

Askern Spa Junior School

Sutton Road, Askern, Doncaster, South Yorkshire, DN6 0AQ

Inspection dates

11–12 March 2014

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.

- Pupils achieve well and make good progress in their lessons and over time.
- Attainment improved significantly last year and was broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Good and sometimes outstanding teaching motivates pupils to do their best.
- Teachers, aided by well-trained and experienced support staff, establish a purposeful atmosphere in lessons.
- A wide range of activities are provided for pupils to enjoy. The school has developed a strong tradition in music and the arts.
- Pupils behave well and enjoy what this improving school has to offer. They show consideration for one another and take pride in the presentation of their work.
- Leaders, including governors, want the very best for all pupils. They use data effectively to identify those pupils who could be making better progress and then provide the right support to help them improve.
- The headteacher, supported by senior leaders and a united staff team, has a clear sense of purpose. As a result, pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching continue to improve.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The proportion of outstanding teaching is not yet high enough to enable all pupils to make rapid progress, particularly in relation to developing their grammar, punctuation and spelling skills.
- The most able pupils do not make equally good progress in every class. For example, their progress is better in Year 6 than it is in Year 3.
- Not all pupils respond quickly enough to teachers' suggestions about how their work could be made better. This limits the progress some pupils make.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 25 lessons or small-group activities, of which two were conducted jointly with the headteacher. The headteacher also joined inspectors as they looked at work in pupils' books.
- Meetings were held with members of the governing body, senior leaders, school staff and two representatives from the local authority.
- Inspectors talked to pupils about their work in lessons, looked at books, listened to pupils read and met with a group of pupils from Year 3 to Year 6.
- Not enough responses to the on-line survey (Parent View) were available for inspectors to consider. However, they took account of a recent survey conducted by the school and spoke to a number of parents during the inspection.
- Inspectors also took account of the 17 inspection questionnaires returned by members of the school staff.
- Inspectors observed the school's work, looked at progress data, performance management information, records relating to behaviour and safety, as well as documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Jim Alexander, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Susan Twaits

Additional Inspector

Pamela Hemphill

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger than average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is above average. The pupil premium is additional government funding provided for children who are looked after, those from service families, and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage. However, the proportion of pupils of a Romany or Gypsy heritage is well above average and growing each year. The proportion of pupils with Traveller or Irish heritage is also growing and now is much higher than average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- A number of staff changes have occurred since the time of the previous inspection, including the appointment of a new deputy headteacher, two assistant headteachers and five new classroom teachers.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching in order to raise achievement still further by:
 - consolidating improvements to the way in which grammar, punctuation and spelling are taught in every year group
 - providing the most able pupils with work that challenges and extends their thinking, particularly in Year 3
 - making sure all pupils act swiftly on the guidance teachers provide, which shows them how to improve the quality of their work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Leaders make sure that pupils' attainment on entry to the school is accurately assessed. While a small but growing number of pupils start school with above average attainment, for the majority of pupils their attainment is below average and for some it is much lower.
- A large proportion of pupils also start school at times other than in Year 3, mainly from the Traveller community. Their attainment is often well below average when they start, some having had no previous school experience.
- No matter what their starting point, pupils are helped to settle quickly and soon make good progress in their lessons and for as long as they stay in school.
- Attainment by the end of Year 6 was below average in 2012, but rose significantly in 2013 and was average in reading, writing and mathematics. However, it remained below average in grammar, punctuation and spelling.
- The vast majority of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress and benefit from well-designed small-group activities and one-to-one support in lessons.
- Pupils who are supported by the pupil premium also make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. As a result, many are working at a similar level to others in their class.
- The proportion of most able pupils who make expected progress is above average. However, fewer make better than expected progress. This is not the case in Year 6, where the most able pupils are provided with work that stretches their thinking and helps them make excellent progress.
- Pupils with an Irish Traveller heritage also make good progress from their starting points and last year left school with above-average attainment, doing particularly well in writing.
- Pupils from a Gypsy or Roma background also make good progress and left school last year with above-average attainment, doing particularly well in reading. These are some of the many examples of how successfully this inclusive school tackles discrimination and effectively promotes equality of opportunity.
- School data, lessons observed and work seen in books show that progress across the school has improved significantly and is now good.
- The overwhelming majority of pupils make expected progress and the proportion making better than expected progress is close to average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Leaders have recognised that it is now pupils' grammar, punctuation and spelling which need to improve further. Improvements are being made this year, but pupils' skills are not yet consistently good in every class.

The quality of teaching is good

- Across the school, teachers' subject knowledge is good and activities are planned to motivate pupils, encouraging them to want to succeed. Pupils respond well to high expectations and settle quickly to their tasks. Work in pupils' books is often very well presented.
- Pupils are helped to reflect on what they are doing well and to explain what they are struggling with. This helps teachers understand what pupils need to do next in order to succeed. Pupils in Year 6 explained that this 'progress pit stop' is a typical part of most lessons, saying, 'Our teacher pushes us to our very limits, so we do our very best.'
- In the vast majority of lessons, adults keep a careful watch on how well the pupils are doing and are skilled at moving pupils on when they are ready for additional challenge. However, this is not always the case for the most able pupils in Year 3. Occasionally, pupils finish work and then have to wait for others to catch up before they can move on. This limits what is achieved in the time available.

