

The Dame Ellen Pinsent School

Ardencote Road, Birmingham, B13 0RW

Inspection dates 4–5 December 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Pupils make excellent progress, achieving outstandingly in a wide range of subjects. They are exceptionally well-prepared for the next stages of their education.
- Teaching is predominantly outstanding and never less than good. Lesson pace is just right. Work is precisely matched to abilities and previous learning so that it comprehensively challenges pupils. Teachers and teaching assistants work seamlessly together.
- Behaviour in lessons and around school is excellent. Any challenging behaviour is dealt with unflappably so that learning continues. Pupils greatly enjoy school and are quick to give examples of favourite activities.
- The headteacher, fully supported by senior staff, sets very high standards and ensures that they are met. Leaders at all levels contribute fully to the school’s success because performance is scrupulously managed, and support and training is very carefully targeted.
- Governors draw on extensive skills to forcefully challenge the school and ensure it excels, contributing excellently to the school’s progress.
- Since the previous inspection, all main aspects remain outstanding and provision for Reception children has improved.
- Parents and carers are not engaged to the maximum in supporting homework. The impact of actions to further improve attendance is not evaluated to the fullest extent.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed an assembly and ten lessons, four of them with senior staff.
- Meetings were held with pupils, staff at all levels, and governors. Inspectors spoke with parents and carers bringing their children to school. A telephone discussion was held with a representative of the local authority and an e-mail was received from the school's improvement partner.
- Inspectors heard individual pupils read to staff in lessons.
- Inspectors observed the schools' work and examined a range of documents including ones relating to safeguarding, assessments of pupils' academic and personal progress, policies, and documents relating to managing staff performance. Pupils' work was scrutinised with senior staff.
- Inspectors analysed 41 responses registered on Parent View (the online questionnaire).

Inspection team

Michael Farrell, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Peter McKenzie

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than typical special schools nationally.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational need. A third of pupils has autism spectrum disorder and over a fifth has moderate learning difficulties. A significant proportion has severe learning difficulties; behavioural, emotional and social difficulties; or speech, language and communication needs.
- Six out of every ten pupils in the school are from minority ethnic backgrounds and nearly a third has English as an additional language. A quarter of pupils are of Pakistani background.
- A small number of pupils are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium (the additional government funding provided for those looked after by the local authority or eligible for free school meals) is more than double the national average.
- A much higher proportion of pupils than average come into or move from the school than nationally.
- The school has ten mixed-aged classes. The small numbers of Reception children are taught in a class with Year 1 pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards further by deeply engaging parents and carers in their child's homework through:
 - precisely gathering, analysing and responding to parents' and carers' views about the support they need to get the best from their child's homework
 - providing highly relevant workshops and support for parents and carers based on this research
 - using new technologies to extend and enliven homework.
- Accelerate improvements in attendance by monitoring and evaluating which strategies work with different groups and in different circumstances, and using this information to exactly match interventions to have maximum impact.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- From different starting points, the proportion of pupils making expected or better progress in English and mathematics is higher than for national data.
- Children of Reception age and pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 make excellent progress and learn exceptionally well, developing a range of cognitive skills rapidly.
- Boys and girls, pupils at different levels of ability and previous learning, and those from minority ethnic groups all make excellent progress. Pupils with autism spectrum disorder, moderate learning difficulties, severe learning difficulties, and other types of special educational needs all make exemplary progress. This is because work is challengingly tailored to the individual, and pupils strive to do their very best.
- Over time, the achievement of pupils entitled to the pupil premium matches or exceeds that of others. This is because work is precisely matched to individual needs, and resources are chosen with great care and based on evidence of their impact. Where, very occasionally, the achievement of these pupils is lower than that of others, the school takes effective action and progress is accelerated.
- Where pupils can read, they do so widely and regularly. They apply new skills conscientiously in different contexts because lessons are thoroughly planned to enable this. Pupils are extremely well prepared for the next class in school or the next stage of their learning.
- Learning is never less than good and more often outstanding in a range of subjects and areas. There are early signs of pupils' achievement in physical activities improving further as staff skills and competence grow, helped by the primary school sports funding for physical education.
- In an excellently planned and fast-paced literacy lesson at Key Stage 2, pupils achieved outstandingly in writing a story about Christmas Eve. Some told an adult what they wanted to write, while others prepared a story with a beginning, middle and end. Pupils animatedly described how someone might feel at this time, using phrases such as 'warm and happy' and 'mad with excitement'.
- In a lesson involving writing and related activities, Reception children demonstrated excellent progress making marks. Over time, the work in their books showed increasing precision and skill in recognising a range of pictures where words were also introduced. Their progress was aided by precise individual planning that was constantly updated, ensuring that work remained very challenging.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Teaching observed during the inspection was predominantly outstanding and never less than good, matching observations made over time by senior staff in the school. Staff enthusiasm is infectious so that pupils greatly enjoy their learning.
- The pace of lessons is just right to ensure maximum learning, brisk whenever it can be and steadier when this is necessary to ensure that pupils' understanding is secure.

