

Dorrington Academy

Dorrington Road, Perry Barr, Birmingham, B42 1QR

Inspection dates

11–12 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	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.

- Pupils achieve well and make good progress. Although many children start school with skills below those expected for their age, pupils leave Key Stage 2 having reached average standards in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teaching is good and some is outstanding. Well-planned lessons are lively and interesting, capturing pupils' enthusiasm and making them eager to learn.
- Good use is made of the grounds and outside facilities. All pupils have plenty of opportunities to learn outdoors, promoting an active and healthy lifestyle.
- Pupils behave well in and around school. They are polite to adults and to each other and take their school 'Respect Agenda' very seriously.
- The school provides a safe environment for pupils and they say they feel safe. They also know how to keep themselves safe in different situations.
- The school is well led by the headteacher and her senior leaders. Pupils' progress is checked regularly to make sure that any pupils in danger of falling behind are quickly helped to keep up.
- The governors are very supportive of the school. They are proud of what the school does well and understand how it can do even better.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school and underpins all it does.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Occasionally, when asking questions, some teachers do not help pupils develop their ideas and language skills well enough.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to practise their literacy skills by writing at length in different subjects.
- Guidance for pupils as to how they can improve their work is not always clear and advice is not always acted upon.
- While all senior leaders are skilled in checking pupils' performance in different subjects, some have not yet developed the skills they need to drive improvements across the whole school.
- Governors' visits to the school are not always focused tightly enough on evaluating progress on specific improvement priorities.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 35 lessons or parts of lessons, 12 of which were seen together with the headteacher, deputy headteacher or an assistant headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other staff, three groups of pupils, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body and three other governors.
- Informal discussions were held with parents and carers.
- The inspectors took account of the 52 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, the school's own parental and pupil questionnaires and 51 completed staff questionnaires.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and reviewed a range of documentation, including the school's checks on its performance, its analysis and tracking of pupils' progress, records of behaviour and safety, school improvement plans, records relating to classroom observations and the management of staff performance, safeguarding arrangements and records of meetings of the governing body.
- The inspectors also looked at pupils' work, listened to pupils read and checked information on attendance.

Inspection team

Susan Hughes, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Linda Brown	Additional Inspector
David Westall	Additional Inspector
Tim Nelson	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school. It converted to become an academy school on 1 June 2012. When its predecessor school, also known as Dorrington Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium, which is additional funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, have a parent in the armed forces or are in local authority care, is above average.
- The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language are well above average. Less than 7% of pupils are White British.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average, as are the proportions supported at school action plus, or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The results of the most recent Key Stage 2 national tests and assessments were annulled. Consequently, there are no published progress and attainment data to verify whether the school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- An acting deputy headteacher has been in post since January 2014, following the resignation of the previous deputy headteacher. An acting assistant headteacher took up post at the same time.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that more is outstanding by ensuring that:
 - teachers give consistently clear guidance as to how pupils can improve their work and make sure that pupils act on this advice
 - all teachers' questioning helps pupils develop their ideas and vocabulary to extend their learning
 - pupils have more opportunities to develop their literacy skills through writing at length in different subjects.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - developing the skills of senior leaders so that they make an even more significant contribution to driving improvement across the whole school
 - ensuring that governors' visits are tightly focused on school improvement priorities and are routinely reported to the rest of the governing body.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children typically start in the Nursery classes with skills and experiences below those expected for their age. They make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes and start Key Stage 1 with skills much closer to those expected for their age, though still weaker in literacy, mathematics and speaking. In 2013, children made exceptionally good progress and developed skills above those expected for their age. This was as a result of improvements in teaching.
- Pupils make good progress throughout Key Stages 1 and 2. The results of the most recent Year 1 national screening check on how well pupils know phonics (the sounds that letters represent in words) were average. Overall standards at the end of Key Stage 1 in 2013 were also average, reflecting good progress from pupils' lower starting points.
- Good progress in reading, writing and mathematics in Key Stage 2 means that the gap between pupils' attainment and the level expected for their age narrows as they move through the school. From below average standards, they reach average standards by the end of Key Stage 2, with some pupils attaining two terms ahead for their age.
- Pupils supported by the pupil premium make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics because they are ably helped by the staff. Eligible pupils currently in the school are approximately two terms behind other pupils at the beginning of Key Stage 2 but the good progress they make means that, by the end of Key Stage 2, the gap has narrowed to a term or less for most pupils.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress because they are well supported in their learning. Their progress is checked regularly to make sure that the additional support they are given is helping improve their learning. More-able pupils make equally good progress.
- Progress in physical education is good. The school has used its primary school sport funding to employ specialist coaches to teach lessons, train teachers and run clubs. Pupils enjoy a range of sports and this year the school is focusing on traditional competitive sports as well as introducing new activities such as working with balance trainers.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is typically good. Pupils are enthusiastic and keen to learn, and say they like the fact that many subjects are linked to their topic themes. For example, Year 6 pupils studying the Second World War discussed how soldiers and their families would write to each other. They were inspired to write their own letters, empathising with the recipient and ensuring an appropriate use of language for the style of writing.
- Staff have an expert understanding of how children learn, and this enables those in the Nursery and Reception classes to successfully develop a range of skills. For example, activities following the theme of Jack and the Beanstalk caused excitement and children were engrossed in their learning. They created seed packets, learnt the different parts of a plant, wrote instructions for planting seeds and drew pictures of different types of flowers. In all activities, adults encourage children to talk about what they are doing to extend their language skills.
- Additional adults in the classroom are used well. They are well briefed and support pupils

effectively, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Pupils who benefit from pupil premium funding are also well supported in different ways to promote good progress. On occasions, they benefit from individual teaching or teaching in small groups to boost achievement.

