

Ash Croft Primary School

Deep Dale Lane, Sinfin, Derby, DE24 3HF

Inspection dates

7–8 May 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.

- Pupils make good progress from starting points which are often below those typically found. Progress is rapidly improving due to the good-quality teaching.
- Standards are rising and, in most year groups, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is above that expected for pupils' ages.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are well supported so that their progress is in line with that of their peers. The gap in progress between those entitled to pupil premium funding and their classmates has narrowed.
- Pupils' behaviour in and around the school is good and has a very positive impact on their learning. The school works hard to ensure pupils' safety.
- The quality of teaching is good with some that is outstanding. Teachers create a very purposeful climate which encourages pupils' learning.
- The creation of the federation has had a positive impact, especially on developing leadership.
- Although the sharing of leadership and expertise across the federation is at an early stage, this has already had a positive impact on pupils' progress and the quality of teaching.
- The governing body has led the school well during the creation of the federation. All staff demonstrate a clear commitment to raising standards and improving teaching and learning.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not have enough opportunities to learn from examples of outstanding practice.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to develop skills in using computers and other technology in their work.
- In some lessons, the most-able pupils are not provided with challenging enough tasks that will move their learning on.
- Governors do not monitor all aspects of the school's work closely or regularly enough.
- The school does not check in sufficient detail the success of its work with small groups of pupils who have specific learning needs, or who take part in nurture provision.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching in 14 lessons. A number of these were observed jointly with the headteacher, heads of lower and upper school or the assistant headteacher.
- Meetings and discussions took place with the headteacher, governors, pupils, staff, a representative of the local authority, and parents.
- Samples of pupils' work were examined. Some pupils read books with the inspectors.
- The inspectors took account of the 19 responses to the online survey, Parent View, as well as 32 responses to the school's own parental questionnaire. The inspectors took account of the 15 questionnaires completed by staff.
- The inspectors looked at a range of documents, including data on pupils' progress and attainment produced by the school, procedures for safeguarding, the school's own evaluations of its work, reports to the governing body and the plans for raising attainment.

Inspection team

Geof Timms, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Michael Bucktin

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Ash Croft Primary School is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Since the last inspection, the school has formed a 'hard' federation with another local school. The headteacher is executive headteacher of both schools and they are governed by one governing body.
- Around half of the pupils are White British. The rest come from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds with a slightly above-average proportion who have English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is well below average. The proportion supported through school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is well below average.
- An average proportion of pupils are supported by the pupil premium which, in this school, provides additional funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- There have been significant changes to the leadership team since the last inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make more of the teaching consistently outstanding by:
 - providing more opportunities for teachers to learn from outstanding practice in this school and in other schools
 - ensuring the work provided for pupils, especially the most able, helps them learn and provides sufficient challenge
 - providing sufficient opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in using computers and other technology.
- Improve the school's systems for tracking its success by:
 - encouraging governors to gather more comprehensive evidence of all aspects of the school's work, including through regular visits
 - checking more closely on the success of the school's work with small groups of pupils with specific learning needs or who take part the nurture group.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- When they start school, most children have levels of knowledge and understanding which are below those typical for their age. They often start with weak skills in their understanding of the world and in communication. Children make good progress during the Reception Year and the current year group have attainment that is broadly in line with that expected for their age.
- Standards in the 2013 national tests at the end of Year 2 were slightly below average in reading, writing and mathematics. However, the current pupils in Year 2 have made good progress and are attaining standards above those expected in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Attainment at the end of Year 6 in 2013 was broadly average. Attainment in reading fell because the school focused all its efforts on improving pupils' writing. Although this was successful, leaders realised they needed to keep standards in reading improving as well and this has been addressed this year.
- The progress made since Year 2 by the current Year 6 is well above that expected in reading, writing and mathematics. In particular, the school has ensured many more pupils than last year are on track to reach the higher levels. Even so, in other year groups, some higher attainers do not always make the progress they are capable of because the work they are given lacks sufficient challenge to meet their needs. This happened when a group of the most able Year 1 pupils were working on place value with large numbers but had too many repetitive examples to work through, rather than being challenged by opportunities to use their knowledge to solve a problem.
- The results of the Year 1 check on pupils' skills in linking letters and sounds (phonics) show standards in 2013 were slightly below the national average although this represented good progress given their attainment on entry to the school. The current Year 1 pupils are on track to achieve better than last year's national average, due to good quality teaching.
- Progress in reading throughout the school is good. Pupils have good phonic skills and are able to read words accurately. In many lessons, they show a good ability to understand what they are reading. The progress made in pupils' writing is good and standards are above average in the current Year 6. Pupils in Year 4, for example, are able to create a variety of effective opening clauses to start an explanatory text. In mathematics, good achievement is evident throughout the school. The extension activities for Year 6 are very challenging and pupils are developing good skills in a variety of contexts.
- There is evidence of good achievement in other subjects such as art and design, and design and technology. However, pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to learn about new technology such as computers, or to use them in other subjects so they make less progress in information and communication technology.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs receive effective extra help, and this is evident in their current good progress. The school's pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, and those with English as an additional language, make good progress often helped by staff who also speak languages other than English. Progress in learning English is often rapid and supports their learning in other subjects.
- Last year, the school significantly narrowed the gap between the attainment of pupils supported through the pupil premium funding in mathematics and writing. However, the gap in reading

