

Dovecotes Primary School

Ryefield, Dovecotes Estate, Wolverhampton, WV8 1TX

Inspection dates 17–18 September 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	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.

- Children start in Nursery with levels of skills and understanding that are well below those typically expected for their age. In 2013, standards at the end of year 6 were average. This represents good progress.
- Pupils who are at risk of falling behind in their learning are identified quickly and are provided with a range of effective support.
- Senior leaders and governors are acutely aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses and they have been relentless in their work to improve the school.
- The school provides a caring and supportive atmosphere where pupils say that they feel safe.
- Teachers and teaching assistants have received effective support and training from the senior leaders and this has improved the quality of teaching. Teaching is now good with some that is outstanding.
- Exceptionally positive relationships between staff and pupils are a strong feature of this school. Pupils feel safe, behave well and are respectful and polite.
- Attendance and punctuality have improved markedly over the last two years.
- The headteacher is a driving force for improvement. This has resulted in pupils making improved progress and achieving higher standards and has created very good links with the parents and the local community.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In a minority of mathematics lessons, more able pupils are not provided with questions and activities that encourage them to extend their thinking and work independently.
- There are insufficient opportunities for teachers whose practice is good to learn from teaching in the school which is outstanding.
- The system for collecting information about pupils' progress is too complicated and this makes it difficult for senior leaders and governors to be able to check accurately the impact of their actions.
- Pupils are not always given the opportunity to act on the teachers' marking.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 21 lessons, two of which were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspectors heard a sample of pupils read, looked at past and present work in books, observed morning playtime and lunchtime activities and attended an assembly.
- Meetings were held with the senior and middle leaders, groups of pupils, four members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- There were insufficient responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) for them to be visible; however, inspectors analysed the responses made to a recent school survey and talked to parents and carers before and after school. The inspectors also considered 13 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- The inspection team looked at a number of documents including: the school’s self-evaluation and planning for improvement; records of the quality of teaching; information on pupils’ current progress and achievement; records relating to punctuation and attendance; and the school’s safeguarding information.

Inspection team

Rachel Howie, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

David Edwards

Additional Inspector

Jane Moore

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is an average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported by pupil premium funding (additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those in local authority care) is more than double the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is well above average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action, school action plus and those with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- In order to sustain and improve pupils' progress, increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by:
 - ensuring that all teachers and teaching assistants consistently provide pupils, especially those who are more able, with questions and activities that encourage them to think for themselves and work independently, particularly in mathematics
 - ensuring the school's clear marking policy is applied by all teachers in all subjects and that pupils are given sufficient time to respond to the teacher's marking
 - sharing more widely the outstanding practice that is already in the school.
- Increase the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that senior leaders and governors can check the impact of their actions by presenting information on pupils' progress more clearly and concisely.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils achieve well. Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and knowledge that are well below the levels typical for their age. In 2013, pupils left the school achieving standards in reading, writing and mathematics which were in line with those found nationally. This represents good progress and is a much-improved picture compared with previous years. Throughout the school pupils are now progressing more quickly than previously has been the case.
- A large proportion of pupils who join Nursery start with social, language and numeracy development well below that typically expected for their age. The staff in the Nursery and Reception classes are skilled at recognising children's needs and provide a wide range of stimulating activities which engage children well and promote independence. As a result, children make good progress.
- In 2012, at the end of Year 2, the standards achieved by pupils in reading, writing and mathematics dipped. The school responded quickly and effectively. In 2013, the proportion of pupils at the expected level for their age was slightly above average in reading and mathematics.
- Pupils make particularly good progress in reading in Key Stage 1. This is a result of effective teaching and a sharp focus on the development of phonics (the sounds that letters make). More Year 1 pupils than the national average reached the expected standard in the most recent phonics screening check.
- The school promotes the enjoyment of reading well and as a result, pupils have a very positive attitude to reading and talk about the books and authors enthusiastically.
- Throughout the school, teachers are ensuring that pupils have a range of opportunities to develop their language skills and vocabulary. Pupils regularly take part in partner and group work. This is developing pupils' speaking and listening skills effectively.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics has improved sharply and is now good. This is partly as a result of changes made to the organisation of the daily mathematics lessons and the increased opportunities for pupils to use their mathematical skills in other subjects like science. For example, the introduction of the 'Daily 10' has rapidly improved pupils' knowledge of number facts and times tables throughout the school.
- Pupils now have more opportunities to practise their writing skills in other subjects through the introduction of 'irresistible learning'. This, combined with improved teaching and activities that are closely matched to pupils' abilities, is helping pupils to make good progress.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs receive effective and focused support. This is ensuring that they typically make at least as good progress as other pupils in the school. The special needs co-ordinator checks frequently on their progress and works effectively alongside teachers, teaching assistants and outside agencies to ensure work is closely matched to their needs.
- Funding received by the school for pupils entitled to the pupil premium is used very effectively to enhance the level of support for these pupils. As a result, pupils eligible for this funding, make

progress at the same rate, and in some cases better than, their peers. The gap between the achievement of these pupils and that of their classmates is reducing rapidly.

