

Allens Croft Primary School

Allens Croft Road, Kings Heath, Birmingham, B14 6RP

Inspection dates 28–29 January 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher, other leaders and the governing body together form an effective and professional team, which has improved teaching and pupils' achievement.
- Leaders evaluate accurately the school's effectiveness and the quality of its teaching. The school's capacity for further improvement is good.
- There are secure systems for the monitoring and tracking of pupils' progress throughout the school. These are used well to improve teaching and raise standards.
- Leadership in the early years is good and ensures that most children make good progress.
- There are mutually beneficial partnerships with other schools and the local children's centre.
- Most pupils make good progress overall in reading, writing and mathematics at each key stage. Standards are rising; pupils' progress is accelerating.
- Good teaching and attention to the pupils' personal as well as their academic development result in good behaviour and attitudes to learning.
- Well-designed provision for any pupils at risk of falling behind helps them make good progress.
- Pupils enjoy school. They feel safe because adults pay good attention to pupils' welfare.
- An atmosphere of mutual respect exists across the school, and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted very well.
- Pupils understand and appreciate each other's beliefs and values.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils' achievement in mathematics is not as good as that in reading and writing.
- Teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to develop their mathematics skills through work in other subjects.
- Not all teachers have a consistent approach to the ways they challenge the most-able pupils.
- A few subject leaders do not have the full range of skills needed to help senior leaders in their monitoring of learning and teaching.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning and teaching in 15 lessons. Six of these lesson observations were carried out jointly with members of the senior leadership team. Twelve teachers, and their teaching assistants, were seen working with the pupils.
- Inspectors looked at examples of pupils' work, heard a sample of pupils from Key Stages 1 and 2 reading and met with groups of pupils. Many informal opportunities were taken to talk with pupils.
- Discussions were held with all members of the senior leadership team in their various roles, including: the headteacher; assistant headteacher; the inclusion manager (the special educational needs coordinator); and the Key Stage 2 coordinator.
- Meetings were also held with various staff in their roles as leaders of subjects or other aspects of the school's work, such as the early years and curriculum.
- Discussions were held with governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body. A meeting was also held with the local authority's nominated improvement adviser for the school.
- A wide range of school documents was reviewed. These included the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, policies and reports on the school's strengths and aspects for development, monitoring records and reports, safeguarding records, curriculum materials, information provided for families, and governing body documents. The school's data, including records of pupils' progress, were also reviewed.
- Inspectors took account of the 30 responses to an inspection questionnaire for school staff.
- The online questionnaire, Parent View, was completed by 17 respondents, and their views were taken into consideration. The inspectors considered written submissions provided by parents during the inspection.
- The 40 responses to the school's own annual survey of its parents, last carried out very recently in January 2015, were also taken into account, as were the views of the families inspectors spoke with at the school gate.

