

Almeley Primary School

Almeley, Hereford, HR3 6LH

Inspection dates 30–31 January 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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 join the school with skills which are generally below those typical for their age. By the end of Year 6, standards are above average overall in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils of all abilities make good progress in every class and every teaching group because they receive good-quality teaching.
- Reading skills are taught effectively.
- Much thought goes into the way pupils are divided into groups for teaching. This ensures that pupils receive work which is at the right level for their stage of development.
- Teaching assistants make an important contribution to pupils' learning.
- Varied teaching activities and the friendly environment contribute well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupils' positive attitudes and good behaviour in lessons contribute well to their learning. Pupils feel safe and well cared for.
- The headteacher provides good leadership which has had a positive impact on improving the quality of teaching throughout the school. As a result, pupils' achievement is improving, particularly at Key Stage 1.
- The governing body fulfils its function well. It has provided excellent support to the headteacher in managing changes over the last year.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although above average, standards in writing are not as high as in reading and mathematics. The written work of older pupils is often inaccurate, and teachers are not always rigorous enough in pointing out to pupils where they have made mistakes.
- The teaching of some subjects, such as geography and history, lacks breadth. These subjects are not used sufficiently to help pupils to consolidate their writing skills.
- Leadership roles and responsibilities have not been delegated sufficiently in the past. Action has already been taken to rectify this, but has yet to have an impact.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited 19 different teaching sessions for varying lengths of time. Almost all of the observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher.
- He held discussions with the headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body and another governor, all of the teaching staff, most of the teaching assistants and various groups of pupils. He also had a telephone conversation with the school's improvement adviser.
- He looked at a range of documentary evidence, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, data regarding pupils' progress, and documents relating to safeguarding, special educational needs, pupils' behaviour, attendance and the management of teachers' performance.
- He scrutinised pupils' written work in a range of subjects and listened to pupils reading.
- He also took into account the views of 22 parents recorded on Parent View (Ofsted's online survey of parents' views) and the views of 10 members of staff who completed Ofsted's staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Graham Sims, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school. Pupils are taught in three mixed-age classes.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who are supported through school action is average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds and speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium (at this school, additional government funding for pupils who are, or have been, eligible for free school meals) is broadly average. The number of pupils involved, however, is small.
- The headteacher plays a leading role in the school's informal federation with three other primary schools and the local secondary school. All five schools have their own governing bodies, but they carry out joint activities.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress for pupils at the end of Year 6.
- There have been major staff changes since the last inspection. The number of pupils on roll has fallen. The current headteacher joined the school in April 2012. At the time of the inspection, one of the three class teachers had been in post for two terms and another for less than a month.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality and accuracy of pupils' writing, especially in Key Stage 2, by:
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to develop and consolidate their writing skills in a range of subjects
 - ensuring that teachers are more rigorous in pointing out to pupils where their writing needs improvement.
- Ensure that there is sufficient breadth and depth to the teaching of subjects such as history and geography.
- Ensure that staff who have delegated responsibilities for leading improvement initiatives or coordinating subjects have sufficient opportunity to carry out their roles and that they have a positive impact as leaders.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

