

# Alfred Street Junior School, Rushden

Alfred Street, Rushden, NN10 9YS

**Inspection dates** 16–17 April 2015

| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>   | Previous inspection: | Requires improvement        | 3        |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|----------|
|                                | This inspection:     | <b>Requires improvement</b> | <b>3</b> |
| Leadership and management      |                      | Good                        | 2        |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils |                      | Good                        | 2        |
| Quality of teaching            |                      | Good                        | 2        |
| Achievement of pupils          |                      | Requires improvement        | 3        |

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Since the last inspection, pupils' progress has not been good enough to ensure they reach the standards that they are capable of by the end of Year 6.
- Attainment at the end of Year 6 has been broadly average, but lower in reading and mathematics than in writing.
- Although pupils' achievement is improving in all three subject areas and they now achieve well in reading, they still do not do as well in mathematics.
- There are weaknesses in some pupils' reasoning and problem-solving skills in mathematics.
- Work is not set at a suitable level of difficulty for pupils in subjects such as geography and history.
- In some classes, the good quality of pupils' writing in English is not reflected in their writing in other subjects.
- The achievement of the most able pupils requires improvement. Too few are reaching the higher levels of attainment.

### The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher, other leaders, staff and supportive governors have taken positive action to improve the quality of teaching and to raise pupils' achievement.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and behave well in lessons and around the school.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted successfully. They are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Safeguarding procedures are effective. Pupils feel safe and well looked after by the staff.
- Teaching has improved since the last inspection and is now good. This has had a positive impact on pupils' progress, although not yet a full impact on attainment by the end of Year 6.
- Teachers provide clear guidance for pupils and engage them well.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classes. Some lessons were seen jointly with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher or the assistant headteacher.
- They scrutinised pupils' work and analysed the information about their attainment and progress.
- They held discussions with the headteacher, other staff, a representative from the local authority, governors and pupils.
- The inspectors took account of the 10 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, and the 42 returns from the school's own survey.
- Responses to the questionnaire from 14 members of staff were taken into account.
- The inspectors examined a range of documents, including: school policies; safeguarding procedures; and the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning.

## Inspection team

Derek Watts, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jacqueline Pentlow

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Most of the pupils are White British.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average.
- An above-average proportion of pupils are eligible for the pupil premium. This is additional funding for looked after children and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The proportion of pupils who join the school part way through the year has increased recently, particularly in the current Year 6.
- The deputy headteacher was appointed in September 2014 and the post of assistant headteacher has recently been created.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' progress so they reach higher standards by the end of Year 6, particularly in mathematics, by:
  - ensuring that challenging work is set for pupils in subjects such as geography and history
  - giving the most-able pupils sufficiently demanding work to do
  - building on the work to increase pupils' reasoning and problem-solving skills in mathematics
  - increasing the opportunities for pupils to write longer pieces in subjects other than English.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- Leadership and management have improved since the previous inspection. The headteacher and other key leaders have taken decisive and effective action to improve teaching in particular. Leaders and staff work well as a team and show determination to move the school forward. Teaching is now good and pupils are making faster progress.
- Leaders' actions have led to a marked improvement in the quality of teaching. Senior leaders, the local authority and local headteachers regularly check the quality of teaching. Effective coaching, training and support have been provided to help improve teachers' practice and skills. For example, training in the teaching of reading has had a positive impact on pupils' progress. The school's arrangements for the management of teachers' performance contribute well to the improvement of teaching. The targets set to increase teachers' skills are linked to pupils' progress.
- The relatively new deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher have settled well into their roles and are making a good contribution to school improvement. The leadership of key areas such as English in particular is effective. Subject leaders rigorously check the progress of pupils and the quality of teaching in their respective areas.
- The headteacher and staff have created a positive and welcoming school ethos where pupils can learn and flourish. All leaders and staff promote good behaviour and ensure that all pupils are safe. The systems to check and promote attendance are thorough. Leaders and staff successfully foster qualities and values such as listening to others, care, cooperation, honesty, responsibility, tolerance and respect for others. They promote spiritual, moral, social and cultural development successfully and prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain.
- The school provides an appropriate range of subjects. Effective action has been taken to accelerate pupils' progress in reading. Leaders have rightly identified the development of pupils' reasoning and problem-solving skills as an improvement priority in mathematics. Good-quality provision for art enhances pupils' aesthetic and cultural development. A wide range of additional activities such as clubs, educational visits and sport enrich pupils' learning and contribute well to their personal development.
- Leaders have developed an effective system for recording and checking pupils' attainment and progress. The implementation of a new assessment system without National Curriculum levels is at an early stage.
- The school promotes equality of opportunity well, fosters good relations and tackles all forms of discrimination effectively. All groups of pupils have full and equal access to the activities provided.
- The use of the pupil premium has improved. This area is led well and a range of support programmes has been implemented to help ensure that eligible pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The primary school physical education and sport premium is used effectively to promote pupils' physical development and to extend their sporting opportunities. An effective sports partnership has been established with other schools in the area. Specialist coaches are employed to provide quality teaching for pupils and training for staff in areas such as gymnastics, trampoline and dance. Pupils participate well in different sports clubs such as archery, football, fencing, golf, and dance.
- The local authority has a clear overview of the school's performance and provides good support. Members of staff have been to other schools to observe good practice. The school has been active in enlisting advice and support from other professionals.
- The governors ensure that all safeguarding procedures are robust and meet requirements.
- The partnership with the local infant school is being strengthened in order to reach agreement about pupils' attainment and the quality of their work to help the transition from infant to junior school. Leaders