Inspection team

Michael Miller, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Linda Rowley

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is average in size when compared with other primary schools.
- Although the large majority of pupils speak English as their first language, it is an additional language for just over a quarter of the pupils at the school. This figure is above average.
- A minority of the pupils (just under half) are of White British and Other White heritage backgrounds. A small minority (around a quarter) are from Asian or Asian British backgrounds. There are a few (around 10%) pupils from both Mixed and Black or Black British heritage backgrounds. A few come from various other ethnic groups.
- There are currently two Reception Year and two Year 1 classes; children attending the Reception classes do so full-time. There is one class in each of Years 2 to 6.
- At some 66%, the proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium is well above average. This is additional government funding for pupils currently or previously known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average at about 22%.
- Some 3% of the pupils currently at the school have an education and healthcare plan. The school is in the process of implementing the new code of practice for pupils who have special educational needs and is gradually implementing education and healthcare plans for those pupils for whom this is appropriate.
- The local authority has delegated the role of school improvement adviser to a National Leader of Education who is a headteacher at a local partner school, Colmore Junior School.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for the attainment and progress of pupils by the end of Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the quality of teaching and accelerate further pupils' progress by ensuring that:
 - teachers set work that challenges all groups of pupils, particularly the most able, so they are moved more quickly on to harder work when they have mastered the tasks set
 - teachers' planning takes increased account of the school's good quality data on pupils' progress to plan appropriate challenges for pupils across the ability ranges.
- Consolidate and enhance the improving progress being made by pupils in their mathematics work by:
 - ensuring pupils have more opportunities to develop their mathematical thinking, investigation and calculation skills, and apply them across the full range of the subjects being taught
 - developing a more consistent approach to providing extension tasks for more-able pupils to provide an extra element of challenge in their mathematics work.
- Support those less-experienced subject and other leaders in developing fully the skills they need to assist the experienced senior leaders in checking and evaluating pupils' progress and the quality of teaching, and thus help raise pupils' achievement.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Parent View, and the school's own surveys, show high levels of satisfaction with the school's leadership. Almost all parents spoken with during the inspection had nothing but praise for the school; as one wrote, 'I am very impressed with the school's creative approach to learning and the ways teachers key into the individual pupils' strengths and gifts.' The inspection findings support the parents' views.
- The school has developed a good curriculum which it has ensured is relevant to its pupils. It has made good progress in developing its approach to the new National Curriculum. The work and activities it provides promote interest and often good levels of excitement and fascination for the pupils.
- Through what it teaches, and the school's strong focus on the pupils' personal development, the school ensures that pupils are being prepared well for life in a modern, multicultural Britain. A thorough understanding and appreciation of local community values, as well as more general British values, is at the heart of the school's approach and success. Discussions with pupils and their families show that the ways the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles any potential discrimination are much valued.
- As at the time of the last inspection, the headteacher's very effective leadership is helping to ensure the school's increasing success. Leadership is enabling pupils to make increasingly good progress. Effective teamwork supports well the school's leadership at all levels. Senior leaders and the governing body monitor each aspect of school life properly and regularly. The school ensures that all the required policies and practices for safeguarding pupils are in place and implemented.
- Subject and senior leaders work together cooperatively. This is supported by the school's approach to professional development as well as the teachers' skills in evaluating the impact of their work on pupils' achievement. However, a few subject leaders are relatively new to their post and have yet to develop fully the skills they need to assist the experienced senior leaders in checking and evaluating pupils' progress and the quality of teaching, and thus help raise pupils' achievement.
- The monitoring of learning and teaching is good. School records show this is undertaken regularly; the analysis of lessons observed jointly with senior leaders demonstrated a professional, sensitive and positive approach to supporting learning and teaching. Teachers and their assistants are responsive to the school's ways of ensuring accountability for their work. As a result, performance management is being linked to their professional development and is improving successfully both teaching and pupils' progress.
- Through its delegation to a local National Leader of Education (NLE), the local authority monitors the school regularly. The NLE is playing a helpful role in both monitoring and supporting the work of the school and providing helpful advice on school improvement, and particularly for mathematics. This, and other links with a local consortium of schools, has enabled the school to build a network of partner schools to help quality assure the accuracy of teachers' assessments concerning pupils' attainment and progress.
- Senior leaders and governors check regularly that the pupil premium funding has a good impact on the achievement of eligible pupils, who form the large majority of those at the school. This funding is being used effectively, particularly in securing additional staffing and resources to provide extra tuition, and to ensure no pupils are disadvantaged.
- Effective use is being made of the primary school physical education and sport premium. This is enhancing the opportunities for pupils to participate and do well in these areas. The school has used the funding well not only to employ a specialist physical education teacher but also to build network links with other schools to promote the subject. Discussions with pupils show that they enjoy their sport, and appreciate the benefits this brings to their health and well-being.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - There has been significant improvement in the governance of the school since the last inspection, when a review of governance was recommended. This has been completed successfully. The governing body places a clear priority on ensuring the school's legal requirements are met in full.