Good

- Over half of the children who join the Reception Year have not attended pre-school or nursery before they start school. Their skills, knowledge and understanding are generally below the levels typical for their age, particularly in communication and language and in their personal, social and emotional development. The youngest children enjoy being part of the school and learn quickly from the older pupils as they try to follow their examples. By the time they start Year 1, their skills are much closer to the levels expected for their age.
- Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 have been below average for a number of years, but have improved markedly over the last 12 months as a result of changes implemented by the headteacher, supportive action from the governing body and improvements in the quality of teaching. Almost all pupils are on track to achieve the levels expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics, and some pupils are already achieving higher levels.
- Although standards fluctuate because of the small number of pupils in each year group, they have typically been above average at the end of Key Stage 2 for the last few years. This represents good progress from pupils' different starting points. Standards in writing have fluctuated more, and are generally lower, than in reading and mathematics.
- The school has taken decisive and effective steps to improve pupils' understanding of phonics (the sounds that letters make). Teachers and teaching assistants have received training in the teaching of phonics, and pupils now have a short session every day in which they are taught in small groups divided according to their level of understanding. In 2012, just over half of the pupils reached the expected standard in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1. In 2013, almost every pupil did so.
- The impact of the teaching of phonics is seen in the quality of pupils' writing. Younger pupils apply their understanding of phonics well when attempting to spell new words. The writing of older pupils, who have not had such a systematic grounding, is frequently inaccurate. Nevertheless, pupils have a good understanding of how to enliven their writing through the use of descriptive vocabulary and by altering the structure of their sentences.
- Pupils' mathematical skills are developed systematically and well, although pupils sometimes struggle to apply their mathematical skills in different or unfamiliar contexts.
- The school has altered the structure of its classes and the way pupils are divided into groups for the teaching of English and mathematics. This has been particularly beneficial for disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and the more-able pupils as they are taught in groups where the work is matched well to their differing needs. Pupils who have particular needs or who are falling behind are given effective additional support. Pupils in Year 2 are no longer taught with those in the Reception and Year 1 and have benefited from the challenge of being taught with older pupils. As a result, all groups of pupils are making good progress.
- Pupil premium funding is used well to provide individual or small-group support for those for whom the funding is intended. Some of the funding is also used to enable these pupils to access additional activities so that they are not disadvantaged. It is not possible to compare the performance of these pupils with others without identifying individuals. However, the school's systems keep a careful track of pupils' progress, and data over the last few terms show that, even though a few may be behind their peers, all are making good progress from their different starting points.

The quality of teaching**Good**

- Pupils receive good-quality teaching in all three classes and when they are taught in smaller groups. The school's evaluations of the quality of teaching indicate that there has been good improvement over the last four terms.
- The school's system for tracking pupils' progress is used effectively to place pupils in the most appropriate teaching group and to move them from one group to another when the time is right. Frequent meetings with the headteacher to discuss pupils' progress have helped staff to develop a good awareness of how well their pupils are doing and to adjust their teaching to help them improve their progress.
- Teachers structure their lessons well. They provide helpful instruction to the whole class and to groups of pupils so that pupils understand what they are required to do. In most lessons, teachers help pupils to consolidate their learning by asking pertinent questions and reviewing what has been learnt.
- The teaching contributes well to pupils' moral and social development. Pupils have plenty of opportunity to work on their own and to work collaboratively with their classmates. They learn how to respect others and to listen attentively when others are speaking. They also develop good social skills when working as a group. Good classroom management helps children in the Early Years Foundation Stage to make good progress with their personal, social and emotional development. Thoughtful discussions in religious education, the opportunity for all pupils to be involved in 'Forest School' activities, and good provision for music contribute well to their spiritual and cultural development.
- Pupils' positive attitudes to learning and the excellent relationships between staff and pupils result in an environment which is conducive to learning. Pupils listen attentively, settle down to their individual or group tasks quickly, try hard to succeed, and persevere, even when they find the work difficult.
- Teaching assistants have developed good skills over the last year. They contribute well to the learning of all pupils, but particularly to the learning of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. A few pupils receive one-to-one support from them, but with an emphasis on helping these pupils to become gradually more independent.
- The quality of teachers' marking has improved over the last two terms and now provides clearer guidance to pupils on what they need to improve. Teachers often provide, or draw up in discussion with pupils, helpful guidelines which the pupils use to evaluate how successful they have been. However, they have yet to develop fully pupils' ability to be self-critical, particularly with regard to the accuracy of their writing, and are not always rigorous enough in pointing out to pupils where they have made mistakes.

The behaviour and safety of pupils**Good**

- Pupils say that they enjoy school. They particularly like the increased range of sporting opportunities which have become available to them over the last year. They have confidence in the teachers and other staff whom they perceive to be helpful and caring.
- The behaviour of pupils is good. They behave well in lessons and have positive attitudes to learning. They are keen to participate and respond eagerly to teachers' questions. They work

hard in lessons and concentrate well on the tasks they are given.

