in English.
- Teachers plan and teach lessons in a way that helps the pupils to build rapidly on what they already know. Teachers make lessons very interesting and, consequently, pupils want to learn.
- Senior leaders train and support the teachers and teaching assistants very effectively.
- Pupils behave extremely well and show great respect for the views and beliefs of others.
- The headteacher and senior leaders are highly ambitious for the school, and take every opportunity to work with others to continually improve the quality of teaching.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 35 lessons. In addition, they visited some classes to look at how pupils who need extra help are supported, and also to listen to pupils read.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils in lessons, at lunchtimes, and at play times.
- The inspection team scrutinised a range of documents, including the school’s plans for improvement and policies about keeping pupils safe. The team also examined the work in some pupils’ books and a range of data about their progress.
- The inspectors held discussions with pupils, teaching assistants, teachers, the senior leadership team, the special educational needs coordinator, and the Chair of the Governing Body. The lead inspector also met a representative of the local authority.
- There were too few responses to the Parent View website to draw any conclusions. The inspectors took account of comments made by parents to whom they spoke during the inspection and at the start of the school day. Inspectors analysed the results of a survey of parents’ views carried out by the school. They also analysed comments made by past and present pupils posted on the school website.
- The inspectors considered the views expressed in the 30 questionnaires returned by members of staff.

Inspection team

Christopher Parker, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Anne McAvan

Additional Inspector

Elizabeth Needham

Additional Inspector

Doreen Davenport

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is much larger than most primary schools.
- All of the pupils are from minority ethnic groups. Seven out of 10 pupils are from Pakistani heritage and one in 10 pupils is from a Bangladeshi background. Nine out of 10 speak English as an additional language, which is very high in comparison with the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs at school action (pupils who need extra support with their learning) is broadly average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus, or with a statement of special educational needs, is also broadly in line with the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium is almost double the national average. This is additional funding for particular groups of pupils. In this school, it is for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Take further steps to close the gap in attainment in English between those pupils supported by the pupil premium and their classmates, by sharply targeting the available funds to the maximum benefit of these pupils.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- The pupils make rapid progress. When they start school in the Nursery and Reception classes, most of the children have not developed the range of skills that are expected for children of this age. Many of the children are at a very early stage of speaking English and their general communication skills have not developed to the expected level.
- Children make considerable progress in the Nursery and Reception classes. They gain confidence in their use of language, and their early reading skills develop particularly well because the sounds that letters make are taught very effectively. They develop a wide range of skills through both activities that the teachers lead and ones which they choose themselves.
- Attainment at the end of Year 2 has risen steadily over recent years. In 2008, pupils left Year 2 a year behind the national average. In 2012, following year-on-year improvement, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics reached the national average. The work in the pupils' books shows they are continuing to make rapid and sustained progress.
- The progress that pupils make in Key Stage 2 has increased considerably and raised attainment from well below average in the past to broadly average in 2012. Observations of pupils' work in lessons, scrutiny of their work, and analysis of the comprehensive information collected by the teachers shows that these levels of attainment are being sustained.
- Rates of progress between the start of Year 3 and the end of Year 6 have increased markedly in recent years. In 2012, the proportion of pupils making more progress than is expected was high, being double the national average in reading and writing. Pupils continue to make rapid progress in lessons throughout Key Stage 2.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs do very well. They make rapid progress because of the excellent individual and small-group teaching they receive. They are set a wide range of interesting work that is carefully planned to help them to grasp new learning. There is strong emphasis on both reading and writing.
- As a result of additional teaching paid for by the pupil premium funding in 2011/12, pupils who qualified for this support made slightly faster progress than the rapid progress by all pupils. The gap between these pupils and their peers closed to three months in mathematics, but stood at about six months in English. The gap is not closing as fast as it could be in English.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- The teachers have high expectations of pupils of all abilities. Some lessons inspire the pupils to think differently. In a lesson based on the poem *Don't Be Scared* by Carol Ann Duffy, Year 6 pupils prepared to write their own poems using metaphors and imagery. They described their new school as 'a chocolate box' containing 'a plethora of mouth-watering delights'.
- The high level of consistency in the quality of teaching results in pupils making rapid and sustained progress. The teachers plan and teach lessons that build rapidly on what pupils already know and are able to do. They question pupils to make sure that they fully understand.

As a result, pupils do exceptionally well across a wide range of subjects.