- Governors show a strong commitment to the school; there is a close working partnership between the governing body and school staff. This means that governors have a good appreciation of the school, its local community and the specific needs of its pupils. Discussion with governing body representatives show that they have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for further development.
- Through the reports they receive, governors gain a helpful understanding of the school's data; there is a clear appreciation of how well the school is performing. Governors are properly involved in the monitoring of performance management and, through regular visits to the school, are knowledgeable about the quality of teaching and pupils' learning and progress. The governing body ensures that teachers' salaries are linked to pupils' progress, teaching quality and the national *Teachers' Standards*.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. There is a consistent approach by staff to behaviour management to which the pupils respond well, both in lessons and around the school. Pupils' attitudes to learning are also good. Attendance is rising and is now average. There is a strong sense of community within the school.
- Pupils show high levels of mutual respect. They listen to each other's views and ideas both thoughtfully and reflectively. This demonstrates the often high quality of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school enables pupils to start to see beyond country, class or creed as they get older and grow in experience.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Discussions with pupils confirm that they are happy at the school and feel safe. This makes an important contribution to helping them make progress. All parents responding to 'Parent View' agreed that their children are happy at the school and feel safe.
- No pupils spoken with thought that bullying was an issue at the school. Pupils of all ages show that they have a good understanding of the hurtful nature of the different types of bullying. For their ages, pupils have a good understanding of how to keep safe. Pupils pay good attention to their own and others' safety and well-being, and this is evident across most aspects of school life. Children learn to be kind and considerate towards each other right from the Reception Year, and are given the skills to use tools and equipment safely. The importance of courtesy and respect are understood well by pupils of all ages.
- The school's inclusive approach is reflected in the pupils' understanding of each other. Pupils can be sure that discrimination is not tolerated. Pupils are also being prepared well for life in a wider society and modern Britain, particularly in the ways they develop open minds to the different viewpoints, beliefs and ideas of others. Universal, including British, values of democracy, the rule of law, tolerance, mutual respect and liberty are understood well by the pupils.
- Pupils' good personal development was illustrated in a highly effective Year 5 personal, social and health education lesson, which was part of a national initiative to challenge homophobia in primary schools. This followed an excellent whole-school assembly, on the previous day, where pupils of all ages showed that they were able to explore the question 'What is true love?' Pupils showed that they had an understanding of concepts such as 'sacrifice' which was beyond their years. Pupils appreciate that giving up things they love as individuals to help make others happy is often important in life, and were able to reflect very well on this.
- Pupils in Year 5 demonstrated the fine impact of the school's approach to inclusion and community values through their discussions about the book *'My Princess Boy'* and the concept of unconditional friendship. Pupils showed true empathy in the ways they talked, for example, about the importance of people having an 'open heart and being beautiful'. As one pupil said, 'We are all human, we are all unique.'

The quality of teaching is good

- The teaching of reading, writing and mathematics is good overall across the school. Teachers and teaching assistants understand well the strengths and specific learning needs of individual pupils across the ability ranges. Pupils of all abilities respond well to the daily challenges offered by the teaching. This is raising steadily pupils' standards across the school.
- The school has started to look more closely at the performance of its more-able pupils and how the teaching can challenge them further, especially in mathematics. However, there is not yet a consistent approach to planning, and providing harder work and extension tasks for the school's most-able pupils in all lessons; particularly when the pupils concerned have mastered the tasks set and met their targets.
- Discussions with staff and governors show a school-wide awareness that closing the 'gap' between the standards achieved by pupils in mathematics and English is a key school priority. The school has made good progress in the teaching of its new curriculum for mathematics, and in the ways it teaches basic mathematics skills. However, sufficient opportunities are not always planned to enable pupils to practise and employ their mathematics skills within other subjects. There are not always sufficient opportunities to develop and apply their mathematical thinking, investigation and calculation skills. This is in contrast with the often excellent opportunities that pupils have across a wide range of subjects to develop their reading and writing skills.
- There are a number of important strengths in the teaching, and examples of good practice are to be seen across the school. There is good, cooperative planning concerning what is taught, and this contributes well to the relevance of the school's curriculum. Good organisation and the use of resources result in the effective use of time during lessons and pupils generally make rapid progress as a result. Marking is regular and linked well to the targets set for the pupils in each particular piece of work. Teachers back up their marking well through oral feedback. Pupils appreciate this.
- Working relationships between teachers, teaching assistants and their pupils are good. Teachers have suitably high expectations of both themselves and their pupils; staff are ambitious to help pupils to succeed. Pupils learn well because teachers know and understand them well as individuals.

The achievement of pupils is good

- In the two years since the school's previous inspection, pupils' achievement has improved significantly, particularly in Key Stage 2. The good progress seen previously in the Reception Year and in Key Stage 1 has continued; the progress pupils make in Key Stage 2 has accelerated. This is because the school now makes more effective use of its systems for tracking and monitoring pupils' progress.
- The school has been successfully strengthening the quality of its provision from the Reception Year onwards, to provide pupils with an increasingly firm foundation on which to build in later years. This is now paying dividends throughout the school. The school has responded positively to the ways it is improving pupils' standards, including in the current Reception Year and Key Stage 1.
- In the 2014 national tests and assessments, the attainment of Year 6 pupils was below average, but this represented good progress from their low standards four years earlier in Year 2. Progress was weaker in mathematics, resulting in lower standards than the pupils gained in English. Ensuring the closing of this 'gap' forms a major part of the school's improvement plan.
- School data show that, since the last inspection, most pupils in Key Stage 2 have made good progress, with some making exceptional progress. This is not fully reflected in the results for last year's Year 6 pupils because, although their good progress made up a lot of lost ground, it was not enough to overcome shortfalls in achievement from previous years. Gaps in performance between disadvantaged pupils and their classmates, and other pupils nationally, are closing successfully in reading and writing, but not as fast in mathematics.

