

Acacias Community Primary School

Alexandra Drive, Burnage, Manchester, Lancashire, M19 2WW

Inspection dates 11–12 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	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.

- Teaching is good. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and use a wide range of strategies to involve and motivate them. As a result, pupils make good progress in lessons and over time across the school.
- By the end of Year 6, attainment in reading and mathematics is high. In writing it is above average. Pupils' progress from their various starting points is good in English and outstanding in mathematics.
- Well-planned support for pupils with special educational needs enables them to make good progress and participate fully in activities alongside their classmates. Pupils supported by pupil premium funding also make good progress.
- Children's achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding as a result of outstanding teaching.
- Behaviour is good; pupils are keen to learn and are proud of their school. Attendance is above average. Pupils say that learning is fun and that they feel safe.
- The senior leadership team provides clear direction. Actions taken to improve provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the teaching of reading have proved successful in significantly raising attainment and in increasing the rate of progress pupils make.
- The good promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development enables them to thrive in a vibrant learning community where achievement is celebrated.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not yet outstanding. The information gained from marking is not always used effectively to plan next steps. Pupils are not always given the guidance they need to improve their writing or the time to respond. In subjects other than English and mathematics, the most able pupils are not always effectively challenged.
- Governors are not sufficiently well informed to rigorously challenge the school about its performance or the impact of its actions to improve the progress of different groups of pupils, particularly those supported by the pupil premium.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 25 part lessons, including short visits to other activities led by teachers and trained assistants. Eight of these observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Groups of pupils from Years 1 to 6 met with the inspectors. Discussions were also held with staff, including senior leaders. Discussions were conducted with the Chair of the Governing Body and with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors took into account 48 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and 33 responses to a questionnaire completed by staff during the inspection.
- The inspectors scrutinised pupils' work with the headteacher and deputy headteacher and read a range of documents. These included documents about the school's strategies to enable leaders to gain an accurate view of its performance, school improvement plans, pupils' current progress, policies and records on safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.

Inspection team

Judith Tolley, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
David Halford	Additional Inspector
Jennifer Lawrence	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Acacias is much larger than the average-sized primary school. There has been a significant increase in the number of pupils on roll since the last inspection.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is high, as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils supported by pupil premium funding (additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those looked after by the local authority and children of service families) is lower than that usually found.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also lower than average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- A significant proportion of pupils join the school at other than the normal times.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to outstanding and thereby accelerate even further the progress pupils make, especially in their writing, by:
 - ensuring pupils always get the guidance they need to improve their work, including how to improve their handwriting and spelling, and are given the opportunity to respond to such advice
 - making sure that the information teachers gain from marking is always used effectively to plan next steps in pupils' learning
 - ensuring that the most able pupils are always given the right level of challenge in subjects other than English and mathematics, so that they can fully develop their skills in other subjects and always achieve at a high level.
- Improve the governors' understanding of the information they are given about the school's performance so that they can more rigorously challenge the senior leadership team.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- A very high proportion of pupils make the progress expected of them from their starting points and more pupils than nationally make more than the progress expected of them in English and mathematics.
- Many children enter the school in the Nursery and Reception classes with skills and knowledge that are well below those expected for their age. They make outstanding progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They make particularly good progress in developing their speaking, reading, writing and their personal skills so that most enter Year 1 confident learners, with skills that are broadly typical for their age. They make good progress in English and outstanding progress in mathematics as they move through the school. By the end of Year 6, standards in reading and mathematics are high, and standards in writing are above average.
- In 2013, there was a dip in the standards reached by Year 2 pupils, especially in writing, and too few pupils made the progress expected of them. This was because a significant proportion of pupils who had little or no English joined the school during Key Stage 1. The progress of these pupils was slowed considerably in Years 1 and 2 while they acquired a working knowledge of English. However, work seen during the inspection indicates that standards have improved significantly over the last year across all year groups and that now pupils make good progress by the end of Year 2. Gaps in the performance of different groups have closed and pupils now make consistently good progress in reading, writing and outstanding progress in mathematics.
- The most able pupils make good progress from their starting points in writing, and outstanding progress in reading and mathematics, with some reaching the highest levels by the end of Year 6. However, they are not always challenged enough in other subjects, such as geography and history, and so do not reach higher standards in these subjects.
- Pupils write effectively, and at length, for a variety of purposes and audiences and use a good range of vocabulary and structures. However, the quality of their written work is sometimes marred by the inaccuracies in spelling and a lack of care with handwriting.
- Achievement in reading has improved recently as a result of the introduction of phonics (the sounds letters make) and guided reading sessions. By the end of Year 6, most pupils read a variety of texts confidently and with a good level of fluency and understanding. Most are able to talk in detail about what they have read and have enjoyed.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make the same good progress as their peers as a result of the extra support they receive in lessons. Similarly, pupils at the early stages of learning English make good progress as a result of the help they receive in doing this and the emphasis throughout the school on developing the speaking and listening skills of all pupils.
- The extra support, such as extra help in the classroom and support from teaching assistants that the school provides with the additional funding for pupils supported by the pupil premium enables these pupils to reach their targets and to make the same good progress as their peers. In 2013, the gap between the attainment of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and their classmates, in English and mathematics, was slightly narrower than that seen nationally.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is consistently good and some is outstanding. Pupils display enthusiasm for learning, especially when activities challenge them to think things out for themselves or solve problems. When this is the case they display high levels of concentration and interest and engage in lively discussions. For instance, in the Nursery class, children were entirely absorbed by a game throwing a dice and recognising the numbers. They then applied what they had learned to counting out milk cartons and oranges during their snack time, and deciding where in the world the oranges came from.

