

Ashton Vale Primary School

Avebury Road, Bristol, BS3 2QG,

Inspection dates 20–21 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
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

- Inconsistencies in pupils' progress through the school have weakened the levels of attainment reached at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2.
- More effective actions by leaders and managers have not been operating long enough to bring levels of attainment to match those found nationally and secure pupils' good achievement over time.
- Mathematics lacks the strong leadership and emphasis needed to raise standards and expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- The quality of teaching has varied over time and has not been consistently effective across the school to secure pupils' good achievement.
- At times in Key Stage 1, the levels of pupils' reading books are not matched closely enough to pupils' reading skills and this constrains the development of their phonic understanding (letter sounds.)
- Occasionally, including in phonics and mathematics lessons, teachers do not respond quickly enough to pupils' responses by adapting their teaching to match learning more precisely to pupils' abilities and ensure that all pupils make equally good progress.

The school has the following strengths

- Senior staff and members of the governing body, including some new this term, share a more focused commitment to raising standards. Several initiatives, including a strengthened partnership with parents and carers, are bringing improvement as a result.
- Sustained good teaching in Years 5 and 6 and developments in teaching across the school are now improving pupils' progress. This is especially the case in writing and, increasingly this year, for those with more ability.
- Pupils experience a stimulating variety of activities that enrich their health and well-being and promote their wider interests.
- Pupils behave well and enjoy school, and attendance is much improved this term.
- Staff provide excellent care and diligently safeguard pupils' welfare. Pupils with special educational needs and disabilities are well supported; the few with significantly complex needs benefit from exemplary individual guidance so that they too grow in confidence.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors visited 16 lessons and were accompanied by the headteacher and assistant headteacher during some of these observations.
- The inspectors observed morning playtime and lunch breaks and also attended two assemblies.
- Meetings were held with members of the school council and many other pupils were spoken to during lessons and breaktimes. The inspectors also met with governors and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors held meetings with school staff, including senior leaders.
- The inspectors received 16 staff questionnaires. The inspectors also spoke informally with a number of parents as they brought or collected their children to and from school and the lead inspector also held a telephone discussion with a parent.
- The inspectors also took account of 32 parents' responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning and undertaking the inspection.
- The inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a number of documents, including the school's own information on pupils' progress, planning and leaders' checks on the quality of teaching, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Alex Baxter, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Janet Dinsmore

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is a broadly average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils attending the school are of White British heritage.
- The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and of pupils who have English as an additional language are below average.
- A small group of Travellers attend the school when resident on the local site.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is above the national average. The proportion supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (which provides additional funding for children in local authority care, children from service families and those known to be eligible for free school meals) is below that found nationally.
- The children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are accommodated in a designated Reception class.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The school is part of the South West Bristol Co-operative Learning Trust.
- At the time of the inspection, a significant proportion of the teaching staff were new to the school or to their areas of responsibility.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good and better teaching over time by:
 - making sure that checks of pupils' understanding and skills are used more readily to adapt teaching so that it consistently matches learning activities and support to pupils' differing abilities.
- Raise pupils' achievements, especially in reading and mathematics by:
 - ensuring that pupils' reading books match their reading skills, particularly to support the development of pupils' phonic understanding, throughout Key Stage 1
 - strengthening leaders' effectiveness, including in mathematics, in order to raise expectations of pupils' work and attainment, including sharing the good practice evident in parts of the school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Over time, pupils' progress has varied due to inconsistency in the quality of teaching. Continuing below average national test results at the end of Years 2 and 6 since the previous inspection show that the progress of some pupils has not increased quickly enough. Despite some improvement over the past year and increasingly this term in writing, this results in overall achievement that still requires improvement.
- Children generally enter the Reception class with the range of skills expected for their age, but often communication and language skills are more variable and are less well developed. Raised teachers' expectations and the pupils' positive attitudes to learning and strengthened ability to work collaboratively are helping pupils to quicken their progress through the school.
- Although pupils' progress still varies at times, it is improving, especially in writing, and an increasing proportion of pupils, especially those with more ability, are now making good and better progress. For example, in response to excellent teaching, pupils in Year 1 wrote some well-presented and well-constructed sentences, reflecting their good understanding of adjectives and similes.
- Observations of pupils during lessons, especially in Years 5 and 6, now demonstrate a much higher proportion of pupils with higher than expected skills for their age, solving mathematical problems and evident too in their imaginatively considered forest poems.
- Strengthened teaching of phonics (letter sounds) brought improved and above average performance in the Year 1 phonic screening check in 2013. Pupils' reading skills continue to develop more quickly now across the school, reflecting a more focused drive to improve pupils' reading, which has included enlisting parents' help in encouraging reading at home. However, inconsistency in teaching phonics at times in some other years and gaps in pupils' previous learning still constrain progress and weaken skills such as spelling, especially for some average and lower attaining pupils.
- Sensitive adult support enables disabled pupils and those with special educational needs to make good gains in their personal development and self-confidence. Pupils joining from other schools, including some who have English as an additional language and a few from Traveller families, are integrated well and make similar progress to their peers further, reflecting the school's dependable commitment to equal opportunity.
- The small numbers of pupils in receipt of pupil premium support (half of whom also have special educational needs) are also benefitting from earlier additional adult support and, as other pupils, are now making better progress than in the past, equally in reading, writing and mathematics.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching has not been consistently good enough across the school over time. Whilst improving now, some new staff and strengthened procedures have not been in place long enough to fully secure good progress for all groups of pupils.
- Occasionally, average- or lower-attaining pupils are not fully included in discussions and their progress slows. For example, in some phonic and mathematics lessons, teachers do not use questions well enough to check how much these pupils understand, by probing more deeply and encouraging them to explain their ideas.
- While all children benefit from the good support they receive when interacting with an adult, for example in the 'Mad Kitchen' in the Reception outdoor learning area, on a few occasions their more independent activity lacks the adult checking needed to keep children learning well.
- Increasingly in recent terms, the full range of pupils, especially more able pupils, are being challenged better, either by carefully planned independent work and/or additional adult support,

and this is quickening their progress, as, for example in Year 3, where the teacher checked the pupils' knowledge by instructing them, with their eyes closed, to raise a hand to indicate their answers to various questions and then followed this up with further explanations at the level needed to lift their understanding.

