

Acre Rigg Academy

Acre Rigg Road, Peterlee, County Durham, SR8 2DU

Inspection dates 4–5 June 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 make good progress because teaching is lively and imaginative. This is particularly the case in Years 5 and 6 where teaching is outstanding.
- Pupils make excellent progress in mathematics. They are given extensive opportunities to develop their mathematical understanding in real-life situations so that a high proportion of pupils reach above average standards by the end of Year 6.
- Pupils make good progress in reading to reach standards that are just above average. They have a good knowledge of different types of books and authors because they study a class novel each term.
- Teaching is good because teachers explain new work clearly and ask pupils questions in a way that helps them to make good progress.
- Pupils behave well because adults have high expectations of them. A calm atmosphere pervades the school so that poor behaviour is rare.
- Pupils say they feel safe, that bullying hardly ever happens, and when it does they know what to do.
- Leaders, including governors, are determined that all pupils will succeed. They track pupils' progress carefully and provide additional help where it is needed.
- Leaders have equally high expectations of teachers. They check the quality of teaching regularly and give detailed feedback. As a result, the quality of teaching has improved so that it is now good.
- The curriculum is lively with a wealth of activities that spark the imagination of pupils. Examples include eggs hatching in an incubator, pupils learning to fence and a visiting author developing pupils' creativity.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is good rather than outstanding in Years 3 and 4 where pupils are not given enough opportunities to improve their work, move on more quickly when they understand or revisit work with which they have struggled.
- Attainment in writing is not quite as high as it is in reading and mathematics. Too few pupils are reaching the highest levels and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals do less well than their classmates.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 12 lessons taught by eight teachers as well as looking at pupils' work. Some observations and work checks were carried out jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors talked to pupils at break and lunchtimes, and heard others in Year 3 and Year 6 read.
- The views of 11 parents who responded to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) were taken into account, as well as the views of parents gained informally at the start and end of the school day.
- Inspectors met with senior and middle leaders, teachers, members of the governing body, a member of the board of directors and a representative of the local authority.
- The school's improvement plan and records of pupils' achievement, records of the quality of teaching, pupils' behaviour and safeguarding were examined.
- Thirteen staff submitted their views via a questionnaire and inspectors took these into account.

Inspection team

Christine Cottam, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Anne Humble

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school became an Academy on 1 December 2012. It is sponsored by Tudhoe Colliery Primary School.
- Both schools are members of Tudhoe Learning Trust, a partnership of four primary schools led by an executive headteacher, who is also the headteacher of the sponsor school. The Trust has a board of directors. Acre Rigg Academy also has its own governing body and headteacher.
- Acre Rigg Academy is a junior school for pupils aged 7 to 11. It is about the same size as an average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is higher than the national average. (The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after by the local authority.)
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage and speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is above average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also above that usually found.
- The school meets the current floor standard, which is the government's minimum expectation for attainment and progress in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- The school has recently achieved the full International School award and has been accredited as an 'Investor in Children'.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the quality of teaching in Year 3 and Year 4 by:
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to correct or improve their work in order to make more rapid progress
 - moving pupils on more quickly during lessons when it is clear they have already understood
 - adjusting planned activities when groups of pupils have made less progress than expected.
- Raise standards in writing so that a greater proportion of the most able pupils reach above average levels and the attainment of those eligible for the pupil premium improves by:
 - giving all pupils more opportunities to extend their writing in English and other subjects
 - improving handwriting and presentation
 - expecting pupils to use the correct spelling and punctuation appropriate to their age and ability in all of their written work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils make good progress in Years 3 and 4 because teaching is good. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 make excellent progress because teaching is usually outstanding.
- Pupils start school in Year 3 with attainment that is below average in reading, writing and mathematics. They make good progress to reach broadly average standards by the end of Year 6. Standards are higher in reading and mathematics where they are slightly above average than they are in writing. Fewer pupils exceed the level expected for their age in writing.
- Achievement in mathematics is outstanding. Pupils have many opportunities to use their mathematical skills in real-life situations so that they develop confidence and understanding. For example, Year 6 pupils were working out the value of their shares in real companies after prices had changed. This gave pupils' excellent practice in calculating with decimals as well as developing their understanding of the world of finance.
- Pupils read regularly at school and are actively encouraged to read at home. Pupils enjoy studying novels in class and have an extensive knowledge of different types of books and authors.
- Pupils make good progress in the quality of the content of their writing. They are able to write effectively in different styles and their writing is interesting and imaginative. Pupils have been taught handwriting, grammar, spelling and punctuation appropriate to their age but are not yet using these skills consistently in their writing, particularly in subjects other than English. They do not have enough opportunities to practise writing at length.
- The most able pupils are challenged exceptionally well in mathematics so that a larger proportion than found nationally are reaching the highest level for their age. An increasing proportion of pupils are reaching above average standards in writing, but their attainment is lower in writing than it is in mathematics.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make similar progress to their classmates. This is because teachers and assistants support pupils well to make sure all pupils make good progress.
- Pupils supported by the pupil premium make good progress. This group includes those known to be eligible for free school meals. There is a gap in attainment so that those eligible are about two terms behind other pupils in reading and writing and about six months behind in mathematics. This gap is narrowing significantly in reading and mathematics, but not quite as quickly in writing. This overall improvement shows that the school is using its resources well to provide additional support in order to ensure equality of opportunity.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching is good. It is stronger in Years 5 and 6 where it is more often outstanding than good. Teachers are enthusiastic and inspire pupils to learn. As several pupils said when asked to identify a strength of the school, 'The teachers, they make our lessons fun'.
- Pupils also enjoy doing homework because they are given the freedom to choose how to present their response from a question they are set each week. For example, one girl produced a working collage as a response to the teacher's question 'How do plants make food?' A homework club is provided for those who may not have access to the resources they need at home.
- Teachers often plan activities that are set in real-life contexts and this helps pupils to make good progress in their understanding. For example, Year 5 pupils were using holiday brochures in their mathematics lesson to plan and cost a trip to India.
- Classrooms are extremely well organised and teachers have high expectations of behaviour. This orderly approach helps pupils to settle quickly and make good progress.
- Teaching assistants make a good contribution to learning. This is because teachers use the skills

