

Abbey Junior School

Barclay Road, Smethwick, B67 5LT

Inspection dates 30 April–1 May 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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The school is improving rapidly under the outstanding leadership of the headteacher.
- The headteacher, deputy headteacher and the governors have worked very well together to improve teaching and raise achievement.
- Governors hold the headteacher and other leaders to account very well and ensure that actions to improve are successful.
- The school's leaders have used the pupil premium funds well to provide a wide range of support for disadvantaged pupils.
- Disadvantaged pupils make outstanding progress in reading and writing. The gaps between their attainment and that of other pupils is closing rapidly.
- Pupils make good progress and standards are now above average in Year 6.
- Teachers have high expectations of how well pupils will achieve. They set challenging tasks that are well matched to pupils' abilities.
- Teachers encourage pupils to reach higher standards by setting them clear targets for improvement.
- Pupils behave well, both in and out of lessons. By Year 6, pupils' attitudes to learning are exemplary.
- The school is an exceptionally safe place for pupils. Pupils from all backgrounds get on very well with one another.
- Pupils' attendance is consistently well above average.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not check often enough that pupils are concentrating fully and working as hard as possible in lessons.
- Teachers occasionally make errors in punctuation and grammar in their own writing, which does not provide a good model for pupils.
- Subject leaders do not consistently provide clear guidance to teachers on how to improve their teaching.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 19 lessons. In addition, the inspectors listened to pupils reading and analysed the work in their books.
- Inspectors held meetings with staff, pupils, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 50 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors spoke to parents informally during the inspection to gather their views.
- Inspectors observed the school's work, including arrangements for keeping pupils safe. They looked at a number of documents including: the school's own information on pupils' progress; the school's evaluation of its performance; records relating to attendance and behaviour; and documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

David Driscoll, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Kelly Lee

Additional Inspector

Sarah Davey

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Around half of the pupils are White British. The remaining pupils come from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds.
- An average proportion of pupils is disabled or has special educational needs.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported through the pupil premium (additional funding for pupils currently known to be eligible for free school meals, those who have been eligible for free school meals at any time in the last six years and children in the care of the local authority) is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school is part of a federation with Abbey Infants School. The two schools share a governing body, an executive headteacher (referred to as the headteacher throughout this report) and an executive deputy headteacher (referred to as the deputy headteacher throughout this report).
- The previous executive headteacher fell ill in February 2014 and the executive deputy headteacher was made acting executive headteacher until September 2014. She was supported by the current executive headteacher who took up his current post in September 2014.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teachers check that all pupils are working as hard as possible in lessons.
- Make sure that teachers' grammar and punctuation are accurate on displays and when they write on the whiteboard.
- Ensure that all subject leaders provide precise guidance to teachers on how to improve their teaching.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher form a strong team. They have put many policies and procedures into practice that ensure that all staff know what is expected of them and what they are trying to achieve. All staff implement policies consistently. Teachers say that they are working harder than previously but find their work much more fulfilling.
- Leaders and governors have successfully established a culture where the best teaching is encouraged and good behaviour is the norm. Staff morale is high and many parents comment on how much the school has improved. Leaders ensure that all pupils are treated equally and have equal opportunity to succeed.
- Standards were already rising when the headteacher joined the school, but the rate of improvement has accelerated. The headteacher took immediate action to address the previous underachievement of disadvantaged pupils. The pupil premium funds have been used well to provide a very wide range of different support for such pupils, targeted at helping them in the areas where they most needed to catch up. Consequently, disadvantaged pupils make rapid progress and are making up the ground they lost in the past.
- Teaching is improving well. The headteacher and deputy headteacher carry out frequent checks on teaching and accurately identify strengths and areas for improvement. Teachers are quick to act on the advice they are given in order that the pupils they teach make better progress.
- Teachers now have targets that are appropriately demanding, so leaders can judge whether they are improving the achievement of the pupils for which they are responsible. Previously, teachers had received pay rises which their performance did not warrant.
- Subject leaders and teachers responsible for aspects of the school's work play a good part in helping to move the school forward. They check the quality of teaching conscientiously, but there is variation in the quality of feedback they give to teachers. Some guidance tells the teacher exactly what needs to be done to improve, whereas other guidance has little impact on the teaching.
- The special educational needs coordinator is rigorous in assessing and evaluating the effectiveness of support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. She modifies any provision as soon as it becomes apparent that it is not helping a pupil to make progress.
- The curriculum is good. It provides a broad range of subjects. Pupils particularly value the many trips and visitors who widen their horizons. All staff have been trained in the teaching of British values, and teachers have provided information evenings for parents to explain the changes that have been made to promote them. Teachers build the core values, such as tolerance, democracy and justice, into the topics they teach.
- The school prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain. Central to the school's work is the theme of respect for others, their faiths, cultures and backgrounds. Leaders ensure that there is no discrimination of any type in school.
- The extra sports funding provided for primary schools has been spent well. All staff have been trained in teaching physical education, so the quality of teaching has improved. More pupils are taking up sport each year and many more now take part in competitive sport.
- Leaders ensure that safeguarding requirements are met in full. Consequently, pupils are safe in school and parents have great confidence in staff to keep their children safe.
- The local authority has provided good support. It has provided training for staff in mathematics and English, which has improved teaching and helped to raise standards.