- Consistently good teaching in Years 5 and 6 is also underpinned by teachers' high expectations that pupils should learn by thinking for themselves and by sharing ideas with each other. Across the school, teachers' consistently supportive management of pupils' behaviour, marking of pupils' work and especially the use of 'Personal Best Writing Books' are also improving pupils' involvement in learning and progress.
- Strengths in teaching disabled pupils and those with special educational needs continue, especially for those with very complex needs. Earlier identification and support of pupils' needs, for example by providing additional adult assistance for those pupils entitled to pupil premium funding or for those who speak English as an additional language, is also well organised and is increasingly quickening pupils' progress. However, when the quality of whole-class teaching varies, as it does on occasion, so the pace of learning for some of these pupils is also constrained.
- Teachers provide a good range of practical learning opportunities, including information and communication technology and sport, which strongly promote pupils' interests and healthy living.
- At times, although pupils are encouraged to choose some of their own books and derive pleasure from doing so, some choices are beyond their reading ability and, without closer adult support, are not as effective in advancing pupils' skills. The school is now tackling this and is encouraging more parents to support their child's learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour is good and pupils have clear awareness of right and wrong, which the school encourages through its caring atmosphere. Most parents' responses on 'Parent View' and all those who spoke to an inspector agreed that pupils behave well in response to caring staff.
- School records and governors and staff views also showed that good behaviour continues to be a consistent feature of the school. Occasionally, though, when their interest in lessons is not stimulated enough, a few pupils become distracted and need adult support.
- Pupils were keen to say how much pride they had in their school and how they enjoy coming each day, 'to meet our friends and to take part in lots of interesting activities like the Christmas plays and residential visits.'
- Pupils say they feel safe in school, that there is no bullying and that if anyone does misbehave, there are always caring adults available to whom they can turn for support and guidance. They know about the different forms of bullying and readily talk about how teachers and their parents show them how to protect themselves from cyber bullying when using computers.
- Pupils are polite and helpful and often show great consideration of each other, readily 'going out of their way' to help those new to the school.
- They have a wide range of responsibilities to exercise, which they do eagerly and well. For example, pupils on the school council take their role seriously and talk proudly of their involvement in helping to make a new playground in a local field.
- Attendance is broadly average, improving especially this term and reflecting strengthened links with parents and the headteacher's increased rigour in promoting good attendance and punctuality.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because actions to secure consistently good teaching and at least average levels of attainment have not been focused enough over time. For example, improvement in pupils' writing skills is not yet matched by equal success in raising reading and mathematical skills evenly across the school.
 - Teachers' performance is now checked by leaders, including governors, with increasing effectiveness, with evaluations of teachers' salaries linked with improving teaching and pupils' achievement. Such increased rigour in recent terms has strengthened teaching and the school's partnership with parents and improved pupils' attendance and punctuality.
 - Sharing of expertise across the trust is also quickening the pace of improvement, but the process of developing new staff and leadership roles, for example of mathematics, still continues and has not yet secured pupils' good achievement.
 - Effective use of the pupil premium is steadily closing the achievement gap with other pupils. Similar focused support of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs also meets their needs and demonstrates the school's capacity to improve in the future.
 - Exemplary care for pupils with very complex needs further shows the diligence of staff in safeguarding pupils' welfare. In addition, better progress by more able pupils also illustrates determined promotion of equal opportunity and freedom from discrimination.
 - The headteacher's strong lead in promoting pupils' good health by encouraging their participation in plenty of sport and healthy eating choices continues, for example during lunch breaks and at 'Breakfast Club'. Senior staff provide a full range of physical activity, including specialist coaching from Bristol Rugby, and ensure that additional funding for physical education raises their health and wellbeing even further.
 - The school strongly promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through an extensive range of enriching activities. These include visits to the local community, displays of cultures and topic studies such as 'The Tudors' and 'Ancient Greece'.
 - The local authority provides effective training opportunities for governors and offers further assistance, but the 'light touch support' provided since the previous inspection has not sufficiently strengthened school performance.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors play a key role in sustaining strengths in promoting pupils' health and welfare, collaborating across the trust and developing close links with parents. In recent times, refreshed by new members, governors have become better at holding staff leaders to account and supporting the drive for improvement. Governors undertake training, for example in safe recruitment of staff, to extend their skills and improve their ability to question senior staff about provision and its impact on pupils' achievements. Governors visit the school regularly and share information about the school's performance within its various committees. For example, managing significant changes in staff has strengthened their ability to ensure that staff performance and teachers' pay awards are linked with pupils' progress. Governors check that additional funds, for example for disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and pupils who have English as an additional language, are used effectively. As a result, this is an inclusive school where pupils take equal part in a wide range of activities. Governors also make sure that pupils in receipt of the pupil premium receive the support needed to help them achieve as well as other pupils.
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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	1108913
Local authority	Bristol
Inspection number	433179

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	202
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jenny Smith
Headteacher	Vivienne Champeney
Date of previous school inspection	10–11 May 2011
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