- Disadvantaged pupils make the same progress overall as their classmates, but their attainment remains lower because of their weaker starting points. In 2014, the attainment of these pupils lagged behind that of their classmates by about two terms in mathematics, and two and a half terms in reading and writing. Their standards were below those of other pupils nationally by four and a half terms in mathematics, and two and a half terms in reading and writing. Such gaps were wider than seen with current pupils.
- School records, and discussions with pupils and parents, show that most pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs achieve well and make good progress because their individual needs, both personal and academic, are met well. This is brought about through effective teaching and support, both in main lessons and through more specialist group work. Their progress is monitored well by the school's inclusion manager.
- Pupils for whom English is an additional language also make good progress because the additional support they receive enables them to gain effective use of English as a new language. Established research evidence shows that it can take between 2 to 5 years for good conversational English to develop, depending upon an individual's ability. The school is successful in enabling such pupils to gain an increasing understanding of the English language in order to help accelerate their progress.
- School data show that in their first years in school relatively few pupils reach higher levels. However, the needs of the most-able pupils are fostered well and they make good progress overall. A greater proportion of pupils reach high standards by the end of Year 6 than they did in Year 2. This success is because they respond well to the challenges provided to help them reach their targets. However, the most able do not always have such challenges extended consistently or quickly enough once they have reached their targets.
- By Year 6, most pupils have developed into confident readers whose skills are currently broadly typical for pupils of their age in terms of their accuracy and fluency of reading, their ability to tackle new vocabulary, and the ways they interpret text. The teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they represent), is good throughout the school, and this helps support the development of pupils' reading skills. Children's speaking and listening skills are being developed particularly well in the Reception Year, and this lays a firm foundation for the pupils' literacy work in later year groups.
- Pupils achieve well in their writing work. This is because of a firm focus on English grammar, punctuation and spelling through marking. All writing work is done in the same book, no matter what subject. This leads to expectations of English writing being equally high across all subjects. Pupils develop the skills to write for a wide range of purposes, including creative writing. There is good writing about science investigations, descriptions of the beliefs of different religions, and research, for example about Stonehenge. Pupils take pride in such work.

The early years provision

is good

- The large majority of pupils start in the Reception Year with knowledge, skills and understanding which are broadly typical for their age. However, around a fifth are typically around a year behind in important aspects of their personal, social and emotional development, their communication and language skills, their literacy skills generally, and in their knowledge and understanding of the world.
- Good leadership ensures that provision and children's achievement in the early years are good. Thorough procedures are in place to check children's starting points when they join the Reception classes. Conscientious tracking of children's early development enables staff to intervene quickly when they identify gaps in children's learning or where children are exceeding expectations. Teachers in the early years work and plan collaboratively, and this benefits the children's development.
- Staff use assessments and regular observations of children well to evaluate the children's progress, and to plan for their future work. Adults in the early years are often good at stepping back and observing children to assess the ways they learn and interact with each other. This is used effectively to plan work for individuals and groups of children. Adults' questioning skills are particularly good in enabling children to think things through and express their thoughts and ideas.

- Learning in the early years is supported effectively by the good attitudes to school shown by most children. Their social development, including the willingness to respond to the high expectations set by staff, is often the result of the positive experiences they have received from their work with teachers and teaching assistants alike. Children prove happy and confident learners.
- Since the last inspection, school data show that children are making increasingly good progress. By summer 2014, the proportion of children achieving success in all 17 areas of their learning was slightly better than the national average overall. The proportion of children who achieved a good level of development was above average. Current Reception Year children are on track to achieve even better.
- Working relationships between staff and the children and their families are good. The school is working increasingly closely, and successfully, with its partner children's centre. These and other partnership links are providing a firm foundation for the children and helping to accelerate their learning. Consistently good or better teaching is also setting clear routines for the children and building on these by providing opportunities for free play and in the promotion of the children's speech and language development.
- Children's safety, health and general welfare have a suitably high priority; they are kept safe in an environment that stimulates their curiosity and enables them to thrive. The foundations for children's interest in learning are being established firmly in the Reception classes.

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	103243
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	453760

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	241
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Collier
Headteacher	Paula Weaver
Date of previous school inspection	20 March 2013
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