and governors are keen to extend this work further.

#### ■ The governance of the school:

- Governance has improved since the previous inspection and is now effective.
- The members of the governing body are supportive and provide appropriate challenge in order to hold the school to account. Governors have high aspirations for further improvement.
- The governors have an accurate and realistic overview of the school's performance. They analyse the data and have a clear understanding of pupils' attainment and progress.
- Governors have a good knowledge of the quality of teaching and check its impact on pupils' progress. They understand requirements relating to the management of staff performance and ensure that promotion and salary increases are based on the progress that pupils make. They ensure that effective action is taken to improve any teaching that is less than good.
- Governors check that additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is used properly and question the impact of spending on pupils' achievement.

### The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

#### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. The school has maintained and built on the good behaviour identified in the previous inspection report.
- In lessons, pupils show enthusiasm for learning. They are attentive, cooperative, and participate well in the activities provided. They listen carefully to their teachers' clear explanations and instructions. They respond well to teachers' questions. Pupils show concentration and effort when tackling learning activities. Only occasionally are they less focused, typically when work is less challenging.
- Pupils' behaviour is positive in assemblies, in the dining hall, in the playground and when they are moving around the school. The school's clear records show that behaviour is typically good over time.
- Pupils are courteous, cooperative, friendly and respectful to others. They show an appreciation and good understanding of different cultures and faiths. In discussions, pupils demonstrated a good knowledge of different places of worship, religious festivals and special books. They help others who are less well off than themselves by raising funds for national and international charities.
- Pupils willingly take on additional responsibilities, such as being head boy, head girl, monitors and serving on the school council. Older pupils organise additional activities for the younger ones.
- Attendance levels have improved since the previous inspection because of the school's effective systems for checking and promoting good attendance. Attendance is currently close to average.

#### Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. All parents who completed the online survey, Parent View, and almost all who completed the school's own survey, stated that their children are happy at school, feel safe and are well looked after. The pupils themselves confirmed to the inspectors that they feel safe at school and are well looked after by the staff.
- Safeguarding is given good attention, and leaders and staff take effective steps to ensure that all pupils, particularly the most vulnerable, are well cared for and protected.
- All staff have had recent training in child protection and safeguarding. The systems for checking and recording safety matters ensure that any concerns are quickly dealt with. All staff are security checked before being appointed to the school.
- Senior leaders and the site manager carry out regular risk assessments and ensure that the school is a

safe place for pupils. The school's accommodation and the site are well maintained.

- Pupils show a clear understanding of bullying and the different forms it can take, including cyber-bullying and name-calling. Discussions with them and the school's records of incidents confirm that bullying in the school is rare. Pupils are confident that should bullying occur, staff would quickly deal with it.

### **The quality of teaching** is good

- Teaching has improved since the previous inspection, particularly during the last year. Teaching is promoting good progress for different groups of pupils, especially in literacy and reading. Teachers establish positive relationships with pupils and manage them well. Teachers expect pupils to do their very best and the pupils respond well to these expectations.
- The weaknesses in teaching identified in the previous inspection have been tackled well. Effective support is now provided for pupils in danger of falling behind, including those eligible for the pupil premium. The marking of pupils' work has been strengthened. Teachers provide encouragement and praise for good work and constructive comments to help pupils improve.
- Teachers typically use assessments of pupils' attainment effectively to plan their teaching and to ensure that work set is usually well suited to the abilities of different groups, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics. However, teachers do not always set sufficiently demanding work for the most-able pupils. As a consequence, pupils are engaged in their learning and their interest is sustained. They now acquire knowledge well and deepen their understanding.
- In subjects such as geography and history, the work is not always set at the right level of challenge for different pupils. When this happens, work can be too easy for some and too difficult for others.
- All teachers effectively share the purpose of the lesson with the class. As a result, pupils know and understand what they are expected to learn. Teachers' explanations and instructions are clear and informative. They ask probing questions to challenge pupils' thinking and to check how well they have understood new learning.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are taught well and receive effective support that is specific to their needs. Consequently, these pupils make good progress. Teaching assistants are well deployed and make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning. New arrivals receive good support when needed.
- The teaching of reading has been strengthened since the previous inspection. The teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds that link to them) is effective. Teachers and teaching assistants provide good guidance and question pupils skilfully to help pupils understand different texts. Pupils are provided with valuable opportunities to apply their reading skills in different subjects.
- Writing is taught well. Teachers provide clear demonstrations and guidance to help pupils develop their writing skills, especially in English lessons. Pupils are given opportunities to write for different purposes. Good attention is given to the teaching of grammar, punctuation and spelling. Teachers are taking effective steps to strengthen pupils' spelling, which has been a weaker area. However, pupils do not have enough opportunities to write detailed and extended pieces in subjects other than English in all classes.
- In mathematics, teachers use explanations and demonstration well to deepen pupils' understanding of calculation and mathematical operations. Teachers have begun to place more emphasis on developing pupils' reasoning skills and promoting the application of numeracy skills in order for pupils to solve relevant mathematical problems.