- The federation is a benefit to the school. The school has strong systems to ensure that pupils move smoothly from the infants to the juniors. The way that key staff are shared has reduced costs considerably. Leaders have used the expertise of individual staff to help raise standards through, for example, ensuring that assessments are accurate.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governance is outstanding. Governors hold the headteacher to account very well. They use their deep understanding of the school's performance to ask challenging questions such as, 'Why are standards in mathematics not improving as quickly as those in reading, and what is being done about it?' Governors visit frequently to check that what they are told is happening is proving effective in practice. Their visits ensure that they are exceptionally knowledgeable about the school, and especially the quality of teaching.
- Governors know what is being done to improve teaching and know that performance management is now more effective. They check that good teaching is rewarded, using anonymised data, and pay close attention to how well weaker teaching is improved.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils behave well, both in and out of lessons. Around the school, pupils demonstrate good manners, for example by holding doors open for one another. They are polite and courteous towards visitors.
- Pupils get on very well with one another on the playground. Pupils from all backgrounds play happily together, take turns at games and share equipment.
- The good behaviour means that the school excludes very few pupils. There have been only exclusions in the last three years, one fixed-term and one permanent.
- Pupils' attendance is consistently in the top 20% of schools nationally. Pupils are punctual and come to school ready to learn.
- In lessons, most pupils behave very well. By Year 6, pupils' attitudes to learning are exemplary. They work hard and concentrate for the full duration of the lesson. Pupils show great pride in their work and in their achievements. On occasions, younger pupils do not get straight down to work and do not concentrate on their work.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Parents and pupils all agree that the school is a very safe place in which to learn and play. Adults, for example, staff a room every break and lunchtime where pupils can come and talk about any problems, or simply have a quiet place to sit and read.
- The leaders' actions to promote racial harmony have proved highly effective. All pupils say that there is never any discrimination from other pupils, and this is confirmed by the complete absence of any form of racist incidents for some years. All staff have been trained in identifying and tackling any signs of extremism.
- Pupils are very aware of what constitutes bullying and what to do about it. All wear a 'STOP' wristband as a reminder that bullying is 'Several Times On Purpose' and to 'Start Telling Other People'. However, this advice is rarely needed, as incidents are so infrequent.
- The school has many other measures in place to ensure pupils are safe. The site manager, for example, organises the pupils' health and safety council, which identifies pupils' concerns and awards prizes when pupils behave particularly safely. The site manager also meets with the health and safety governor on a daily basis, while the governor also carries out unannounced spot checks.

- All pupils have a strong understanding of how to keep themselves safe. They are very aware of the dangers of gang culture and knowledgeable about how to keep safe online.

The quality of teaching is good

- Consistently good teaching across the year groups ensures that pupils achieve well. Teachers plan activities that are well matched to pupils' different abilities and ensure that pupils make good progress in learning new skills. In reading, for example, teachers make sure that books get progressively more demanding, so pupils learn new vocabulary and broaden their interests.
- Accurate assessments are at the heart of the good teaching. Teachers assess a piece of work in mathematics, for example, but then test pupils again after three weeks to make sure that they have retained the knowledge and understanding. Each assessment leads to a new set of targets for pupils, so all know what they are aiming for, both in a lesson and in the longer term.
- Teachers mark pupils' writing accurately. They focus on the key elements of spelling, punctuation and grammar so that pupils have all the basics of good writing. Consequently, standards in writing are improving rapidly.
- Teachers provide clear and explicit instructions, so that all pupils know exactly what they are to learn in a lesson and what they have to do to achieve their objectives. Pupils find the tasks they are given challenging, but achievable if they try their best.
- Teaching of the small groups who receive extra support is highly effective. Staff focus exceptionally well on exactly what each individual pupil needs to learn next in order to catch up with other pupils. When the pupil has made up the lost ground, the staff make sure they know exactly what to do in lessons to maintain their progress. In reading, for example, they have a 'toolkit' of what to do when they come across an unfamiliar and difficult word.
- Teachers concentrate well on helping those who have fallen behind to catch up, but this sometimes has drawbacks. In some cases, teachers spend too long with a particular group of pupils and do not check often enough that others are working as hard as possible. Sometimes, the most-able pupils complete their work and have to wait for their next task, while others do not pay full attention to their work.
- Occasionally, teachers make grammatical errors or use incorrect punctuation when producing displays or writing on the board. This does not provide a good model for pupils' own writing.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils achieve well. They make good progress from their average starting points, so that standards in reading, writing and mathematics are now above average.
- Standards in 2014 were average; in particular, disadvantaged pupils, many of whom were disabled or had special educational needs, did not achieve as well as they should have. Nevertheless, the results were significantly better than those in 2013.
- In 2014, disadvantaged pupils were more than two terms behind other pupils nationally in mathematics and writing, and around a term behind in reading. The gaps were narrowing in all three subjects. Disadvantaged pupils were around a term behind other pupils in the school in reading, two terms behind in writing and three terms behind in mathematics.
- Leaders put a wide range of support in place for disadvantaged pupils, and any others who needed to make up lost ground. These have been highly successful. Disadvantaged pupils have made outstanding progress in reading and writing this year, and the gap between them and other pupils has closed rapidly. They have made good progress in mathematics, and the previously wider gap has narrowed significantly.

- Other groups of pupils have also benefited from the extra classes and support. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs now make good progress because staff focus on helping them to overcome individual difficulties in reading, writing and mathematics. In lessons, they receive good quality support from teaching assistants who make pupils think for themselves.
- The many different forms of support available to pupils ensure that all can achieve equally and all make good progress, regardless of their background.
- The most-able are given demanding tasks and make good progress. In mathematics, for example, the most-able pupils are given questions on finding the area between two concentric circles; this is a question that is often seen on GCSE papers. They relish the challenge and, particularly in Year 6, throw themselves into their work with alacrity.

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	103929
Local authority	Sandwell
Inspection number	462569

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	360
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Patrick Redmond
Headteacher	Richard Kentish
Date of previous school inspection	8 May 2013
Telephone number	0121 4292700
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