rose and those entitled to pupil premium were two and a half terms behind their classmates. Currently, the gap is narrowing further and the school's data show that many pupils are making progress at least in line with and often better than their peers.

The quality of teaching is good

- The good teaching has a positive impact on pupils' learning and progress. A growing proportion of the teaching is outstanding and the school is working to ensure that more is of this quality.
- Teachers create very good conditions for positive and purposeful learning in classrooms. A large part of this is due to the support and challenge provided by the leadership. The links between the two schools in the federation have started to enable teachers to share ideas and spread good practice. This has happened, for example, in the Early Years Foundation Stage. However, there have not yet been enough opportunities for the teachers to observe, learn from and work alongside outstanding teachers, either in the federation or in other schools.
- The children in Reception are well taught through a good range of adult-led and child-initiated activities. The classroom is a vibrant and exciting area and the outside space is used very effectively to extend children's learning through activities planned to link to the indoor experiences. Children's progress is regularly and accurately assessed through detailed observations. The records of their learning make good use of new technology and are shared with parents regularly.
- The marking of pupils' work has improved since the last inspection. Teachers mark the work regularly and pupils respond to the helpful comments. Assessments are regularly made and are accurate in reflecting pupils' good progress. However, the tracking of some groups, especially some of those with disabilities or special educational needs, is not as effective in assessing the success of all aspects of the provision because it is not detailed enough.
- The work of teaching assistants throughout the school is highly successful and a major strength. They provide very effective help for all pupils, especially those who find learning more difficult. The teachers and teaching assistants work very well together so that they are aware of and understand the planning and what is expected of them.
- There are occasions when teachers do not provide work that is challenging enough for all of the pupils. This is especially the case for some of the most-able pupils who are given tasks that do not extend their learning sufficiently. Even so, the grouping of pupils in Years 3, 4 and 5 by ability is effective in helping pupils make good progress and gives teachers flexibility so that younger more-able pupils can work with older ones.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of the pupils is good. In all lessons observed, the vast majority of pupils were well behaved and showed very positive attitudes to learning. This has a major impact on their learning and progress, and they thoroughly enjoy their work. Other evidence shows this behaviour is typical.
- Children in the Reception Year are clearly used to the school's routines and they start the day happily and productively, quickly settling down to a range of activities. This is supported by most parents' positive views about how much their children enjoy school.
- Pupils talk openly about the lessons and other aspects of school life which they enjoy. They

clearly like school. One younger pupil described it as 'really, really, really fun!' Older pupils were unequivocally positive about school. They praised the way teachers help them learn and provide interesting lessons.

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say they feel safe in school, and parents confirm this view. The school provides a good range of activities to help pupils' learn to stay safe, and they have a good knowledge of how to use new technology, such as the internet or mobile phones, safely.
- The pupils say bullying is very rare and they are confident if it occurred it would be effectively dealt with. There have been no exclusions of pupils in recent years. The support for pupils facing a range of challenging circumstances is effective, and case studies show these pupils making good progress.
- The development of a regular nurture group has provided pupils whose circumstance might make them vulnerable with strong personal and social support. In addition, the breakfast club provides pupils with a calm and productive start to the day as well as a healthy snack.
- Attendance is broadly average and has improved over past years as a result of the school's strong and successful focus on monitoring and addressing any persistent absenteeism. The majority of the parents appreciate the importance of full attendance.