- In lessons, teachers and teaching assistants constantly check pupils' progress against the 'steps to success' they set out for each lesson. They quickly intervene when a pupil does not fully understand and, where necessary, explain again in greater detail. Teaching assistants are trained well and are quick to provide extra support.
- A specialist sports coach ensures that pupils' games skills develop well and that they have good opportunities to exercise. Similarly, specialist teaching of information and communication technology provides pupils with expert guidance that extends their skills into areas such as making animations.
- The teaching of the sounds that letters make is very effective in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1. Where older pupils need additional help with early reading, staff with expertise in this area are used to work with individuals and small groups. Eye-catching displays and readily available resources are used to promote regular reading of a wide range of books.
- The pupil premium is used to pay for additional teaching, not only for those who need extra help but also for those who are capable of reaching the highest standards. For example, a group of Year 5 pupils were set demanding tasks introducing them to algebraic expressions during a lesson where they made rapid progress as a result of knowledgeable teaching.
- Marking is always of high quality and feedback from teachers very constructive. 'Cloud' marking, which provides pupils with clear guidance on how to improve their work, ensures that they make rapid gains in developing both literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils say they find this very helpful, and they respond very thoughtfully to their teacher's comments.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils have extremely positive attitudes to learning. They concentrate fully on their work and show considerable perseverance. Pupils say they thoroughly enjoy learning, and the older ones frequently comment on how much they like writing because their teachers make it so interesting. This is evident in their work, which shows the rapid progress that they make.
- Both teaching and non-teaching staff say that pupils behave well. In lessons, pupils listen carefully and settle very quickly to the tasks that the teachers set them. They contribute with increasing confidence in lessons. This was clear in a video clip of Year 4 pupils taken during drama activities to prepare for writing about 'a dilemma'.
- Behaviour around the school and in the playground is excellent. Pupils say that bullying is rare. They know about the forms that bullying can take, and know how to stay safe when using the internet. Pupils say that they feel safe at school, and the school's survey of parents' views indicates that they agree.
- Attendance is average. It has improved considerably because the school constantly reminds pupils and their parents of the importance of full attendance. The attendance officer encourages pupils to attend every day by running clubs and activities especially for pupils who do not have good attendance records.
- For most pupils, the wide range of opportunities that the school offers is sufficient reason to

attend regularly. Pupils value the homework they are given, and strive to improve their basic number skills through weekly 'number club' activities. Pupils provide feedback on the school through its website. One comment, typical of many, states: 'Every day, in the morning, I'm excited to come to school...'

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher and senior leaders share a highly successful drive to accelerate pupils' progress. They have succeeded in raising standards in recent years and have sharply targeted plans to bring further improvement. These are closely monitored by both leaders and governors to make sure they have an impact.
 - Leaders are very ambitious. The work of four assistant headteachers who develop and check the quality of teaching throughout the school is a key factor in establishing consistently high-quality teaching. Senior leaders train the teachers, most of whom started their careers at the school, so as to convey to them an understanding of the high expectations placed upon them.
 - The headteacher's involvement in 'the teaching school' and other local collaborations has considerable benefits for the school. Staff not only receive extensive training, but also themselves deliver training for others, and have frequent opportunities to share good practice with colleagues in other schools.
 - The pupils study a wide range of topics and themes, which are all used very effectively to apply and extend their literacy and numeracy skills. Much of the resulting work is carefully presented and of high quality; for example, in Year 6, pupils' history study of the Second World War. A wide range of pupils' artwork is prominently displayed throughout the school.
 - The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements. Discussions with parents indicate that they are very pleased with the school, particularly the way it meets the needs of individuals, and that they recognise it has 'got even better' in recent years. Events, such as workshops about teaching mathematics, are well attended.
 - The local authority monitors the school's performance by analysing it at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. Its links with the school are maintained through its collaborations with other schools. The local authority sees the school as very well placed to offer support to others.
 - The pupil premium is being used in a number of ways to overcome the difficulties that some pupils face. As well as being provided with extra teaching, pupils benefit from activities that increase their confidence. However, the funds are not used solely for this group. Nevertheless, the impact on pupils' progress is marked, continuously checked and carefully analysed.
- **The governance of the school:**
- There has been a marked improvement since the last inspection. The training they have received in key areas of the school's work has enabled them to hold it to account for its performance because, for example, they are able to interpret the data that the school makes available to them. By visiting lessons and talking to both pupils and teachers, the governors keep abreast of the quality of teaching and how well the school is doing. Governors are instrumental in guiding the school towards its goals. The appointment of a business manager not only allows them to keep a keen eye on the financial situation but also allows the headteacher to focus sharply on teaching and learning. Governors are increasingly promoting

'out-of-hours' learning for pupils, and adult education for parents and the wider community. Governors carry out the headteacher's performance review and check that performance management is in place for all staff; they are also fully involved in decisions to reward teachers who have performed particularly well by ensuring their pupils make rapid progress and also by making a valuable contribution to the subjects they lead throughout the school.

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	103324
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	412123

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	648
Appropriate authority	The Governing Body
Chair	Z Ahmed
Headteacher	Tony Lacey
Date of previous school inspection	10 December 2008
Telephone number	0121 675 7702
Fax number	0121 675 0643
Email address	enquiry@arden.bham.sch.uk

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