- The school successfully fosters a positive attitude towards learning. As a result pupils are keen to do their best and improve and this is helping them to make good progress.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching has improved across the school and is now good and sometimes outstanding. Well-planned training has improved teachers' and teaching assistants' subject knowledge, skills and confidence, particularly in phonics, writing and mathematics. Staff have benefitted from watching footage of themselves and others teaching. This has helped them to identify strengths and areas for improvement in their own practice.
- The activities that are organised for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are planned carefully, taking into account the children's previous experience and levels of skill. Teaching in Reception is good, and there is some outstanding practice in the Nursery.
- Teachers' planning includes detailed information about how each group of pupils will achieve well in each lesson. This leads to activities being well matched to the needs of most pupils.
- Teachers often set pupils different tasks to match their ability from the beginning of the lesson. More able pupils get off to a brisk start but occasionally, in mathematics lessons, the activities set for these pupils are not sufficiently challenging to enable them to think for themselves or to deepen their knowledge.
- Strong working partnerships between teachers and support staff are evident across the school. Skilled teaching assistants provide good support for all groups of pupils, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. This has been particularly effective in ensuring pupils at risk of falling behind in their learning are helped to catch up quickly.
- 'Big Write' lessons happen once each week and involve pupils writing at length in a calm, music-filled environment. These are having a very positive impact on pupils' attitudes and the standards of their writing and presentation. All the pupils that the inspectors spoke to were enthusiastic about these lessons and could talk about what they need to do to improve their writing. One boy summed it up by saying 'I didn't realise writing could be so much fun!'
- The school has a clear marking and feedback policy. Teachers mark work in mathematics and English books conscientiously, providing pupils with detailed feedback on how to improve their work. However, pupils are not consistently given time to respond to these comments in order to improve their work. Pupils' work in other subjects is not marked as effectively.
- Pupils know where to find prompts, reminders and resources to help them as they are working, most notably in mathematics and writing. This helps pupils to be productive and independent, and to take a pride in their work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Parents, staff and pupils all agree that school effectively ensures that pupils behave well. Pupils have good manners around school and in lessons and are keen to learn. They are happy to help adults and one another, and willingly offer praise to other pupils.

- Pupils have a well-developed sense of right and wrong and when adults need to issue a warning, pupils adjust their behaviour quickly. Behaviour logs provided by the school show that any incidents are recorded carefully and the number of instances of poor behaviour has fallen considerably over the last two years. A small number of pupils said that playtimes can sometimes be boisterous but confirmed that adults would always intervene if play becomes too rough.
- The staff provide exceptional pastoral care to make sure that pupils are safe and happy in school. Nearly all pupils who spoke to inspectors said that what they like most about school is the adults. One said, 'Whatever happens, there's always a grown-up who will help you out.' Relationships between staff and pupils are outstanding.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the different forms that bullying can take and they report any such incidents are extremely rare.
- Pupils feel safe in school and have a good understanding about keeping themselves safe in a range of situations for example when using the Internet or crossing the road.
- Attendance has improved quickly over the last two years and is now in line with the national average for primary schools. The attendance officer has been persistent in ensuring that families recognise the importance of getting to school on time and of regular attendance. As a result punctuality, which was an area for improvement in the last inspection, has improved significantly. The introduction of a walking bus has been particularly successful in getting pupils to school on time.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher's determination that every pupil should have an equal chance of being successful is at the heart of school improvement. She leads the school purposefully and is well supported by senior leaders, staff and governors.
- The school's development plan is detailed and clear. It accurately identifies the key areas for improvement and sharply focuses on improving pupils' achievement.
- The headteacher has developed a detailed system for tracking the progress of pupils. Senior leaders and teachers have a thorough knowledge of how well each pupil is progressing. However, overviews of this information are not presented clearly enough for senior leaders and governors to check the impact of their actions on different groups of pupils or classes.
- The mathematics and English subject leaders are outstanding role models in their own teaching. They have been very effective in supporting teachers who are new to the school and those whose teaching required improvement. As a result, the quality of teaching across the school is now good. Subject leaders in other areas are not yet fully involved in checking the quality of teaching and the progress of pupils in the area for which they are responsible.
- The 'irresistible learning' curriculum, introduced recently, has been successful in exciting and engaging pupils and promoting good progress. The deputy headteacher leads this area extremely effectively, ensuring that opportunities for pupils to apply writing and mathematical skills are included in every topic and through different subjects, such as science. Family learning opportunities are also included to encourage families to work together on a homework project.

- Pupils are very involved in a wide range of activities that include musical events; competitive and non-competitive sports; fundraising activities and a large number of special events linked to their 'irresistible learning'. These make a significant contribution to pupils' wellbeing and enjoyment of school.
- The school has a number of links with schools in other countries, for example in India, Italy and Hong Kong. These, combined with the opportunities to learn a number of languages and finding out about religious festivals and celebrations, make a strong contribution to pupils' cultural development.
- A wide range of opportunities are provided to encourage parents to be involved in the work of the school. For example, 'workshop Wednesdays' provide parents with an opportunity to spend a morning in their child's class to find out more about how their child learns. Parents report that the school is very welcoming and that the headteacher is very visible and approachable. The school works very closely with other services and with the adjoining Children's Centre.
- In order to make the best use of the extra sport funding (provided by the government to all primary schools) the senior leaders have developed a comprehensive plan, which they anticipate will have a positive impact on pupils' wellbeing. This includes purchasing some new equipment and providing teachers with a range of training.
- The local authority has provided a good range of support and considers the school to be well led and managed.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- School governors bring a wide range of relevant skills and experience to the governing body. They provide a balance of support and challenge for the school. They have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement and have an excellent understanding of the context of the school, the community it serves and the needs of the pupils. Governors know about the quality of teaching and understand how the school's performance compares with that of other schools nationally and are able to ask probing questions about this. However, the information they receive about specific groups and classes of pupils is too complicated. This means that it is not easy for them to assess which actions have been successful. The governing body make sure that performance management systems are in place and that the performance of all staff is linked to pay progression and management responsibilities. They make visits to the school to check for themselves on how well the school is performing. Governors are diligent in ensuring that the arrangements for keeping pupils safe are met.

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	104350
Local authority	Wolverhampton
Inspection number	428822

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	255
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sarah Underhill
Headteacher	Gill Beddow
Date of previous school inspection	26 March 2012
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