- Pupils behave well around the school. They are courteous and polite, and they show consideration for others. Older pupils provide good role models as they take on responsibility for looking after children in the Reception Year. The friendship bonds established help the youngest children to settle quickly and happily into school life.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. The small size of the school enables staff to know all pupils well and helps to generate a family atmosphere where relationships are warm and friendly. The small number of pupils who have difficulty managing their behaviour or developing socially receive sensitive and caring support which leads to improvement.
- Pupils say that they feel safe and, although they occasionally fall out with each other, they are insistent that there is no bullying because good relationships are quickly restored and any unkind behaviour is not repeated. The school's behaviour log shows that rare incidents are taken seriously and are dealt with sensitively and well.
- Tighter procedures and higher expectations have resulted in a significant improvement in attendance, which has risen from below average in 2012 to above average in 2013.

The leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher has provided good leadership since his arrival less than two years ago. Firm action has led to improvements in the quality of teaching, better provision for the teaching of phonics and a different class structure which has resulted in improved progress for pupils at Key Stage 1. Staff feel the changes have been positive and have given a new sense of direction to the school. The great majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire have positive views of the school and the way it is providing for their children.
- Arrangements for managing the performance of teachers have become more rigorous. Salary increases are linked to how well teachers achieve their performance targets and how well pupils achieve. Arrangements are now also in place for managing the performance of teaching assistants.
- Leadership roles and responsibilities have not been delegated sufficiently in the past. The headteacher has begun to delegate responsibilities for leading new initiatives and for coordinating different subjects, although this is still an area for development as two of the school's three class teachers have not been in the school long enough to have had an impact in their areas of responsibility. Staff are keen, however, to make a greater contribution to the leadership of the school than has been the case in the past.
- The school shows its commitment to reducing inequalities through its rigorous approach to checking on the progress of each pupil, through the way it allocates pupils to teaching groups and through the good support provided to individual pupils by teaching assistants.
- There are good systems for ensuring the safety of pupils. The governing body has improved the security of the school site. All adults working or volunteering in the school are checked for their suitability to work with children. The school collaborates with other agencies to assess needs, and to provide support for vulnerable pupils.
- The school makes good use of additional funding. Pupil premium funding is having a good impact on the progress of pupils for whom it is intended. Primary sport funding is being used to

bring specialists into school to teach the pupils, to enhance the skills of staff and to provide additional resources. As a result, pupils achieve well in sporting activities which have a positive impact on their health and physical well-being.

- The school manages its curriculum well. Improvements have been made over the last year and there is a good understanding of what needs to be developed. Activities, such as 'Forest Schools', trips and residential visits for older pupils, engage and motivate pupils. Music features strongly. All pupils in Years 4 to 6, for example learn to play a brass instrument and the school's choir has won 'Small School Choir of the Year' awards. Sufficient emphasis is given to the teaching of English and mathematics, although not enough opportunities are provided for pupils to develop and consolidate their writing skills in other subjects. The teaching of some subjects, such as history and geography, lacks breadth, although the school has plans to rectify this through the development of a more creative curriculum.
- The school has received very little support from the local authority, but engages the services of an independent school improvement adviser to provide advice and guidance from an external perspective. The headteacher and school staff contribute well to, and gain from, the links forged through the federation of local schools. For example, schools join together to moderate pupils' work and for staff training. Staff also benefit by meeting their counterparts from other schools.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has provided excellent support to the headteacher as, together, they have tackled issues to do with the quality of teaching and brought about improvement. Governors keep themselves well informed through regular reports from the headteacher, ask relevant questions and provide a good level of challenge for the school's leaders.
 - Governors have a thorough understanding of the effectiveness of teaching and how teachers' performance is managed. They understand how well the school is doing in comparison to others. They keep a close check on how the school is developing and are forward thinking in the decisions they take.
 - Governors have taken the initiative to meet with parents on a number of occasions, for example, to explain reasons for changes which have been made over the last year.

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	116645
Local authority	Herefordshire
Inspection number	431496

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	59
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Phil Jones
Headteacher	Matthew Maund
Date of previous school inspection	10 February 2009
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