- The quality of marking is typically good and pupils in Year 5 and Year 6 receive excellent guidance on how to improve the quality of their work. However, in other classes not all pupils respond quickly enough to the good advice given.
- The school benefits from highly experienced teaching assistants who understand their role within lessons and what is to be achieved in each session. This helps lessons run smoothly and for time to be used effectively.
- The support provided to pupils needing additional help with their learning, for example in small groups or in one-to-one activities, is good. As a result, pupils who are supported by the pupil premium make good progress and have developed positive attitudes to their work.
- Pupils are able to apply what they are learning in mathematics to a range of problem-solving activities in other subjects. This consolidates pupils' good progress over time.
- The teaching of reading is good and pupils enjoy reading a range of literature. Some pupils start school with very limited reading skills. These pupils are helped to recognise sounds and letters quickly. As their confidence grows, they are able to enjoy reading books which are appropriate for their level.
- The teaching of writing is good and continues to improve. Pupils are provided with opportunities to write at length across a range of subjects. Pupils' written work is regularly featured in the excellent displays around the school. For example, written work describing the life of Nelson Mandela was complemented by art work in the style of Andy Warhol.
- School leaders have recently introduced a new way of teaching grammar, punctuation and spelling. This is at an early stage of implementation and currently more effective in some classes than others. For example, teachers in Year 3 regularly help pupils by correcting their punctuation and reminding them to use capital letters and full stops. However, simple spelling errors are not always corrected and so pupils do not learn from their mistakes.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They settle quickly to their work and their positive attitudes are a significant factor in the good progress they are making in their lessons.
- Pupils enjoy attending the music and art lessons and speak positively about the many sporting activities that are on offer.
- Good behaviour was seen at break and lunchtimes and pupils were keen to point out that this was typical.
- Pupils take pride in their work and the quality of displays around the school is very good. Pupils are smartly dressed and keep their classrooms clean and tidy.
- Occasionally, a few pupils can become restless or silly when they have finished a task and are waiting for others to catch up.
- Attendance continues to improve and is broadly average for the majority of pupils. Some pupils have excellent attendance and never miss a day. Most pupils are very rarely late and appreciate what this improving school has to offer.
- Many pupils from the Traveller community also have good attendance when families are sited near school, but obviously their culture of regular travel impacts on their overall attendance figure.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. There is a positive and caring atmosphere in school; pupils say they feel safe and happy in school and their parents agree.
- The meticulous care taken by office staff and strong links with outside agencies, for example the Integrated Family Support Service, ensure that pupils' welfare is always at the forefront of the school's work.
- Pupils speak very positively about the support they receive from the experienced and highly qualified senior learning mentor and the nurture group team. Pupils have a good understanding about how to keep themselves safe, for example when using the internet.
- Pupils are knowledgeable about different forms for bullying and say it is exceptionally rare at

school. Records kept by the school show that incidents of name-calling are managed effectively and numbers are falling.

The leadership and management are good

- Leaders, teachers, governors and pupils are ambitious for the school to do well.
- The headteacher provides determined leadership, promoting a clear focus on continuous improvement and offers teachers and parents a clear vision for the future.
- The headteacher has built an effective senior leadership team and recent appointments are bringing a wealth of experience and enthusiasm.
- The headteacher has developed effective systems for managing staff performance. Lessons are checked regularly and feedback given, identifying where improvements are needed. Staff say they are very well supported and appreciate the training they receive.
- Systems to enable the school to judge how well it is doing are robust, accurate and inform school improvement plans, which focus on the correct priorities.
- Middle leaders have benefited from ongoing training and have a good understanding of what is working well and what needs further improvement. For example, they recognised that the teaching of grammar, punctuation and spelling were not as good as they could be and have redesigned how these skills are taught. While they are at an early stage of improvement, there are already early indications of improvements in some classes.
- The pupil premium funding is used well and leaders work effectively to ensure different groups have an equal chance to succeed.
- Leaders have ensured that the new primary school sports funding is being used to increase opportunities for pupils to take part in local competitions, as well as to improve the quality of physical education lessons during the school day.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school. Leaders have fostered strong links within the community.
- The local authority has offered effective support since the time of the previous inspection and no longer needs to visit so regularly. In fact, the school is so well regarded that it now regularly supports others in the authority.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is well informed. It challenges school leaders and holds them to account for pupils' achievement. It compares how well the school is performing against others nationally. Governors are strong supporters of the school. They understand the headteacher's vision for the school and value her leadership. They have an accurate knowledge of the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' learning, because they visit school regularly and speak to pupils about their experience of school life. They oversee the performance management of staff effectively and ensure pay awards are only made when targets have been met. Governors check carefully on the use of additional funds, pupil premium funding, for example, and ensure good value for money. They also check that safeguarding arrangements 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	106673
Local authority	Doncaster
Inspection number	430861

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	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	294
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dennis Ridley
Headteacher	Jo Giddins
Date of previous school inspection	15 March 2012
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