The leadership and management are good

- The good leadership found at the school's previous inspection has not only been maintained but also further improved upon in a number of ways. The formation of the federation has been the catalyst for spreading leadership responsibilities around more of the staff. Along with appropriate training for new leaders, this has had a very positive impact on the senior leadership.
- The executive headteacher has ensured that all staff and the governing body have a clear ambition to do the best they can for the pupils at the school. There is a clear ambition to become an outstanding school and this is evident in pupils' rapidly improving progress and the good quality of teaching across the school.
- The senior leaders, and those who lead subjects across the school, have taken on their increased responsibility very positively. Aspects of their work are excellent, such as in the leadership of teaching and learning or the work to judge the accuracy of assessment of pupils' work. These are now being used by other schools as examples of good practice. Staff are given excellent opportunities to develop their leadership skills
- The school's self-evaluation is accurate, and identifies what remains to be done to improve the school further. Improvement planning is detailed and is based on the appropriate priorities. The school continually seeks to improve the effectiveness of teaching. The detailed monitoring of teaching and pupils' learning is carried out by senior leaders. They do this in a very efficient and effective way using direct observations but also the examination of pupils' work, discussions with pupils and the use of data as a basis for regular discussion with teachers about their pupils' progress.
- Training to develop teachers' and teaching assistants' professional skills has been used effectively. For example, the Year 6 teacher undertook training in primary engineering. This has had an immediately positive impact on the quality of design and technology work. As a result, the pupils have created some excellent working models of types of transport.

- Although at an early stage, the federation is proving effective in supporting teachers' skills and providing more efficient use of funding. Even so, teachers have not yet had enough opportunities to observe, work with and learn from other outstanding practitioners. The school has not fully assessed the success and value for money of all aspects of the provision for pupils with disabilities or those who have special educational needs, or the nurture work with pupils facing more challenging circumstances.
- The local authority has provided good support through the process of federation. Training has been very effective in developing successful leaders and the school is now being used by the local authority to spread aspects of this expertise to other schools. Data is regularly checked and the school challenged to maintain its good and improving status.
- Funding available through the pupil premium is used to help eligible pupils to take a full part in school life, and benefit, where appropriate, from specific resources and additional help from adults. The impact of this work is evident in the narrowing of the gap in achievement and the progress made by these pupils is monitored closely by leaders.
- The extra funding available to promote physical education and sporting opportunities is used appropriately, with a focus on increasing participation in a number of sporting activities. External coaches are used to add their expertise to that available on the staff. The school is taking part in more competitions and festivals with other schools in a variety of sports.
- The subjects taught provide pupils with a wide range of interesting activities. Enrichment activities add to pupils' enjoyment of school and the good promotion of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There is a good range of clubs and extra-curricular activities, including team sports, on offer.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Since the last inspection, the governing body has improved the way it holds the school to account. There is now a good level of support and challenge. Governors have had training which has given them a better understanding of using the available data to check pupils' progress.
 - Governors check some of the school's work through a range of visits, including to activities held outside school. They hold regular meetings with, and receive reports from, the headteacher. However, there are aspects of the school's work, such as the nurture group or sessions run for a group of pupils who find learning more difficult, that are not checked on sufficiently.
 - Members of the governing body have a good understanding of the system used to determine teachers' effectiveness in enabling pupils to make progress. Governors check how effective these systems are applied to improve the quality of teaching. Decisions about teachers' pay are appropriately linked to performance and responsibilities.
 - Governors track finances well and assist the school in deciding how to spend additional money, such as that to support pupils eligible for the pupil premium or to extend sports and physical education opportunities.

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	112771
Local authority	Derby
Inspection number	442651

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	183
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gill Smith
Headteacher	Penny Brown
Date of previous school inspection	05 Jul 2011
Telephone number	01332 764160
Fax number	N/A
Email address	admin@ashcroft.derby.sch.uk

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