- Physical education is taught well. When the specialist coaches lead classes, the teachers join in so that they can learn techniques to use in their own lessons. For example, in Year 1 pupils and teachers alike were learning basic hockey skills and pupils enjoyed making progress alongside their teachers.
- Some teachers skilfully ask questions which not only check understanding but also develop pupils' thinking and learning. For example, they will follow up a question with another more complex one, or ask pupils to explain their first answer in more detail. Other teachers, however, sometimes accept single word or brief answers which do not develop pupils' language or extend learning.
- While some teachers give clear guidance to pupils as to how they can improve their work, this is not consistent across all classes. Pupils do not always get enough time to follow the advice from their teachers.
- Pupils practise their literacy skills by writing in different subjects and styles. However, they do not have enough opportunities to improve these skills through writing at length over a sustained period of time.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. In lessons and around the school, pupils typically get on well with each other and with adults. They are attentive in lessons, listening with interest to the ideas of others in the class. Good manners and polite behaviour are encouraged by all staff, and pupils respond well. Pupils say that most children try hard to behave well so that they can enjoy 'Golden Time' each week.
- Pupils are very enthusiastic about their learning and proud of their school. While they particularly enjoy sport, outdoor learning and the different topics, they work well in most lessons. They are keen to share ideas and, when checking each other's work, are sensitive in offering constructive advice. The school's 'Respect Agenda' helps them appreciate the opinions and feelings of others, and guides them in responding appropriately.
- Pupils who find behaving well difficult are well supported. A card system ensures that there is always someone for them to talk to in a calm, quiet area. This minimises disruption to lessons and helps pupils re-join their class as soon as they are able.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils know how to stay safe in different situations. For example, after the visit by members of the fire service, pupils knew how to check for fire on the other side of a door and how to minimise the effect of smoke.
- Pupils understand what bullying is and the different forms it takes, including cyber, physical, mental and racial bullying. They are adamant that bullying is rare in the school and say that any incidents are quickly dealt with by adults.

The leadership and management are good

- The drive and determination of the headteacher have ensured good progress both for pupils and in developing a strong leadership team. Through the headteacher's coaching and other training opportunities, senior leaders have a secure understanding of data analysis and identify how to drive improvement in their subjects. However, some leaders have not yet fully developed skills to take a wider view of improvements across the whole school so that they can spot trends, view achievement in the different subjects and identify appropriate targets for overall school improvement.
- The systems for checking teachers' performance contribute to the good teaching across the school. Individual targets are used by the headteacher and the governing body to measure whether pay rises and promotion are justified by results. Teachers say that they have good training opportunities to help them meet their challenging targets.
- Strong partnerships with other local schools help provide training for staff and opportunities for pupils to work together. Good links with a school in Barcelona, together with individual class partnerships with different schools and charities, give pupils a wider understanding of life outside their school. Pupils' own cultures and faiths are celebrated, developing respect and understanding of different ways of living.
- The subjects pupils learn are vibrant and exciting. Each new topic is introduced and concluded in an exciting way and pupils say they particularly enjoy topics such as 'The Active Planet' in Year 3 and 'Seeing the Light' in Year 2. Literacy and numeracy skills are developed through these subjects, but there are not enough opportunities for writing at length to develop stamina, punctuation and grammar.
- Outdoor learning plays an important part in the curriculum and excellent use is made of the outside classroom, the yurt and the forest area. Pupils develop a wide range of knowledge and skills through studying nature first-hand, making camp fires and building shelters.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage is led well. Through strong leadership and good teaching, children in the Nursery and Reception classes develop their skills well both in the classroom and outdoors. There is a good balance between adult-led activities and opportunities for children to explore and play on their own in a safe and stimulating environment.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is a particular strength of the school. The 'Respect Agenda' has a different focus each year. It enables pupils to develop skills to deal with situations both in school and in their life outside school. They learn about winning and losing graciously in sports or dealing with difficult emotions like jealousy. The school successfully promotes equality of opportunity to make sure that all pupils achieve equally well.
- The school receives good support from external consultants. They check that teachers are assessing pupils' work accurately and help to develop teachers' skills. They are making sure that the arrangements for this year's national tests and assessments are robust and secure.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are very supportive and use their personal strengths and expertise to good effect on the governing body. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and how it can improve, visiting frequently to see for themselves. These visit, however, are not always closely linked to the school improvement priorities, nor are they always reported to other governors

- The school’s finances are managed well. Governors are acutely aware of the need to check regularly that the pupil premium is helping eligible pupils to achieve well and make sure that no pupils are unable to take part in trips or visits. They understand how the new primary school sport funding is used to extend physical education opportunities. Governors ask challenging questions of leaders to check that the new appraisal system is contributing to improving the quality of teaching, and they make sure that teachers’ pay rises are linked to the progress their pupils make. Governors have made sure that the government’s current requirements for safeguarding and child protection 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	138218
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	440694

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	693
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lorraine Gumbs
Headteacher	Loretta Barratt
Date of previous school inspection	21 September 2010
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