of their assistants well and make sure that all adults are involved in supporting pupils to achieve.

- Teachers assess pupils' work accurately and plan to meet the needs of different groups within their class. Where teaching is outstanding it is because teachers adapt their plans when they find that pupils either make more rapid progress than they expected or when a number of pupils have not understood. This is not yet a consistent feature of teaching in Years 3 and 4.
- Teachers mark all pupils' work regularly and accurately and provide good feedback to help pupils to make even better progress. While there are some really good examples of pupils returning to previous work to correct or improve it, this is not yet always the case, particularly in Year 3 and Year 4.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' behaviour is good.
- They are kind and friendly towards one another and courteous towards adults. Staff nurture positive relationships which lead to high levels of mutual respect. As a result, low-level disruption to learning is rare.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to their learning. Social skills are taught well so that pupils can work in a range of situations, on their own, as a class or in small groups. In particular, pupils are resilient when their work is challenging and will have a go themselves rather than just asking adults for help.
- Pupils behave well around the school and at playtimes. They are proud of the work of their school council which has helped to provide lots of small apparatus to make playtimes more interesting. Some pupils act as playground buddies to make sure that all pupils can play with someone. As a result, pupils have developed good levels of respect and understand that there is no place for bullying. They know what to do in the rare instances that it does happen.
- The vast majority of parents who expressed their views are happy with behaviour and all say their children are safe and happy to come to school.
- Attendance has improved and is above average.
- There have been a few fixed-term exclusions for more serious behaviour by a very small minority of vulnerable pupils. These pupils are supported and managed extremely well so that other pupils feel safe. For example, the school employs a counsellor so that all pupils have someone with whom they can discuss their worries.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe in a variety of situations, for example on the internet, near open water and on the roads.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher have high aspirations for pupils. They share a similar ambition to improve the quality of teaching. As a result, achievement is good and teaching is improving rapidly.
- All who work in the school share this culture of high expectations so that all staff hold themselves accountable for the progress of the pupils they teach.
- Leaders check the quality of teaching regularly so that there is a continuous focus on improvement. They give detailed written feedback to help teachers to improve their performance. Teachers are given exacting targets and these are linked to pupils' progress and the nationally expected standards for teachers. Pay awards are only made where teachers meet their targets.
- Teachers appreciate the feedback and training that help them to improve their teaching. Some

of this professional development is provided within the school, and some through external courses. Teaching assistants have also been trained to be more effective in their roles.

- The Learning Trust has provided good support for the school, particularly during a recent period where there were higher than average levels of staff change and absence. An example of this is the current support for special educational needs during the absence of the school's own coordinator.
- Middle leaders are equally ambitious and regularly check the quality of teaching in their subjects. Senior leaders support their professional development extremely well and this has resulted in some promotion either within the school or to posts in other schools.
- Pupils have extensive opportunities to develop their spiritual and cultural understanding through a varied and exciting curriculum. They have a good knowledge of the cultures in other countries such as Kenya through the international links the school has made. They were particularly enthralled in an assembly where they learnt about the modern day slavery of children in Africa through the inspiring story telling of a visiting author.
- The primary school sport funding has been used effectively to extend the range of sports available. For example, pupils are learning to fence this half term. It is also used to improve the skills and confidence of class teachers and to allow more pupils to take part in large scale sporting events. This is increasing the participation and health of pupils.
- The school is a caring, safe environment where safeguarding practices meet statutory requirements.
- The local authority provides effective support through a school improvement professional who visits the school regularly and provides high-quality reports to the governing body.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are knowledgeable about achievement and the quality of teaching because they visit the school regularly and ask challenging questions about the information provided by the headteacher. They share the headteacher's ambitious sense of purpose and want the very best for the pupils they serve. They have taken part in training to improve their knowledge of achievement data.
 - Governors use information well to reward good teaching. Successful action has been taken in the recent past to tackle underperformance so that teaching has improved.
 - The Chair of Governors and executive headteacher are both directors of the Tudhoe Learning Trust. This is ensuring good communication between the governing body and the Trust.
 - Governors ensure resources such as the pupil premium funding are used effectively to narrow the gaps in attainment. The appointment of a Trust finance officer is helping to ensure accurate financial information is provided for governors.

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	138554
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	440062

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor led
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	245
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Derek Turner
Headteacher	Julie Craggs
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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