### **The achievement of pupils** requires improvement

- Pupils' are not yet making good progress from their starting points. Most year groups join the school with broadly average attainment in reading, writing and mathematics. By the end of Year 6 in 2014, attainment was broadly average overall, but lower in reading and mathematics than in writing. Progress in reading was the weakest area.
- The 2014 results showed that achievement required improvement. Weaknesses in teaching, particularly in the teaching of reading, contributed to pupils not achieving as well as they should. Furthermore, pupils' underdeveloped reasoning and problem-solving skills led to some underachievement in mathematics
- The headteacher, key leaders and staff have taken positive steps to raise pupils' achievement, particularly in reading and mathematics. The school's assessments and pupils' work show that pupils are making faster progress than before, especially in reading. Achievement in mathematics is currently lagging a little behind that in reading and writing.
- Improvements to pupils' progress have yet to have a full impact on their attainment by the end of Year 6. While pupils in the current Year 6 are on course to reach above-average standards in reading, standards in writing and mathematics are on track to be broadly average.
- In 2014, the Year 6 pupils supported by the pupil premium attained lower standards than the others in reading, writing and mathematics. They were about two terms behind in all three areas. Compared to other pupils nationally, they were about three terms behind in reading, two in mathematics and just over one in writing. They did not make as much progress as other pupils nationally. Stronger teaching and well-planned support are helping to ensure that disadvantaged pupils are now making faster progress. Recent assessment data for all current year groups show that disadvantaged pupils are now making good progress and the gaps in attainment are closing.
- Pupils who join the school part way through the year are carefully assessed and receive good teaching and support. Most are currently making good progress.
- The achievement of the most-able pupils requires improvement. In 2014, an average proportion of pupils attained the higher levels in writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6. However, the proportion reaching the higher levels in reading was below average. The most able made expected progress through Years 3 to 6 in all three areas. In the current Year 6, similar proportions are on track to reach the higher levels in writing and mathematics but improvements are predicted in reading.
- The progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is now good because of better teaching. Pupils receive well-focused and specific support that meets their needs.
- Most pupils are now making good progress in reading because of the decisive action taken by the school. The profile of reading has been raised and pupils enjoy reading and the reading tasks set. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 consolidate and extend their phonics skills. Older pupils acquire and apply more advanced reading skills such as deduction and inference. Pupils apply reading skills well to find useful information.
- Pupils achieve well in writing. They write for a range of purposes and use different styles. Their grammar, punctuation and spelling are developing well. They apply their writing skills well in English lessons. For example, pupils in Year 4 and Year 5 used emotive language, repetition and exaggeration to good effect in persuasive writing. While there are good examples of pupils applying their writing skills to produce good-quality and detailed written accounts in subjects such as geography, history and science, this good practice is not consistent in all classes.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics is improving but is not consistently good in all classes. Pupils show clear knowledge and understanding of how to make calculations and carry out mathematical operations. Their ability to reason and apply their numeracy skills to solve problems is less strong, but teachers are tackling these areas as a priority. For example, pupils in Year 3 used a range of strategies to solve challenging addition problems. Pupils in Year 6 used graph and tracing paper skilfully to illustrate rotational symmetry of different two-dimensional shapes from an origin.

## 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

|                                |                  |
|--------------------------------|------------------|
| <b>Unique reference number</b> | 121857           |
| <b>Local authority</b>         | Northamptonshire |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 461989           |

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

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| <b>Type of school</b>                      | Junior                                 |
| <b>School category</b>                     | Community                              |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 7–11                                   |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed                                  |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 193                                    |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | The governing body                     |
| <b>Chair</b>                               | Brenda Hunt                            |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | John Kidney                            |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>  | 24–25 April 2013                       |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 01933 353762                           |
| <b>Fax number</b>                          | 01933 355955                           |
| <b>Email address</b>                       | head@alfredstreet.northants-ecl.gov.uk |

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