

Princethorpe Infant School

Princethorpe Road, Weoley Castle, Birmingham, B29 5QB

Inspection dates 13–14 November 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.

- The headteacher leads the school well and provides a clear sense of direction. Senior staff have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and successfully lead improvements in teaching and pupils' achievement.
- Teaching is good. Teachers and teaching assistants work closely together to engage pupils' interest. This helps the pupils to enjoy their learning and achieve their targets.
- Pupils' achievement is good. They reach broadly average standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the time they leave the school. This represents good progress in relation to their starting points in the Nursery.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to reading and have opportunities to read widely and often.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs and those who are at risk of falling behind achieve well because support is tailored to their individual needs.
- The school provides excellent pastoral support. Relationships between staff, pupils and their families are very positive and as a result, pupils feel very safe and well cared for.
- Behaviour is good and pupils get on very well with each other. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strong feature of the school.
- Governors have a good understanding of the school and provide a balance of support and challenge to senior leaders.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Lessons do not include enough opportunities for pupils to apply all the skills they are taught through practical learning activities and to carry out their own investigations.
- Boys sometimes do not learn as well as girls because lessons do not keep them actively engaged for enough of the time.
- The school improvement plan does not provide detailed enough steps for judging the effectiveness of actions taken to improve the curriculum.
- Teaching staff are not as confident in supporting pupils' learning in mathematics as they are in reading and writing.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 12 lessons, of which four were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Discussions with parents took place at the beginning of the school day. No responses to the online questionnaire Parent View were available before the end of the inspection. Inspectors took into account the school's survey of parents' views. The results of the 21 completed staff questionnaires were also considered.
- Meetings were held with the senior staff, groups of pupils and three members of the governing body. A meeting was also held with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors heard a sample of pupils read, looked at past and present work in books, observed playtime and lunchtime activities and attended an assembly.
- The inspection team analysed information about pupils' progress, attendance and behaviour and reviewed a range of documents including: the school's self-evaluation and planning for improvement; records of the quality of teaching; information on the pupils' current progress and achievement; and the school's safeguarding information.

Inspection team

Peter Kerr, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Judith Tulloch

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is an average-sized infant school.
- A high proportion of pupils are supported by the pupil premium (the additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those in local authority care).
- The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language are broadly average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action plus, and those with a statement of special educational needs is above average. The proportion of pupils supported through school action is broadly average.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Move teaching towards outstanding by making sure that:
 - pupils spend as much time as possible in lessons applying the skills they learn in a variety of ways suited to both boys and girls
 - pupils have plenty of opportunities to follow-up their own ideas and engage in creative activities and open-ended investigations
 - teaching staff talk with and listen to pupils as they work to gauge the level of their understanding and change tasks where appropriate to provide more support or more challenge
 - teachers and teaching assistants have the training and support they need to become as confident in supporting pupils' learning in mathematics as they are in English.
- Make the planning of the curriculum more cohesive and purposeful by:
 - being clear about the impact different initiatives will have on the quality of pupils' learning and their rates of progress
 - regularly checking that initiatives are having the desired effect.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- By the end of Year 2, pupils attain standards in reading, writing and mathematics that are in line with those found nationally for their age. In writing, attainment was below average from 2010 to 2012, but accelerated progress since the previous inspection has brought it to above average in the 2013 teacher assessments.
- Good progress has continued into the current school year. Pupils are on track to at least maintain average standards in 2014. Pupils learn particularly well in writing because they write about things that interest them and receive well-targeted support to improve their spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- Pupils are making good progress in reading. They learn phonics (the sounds letters make) systematically from the Nursery onwards and use these skills to read unfamiliar words. They use the library regularly to borrow and read a range of books, both fiction and non-fiction.
- The work in the children's books shows that they learn the basics of mathematics well, but that their learning is not as varied and challenging as it is in reading and writing.
- Pupils from all ethnic backgrounds achieve equally well. Those who speak English as an additional language participate fully in all classroom activities and make similar progress to other pupils.
- Boys reach lower standards than girls by the end of Year 2, in common with the national trend. The school has taken effective action in response to this, including the provision of library and reading books likely to be of special interest to boys. One parent commented on how this had made her son much more interested in reading and Year 1 boys were observed enthusiastically discussing topic books in the library.
- Effective and focused support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs ensures that they make similar progress to other pupils in the school. The school offers particularly effective support to pupils with vision and hearing impairments. Some parents expressed their great appreciation of this to inspectors.
- Pupils eligible for the pupil premium are about half a term behind their classmates, which is a much narrower gap than the two-term gap found nationally. This reflects the well-targeted use of pupil-premium funding by the school to support learning for these pupils, for example through the employment of a pastoral manager and focused intervention groups.

The quality of teaching is good

- In the best lessons teachers fully involve the pupils with their learning. They ask questions to ascertain what the pupils know and think and use this information to make sure activities are suitably challenging.
- Teachers plan frequent opportunities for pupils to practise their reading and writing skills in topic work. Activities such as drama and role play also help the pupils to extend their vocabulary and gain confidence with spoken language. Fewer opportunities are provided for applying

mathematical skills.