- In Year 4, pupils made good progress testing out their predictions about the relationship between the shape of containers and the volume of a liquid. This was because they were clear about what they had to find out and worked well with each other, discussing their strategies and refining their investigations as they went along to ensure it was a fair test.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work very effectively together. They ask pupils searching questions to get them thinking and to see how much they have understood or to challenge them to solve problems for themselves. They check pupils' progress during tasks and intervene to provide support or further challenge where it is needed. For instance, because of this and their secure knowledge of the subject, Year 6 pupils worked at a rapid pace to solve problems using division, discovering alternative ways of tackling the calculations, and were keen to explain their working to others.
- Work is usually well matched to pupils' capabilities and presents an appropriate challenge for different groups. For instance, in the Reception class children worked simultaneously on problems which presented each with an appropriate level of challenge and support because activities were very well- planned and teachers and teaching assistants worked very effectively as a team.
- Pupils' work is marked regularly. Pupils are usually given good guidance about how to improve their work. There are instances of excellent practice within the school where marking determines next steps for different groups and, in some cases, pupils enter into a written dialogue with their teachers about their work. This results in a high level of challenge and outstanding progress. However, in subjects other than English, marking does not always give pupils the guidance they need to improve their writing, particularly their spelling and their presentation.
- The impact of teaching on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good; it is particularly strong when pupils work collaboratively and can learn from each other. For instance, in art, pupils' confidence in their ability to draw creatures from the rainforest accurately increased, as a result of very clear guidance from the teacher and the opportunity to have positive feedback from their classmates. Pupils' drawings were of a high standard and, by the end of the lesson, they were clearly very proud of their achievements.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are considerate to each other and work and play very well together. They support each other well, for example when working with a partner. They take responsibility very seriously and are proud of their contribution to the school, for example as school councillors, play leaders and as mentors. They say that they particularly enjoy art and their skill and enthusiasm for this are evident in the displays around the school.
- Disruption to lessons is rare and pupils usually work with enthusiasm. They listen carefully to others and respect their views. This is evident even among the youngest children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. However, on occasions, when tasks are too easy or too difficult, they sometimes find it hard to maintain their concentration.
- Pupils arrive punctually and settle quickly to lessons. They rapidly get the equipment they need and organise themselves well. They take care of equipment both in lessons and in the playground and behave well in the corridors and in the dining room, taking their roles as monitors and helpers seriously.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils have good relationships with adults, they say they feel safe and are confident that any poor behaviour is dealt with promptly and effectively. They are aware of the different forms of bullying, such as name-calling and cyber-bullying that can take place and know how to deal with it.
- Pupils know how to stay safe and have a good understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle. They value the wide range of activities, including extra-curricular activities, including sport, that is provided and which has a positive impact on their health and well-being. There are high levels of participation in activities, games and sports at lunchtime and after school.
- Attendance is above average. Persistent absence has decreased as a result of the school's good work in encouraging good attendance and pursuing those families whose children do not attend

regularly enough.

- Pupils who may have challenging behaviour are supported effectively to make good choices and, as a result, incidences of poor behaviour are very rare.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, strongly supported by the deputy headteacher, provides clear direction. The members of the leadership team understand the strengths of the school and what could be improved further, based on an accurate analysis of pupils' progress and monitoring of teaching and learning. As a result, after a temporary dip in performance, standards have again improved and progress has accelerated in the Early Years Foundation Stage, as well as in reading and mathematics in Key Stage 1.
- Teaching and learning are closely checked by senior leaders and teachers are effectively supported. Teachers work well as a team of middle leaders to plan the curriculum and to share good practice, although some middle leaders are, as yet, at the early stages of developing their roles.
- The senior leadership team has a detailed analysis of pupils' progress and this is used effectively to trigger timely support for pupils. A comprehensive system to check how well individual teachers perform is linked to the pay scales and used to identify training for teachers.
- Safeguarding meets government requirements, and discrimination in all its forms is rejected.
- The school works well with local agencies and the local network of schools, and with parents to ensure that all pupils settle well to learning. This includes information through newsletters and the school website. The school is committed to providing an equal opportunity for every pupil.
- The curriculum is good and provides an imaginative range of activities where pupils develop their reading, writing, mathematical and investigative skills in a variety of contexts. Pupils have the opportunity to learn Spanish. The curriculum is enriched by a wide variety of activities and visits out of school that enhance pupils' learning and which promote pupils' physical well-being and personal development.
- The new primary school sport funding is being used well to provide extra coaching for sports activities and to improve teachers' practice. This is not only promoting pupils' physical development and well-being effectively, but also ensuring that this will continue.
- Since the previous inspection, the local authority has provided 'light touch' support for this good school to ensure continued improvement and the school plays an important role in spreading best practice within the local authority.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body does not have a fully detailed, up-to-date understanding of the school's national comparative data to be able to challenge the senior leadership team effectively about the school's performance and hold the school rigorously to account. Governors are supportive and are involved in the day-to-day life of the school. They have a clear understanding of the performance of staff including how good performance is rewarded and any underperformance is tackled. Spending is scrutinised but the governing body does not have a fully informed view about the impact of the use of the pupil premium and primary school sport funding. Governors ensure that safeguarding requirements 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	105401
Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	440719

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	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	469
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Bennett
Headteacher	Philip Webster
Date of previous school inspection	11 April 2011
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