- More-able pupils are given more demanding tasks in mathematics, but supporting staff do not always have the skills to get the most out of the pupils by getting them to talk about their thinking and explore and investigate.
- Teachers' marking is consistent and helps pupils to improve their work. The pupils have their individual targets in their books and know the next steps needed in their learning.
- Initiatives introduced since the last inspection have enriched the pupils' learning experiences, as reflected in the good displays of pupils' work around the school, where pupils' writing is celebrated prominently. It is less clear how effective the measures have been in improving their mathematical thinking.
- No outstanding lessons were observed during the inspection, but external monitoring confirms the school's own evaluation that some teaching is outstanding. Leaders know that a small amount of teaching needs improving and are taking appropriate steps to ensure this happens. In these less effective lessons teachers over-direct learning, limiting the opportunities for pupils to express their thoughts and explore ideas.
- Teaching in the Nursery and Reception classes is good. It follows the recently modified Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum, giving pupils plenty of opportunities to learn through play indoors and outside. Good records are kept of the children's progress and staff teach basic skills in English, communication and mathematics well.
- Teaching strongly supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The Regular lessons in the 'Forest School' area, for example, help the pupils to develop good independence and collaborate together and to become aware of the wonders of nature.
- Teaching assistants make an important contribution to learning throughout the school. The special needs coordinator works effectively with teachers, teaching assistants and outside agencies to make sure work is closely matched to the learning needs of these pupils.
- The timetable is not always helpful in promoting active learning. Sometimes consecutive lessons require the pupils to sit still listening to the teacher for too long, causing some, particularly boys, to lose concentration. Senior leaders are considering how best to adapt the format of lessons to involve pupils more in active independent learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour is consistently good. Pupils are good natured, polite and friendly. They talk confidently to adults and help one another readily.
- Behaviour in lessons is usually good because pupils are keen to learn. Occasionally, they become distracted and lose concentration but usually return to the task after a reminder from the teacher.
- Pupils behave well around the school and in the playground. They play happily together in the various areas of the playground and enjoy the organised play and sports activities that are provided by outside agencies.

- In the Nursery and Reception classes, children develop good levels of independence and soon learn to co-operate with others. This is particularly evident in the Forest School, where Reception children spent long periods of time playing independently in groups, making things and acting out their ideas.
- The children feel very safe in school and know they can approach any member of staff if they have a problem. No concerns were raised by children or parents about bullying and children say that teachers would stop it if it did happen.
- Pupils of all ethnic groups get on well together and they learn about different cultural traditions, mainly through stories. Isolated race-related name calling has been recorded. This has been dealt with quickly and effectively with the involvement of the families of the children concerned.
- The pupils are very supportive of pupils and adults who are different in any way. For example, they joined with teachers in signing words to the song they sang in order to communicate with pupils and staff with impaired hearing
- Reflection is strongly encouraged. Pupils offered thoughtful responses, for example, in an assembly about rights and responsibilities.
- Pupils enjoy taking on responsibilities. For examples, Year 2 pupils were observed acting as librarians, confidently using the scanner to record the books their classmates were borrowing on the computer.
- Attendance has improved and is currently in line with the average for primary schools. This is as a result of the encouragement and support the school has provided to families to make sure their children attend whenever possible.
- Punctuality and regular attendance remains an issue with a small number of families, but the school is very persistent in its efforts to promote full attendance for all pupils.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher sets a very welcoming and dynamic tone for the school. She is strongly supported by the overwhelming majority of staff. As one teacher put it, there is '...a real desire to improve as a school. This ethos has been passed down from the headteacher throughout the school'.
- The school has a very positive partnership with parents. A number of parents approached inspectors on the first morning of the inspection to commend the school for its atmosphere and to say how their children enjoyed all that the school had to offer.
- The improvement of teaching and of the quality of pupils' learning and their progress has very high priority in the school. The school development plan is based on accurate analyses of data on pupil performance and clearly focused on how to raise standards. Improvements in writing reflect its effectiveness.
- The school has spent the school sport premium wisely. A sports coach is employed to work directly with pupils at play times and to support lunch-time supervisory staff and teaching staff, with developing the pupils' sports skills.

- The school has also introduced a number of measures aimed at improving the curriculum. It is not clear how the school intends to judge the effect of these on the quality of pupils' learning because clear steps for measuring their success have not yet been set.
- Arrangements for the staff professional development are good. Newly qualified and recently arrived teachers say they feel very well supported. Good in-service training has greatly improved the competence of staff in teaching reading and writing. They feel less confident in supporting pupils' progress in mathematics and senior leaders have identified this as a priority for further training.
- Arrangements for keeping pupils safe meet current requirements. The staff work very effectively with outside agencies to ensure that pupils who are most vulnerable receive a high level of support.
- The school strongly promotes equality of opportunity. Its provision for pupils who are disabled or who have specific learning difficulties is outstanding. A number of parents expressed their great appreciation of this aspect of the school.
- The school uses community volunteers and outside agencies to good effect, for example to hear readers and develop sports skills.
- The local authority provides 'light touch' support for the school because it accurately recognises the quality of education provided.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are well informed about key aspects of the schools' work. They provide a good balance of support and challenge to the senior leaders.
 - The governors' understanding of how well the school is performing in relation to schools nationally has improved because of their increased ability to use the available data on pupils' achievement.
 - Governors gain an independent view on the quality of the school's teaching and its impact on the pupils' personal development and learning through feedback on regular visits, especially by the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body.
 - The governing body makes sure that performance management systems are in place and that the performance of staff is linked to the pay they receive and management responsibilities. Governors know what the school is doing to tackle any underperformance.
 - The budget is managed effectively and governors are aware of how the pupil premium is being spent to support eligible pupils' progress and the impact on their attainment

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	103245
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	426927

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	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	216
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Stuart Bentley
Headteacher	Sarah Jane Wright
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2012
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