- teachers and teaching assistants have very high expectations for pupils' behaviour and achievement. Pupils respond to this fully and are courteous and respectful of others. They use opportunities to communicate with 'talking partners' particularly well.
- Planning meticulously ensures that work is pitched at exactly the right levels for pupils' ability and previous learning, stretching learners to do their best.
- Pupils eligible for pupil premium are taught exceptionally well through individualised work, supported by resources that motivate them highly.
- Teaching strategies are varied and highly effective while resources, including new technology, are used imaginatively to bring sparkle to lessons.
- Teaching assistants question pupils with sensitivity and skill, manage behaviour confidently, and provide excellent support as part of a closely knit team.
- Through sharply focused checking and questioning, staff establish pupils' progress during lessons and adapt strategies as necessary to ensure the best progress.
- In an outstanding numeracy lesson in Key Stage 1, the teacher and teaching assistants worked as one. They ensured that pupils concentrated hard on their tasks involving counting and, for some, matching numerals so that achievement was outstanding. The teacher photographed pupils working and used these in an excellent plenary session where pupils excitedly evaluated what they had done.
- Teachers' subject knowledge and their understanding of pupils' development and needs is very secure. Their evaluation of pupils' work is exact, ensuring excellent progress.
- Pupils' work is annotated with great care, providing a clear picture of what pupils can do with help or unaided. Where pupils are able to read, teachers' comments are made on work which are encouraging and show what can be done to improve.
- Appropriate homework is set and this is carefully matched to pupils' skills and interests. The school recognises that it does not do the maximum to deeply involve parents and carers in homework to further raise standards.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Within its welcoming atmosphere, the school has a highly positive climate for learning. It is a happy place where children excel and in which staff are proud to work.
- Pupils show great enjoyment and enthusiasm for learning. 'I like coming to school', said one pupil. They especially enjoy talking partners.
- Attitudes to learning are highly positive so that pupils enjoy lessons and try their hardest. They remember their targets, especially ones to help their learning and social skills such as: 'Learning to play with everyone', 'Sit in my seat', and 'Do my work by myself'.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school at break times and at lunch is excellent. Where there are instances of challenging behaviour, this is handled very effectively so that learning can quickly continue. More generally, highly skilled behaviour management leads to exemplary

conduct.

- Pupils deeply appreciate what the school offers them. They develop, according to age and levels of understanding, a vivid sense of right and wrong.
- Parents and carers, staff and pupils are very positive indeed about behaviour and safety. Pupils are very clear that they feel safe. According to their age and level of understanding, pupils can explain how to keep safe in different settings and circumstances. This includes using the internet. Speaking of social networking sites, one pupil stated, 'You should not send messages, it's for adults.' Pupils move around school safely and outside they play together amicably because there is plenty to do and supervision is very conscientious.
- Pupils begin to develop their understanding of what bullying is, know that it is wrong, and that staff take it seriously. There is no evidence that any particular group is bullied or is bullying. Indeed, bullying and name calling are rare and are dealt effectively should they arise.
- Attendance has slightly improved year-on-year for the past three years and compared with other special schools is high. The school uses a wide range of strategies to encourage attendance. However, in its monitoring of these, the school does not precisely analyse what works best for different groups and in different circumstances to maximise the impact of its interventions.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher, fully supported by senior staff, sets very high standards and expects them to be met. Leaders at all levels demonstrate an unremitting drive for improvement. This assures the school's excellent capacity to improve further.
- Meticulous tracking of pupils' progress draws on data, pupils' work, lesson observations, and planning to give a well-rounded picture.
- Improvements are supported by rigorous management of staff performance, intimately related to pupil progress and the quality of teaching and learning. Carefully selected training and support from within and beyond the school exactly matches priorities for improvement in school development planning.
- Very well considered policies and meticulous planning underpins the school's highly effective practice in all aspects of its work.
- Richly motivating courses of study help ensure very strong progress and personal development for pupils, including excellent behaviour. These programmes contribute excellently to pupils' social, moral, cultural and social development including through visits and visitors, and themed cultural weeks.
- The relationship between the school and the local authority is strong and the school speaks appreciatively of support over the years, including with building renovation. The local authority monitors the school through visits, recognising its high standards.
- The primary school sports funding for physical education is used to enhance the already strong efforts of the school to improve this area. Close partnerships with a school with a sports specialism is used to train and develop staff and this is thoroughly evaluated. Staff confidence in sports teaching is already improving.

■ The school is highly effective in engaging with parents and carers, and in supporting whole families. Parents and carers highly value the school as shown by discussions and by the Parent View responses. The school is keen to further support parents and carers in making homework more exciting and productive.

■ Safeguarding, which is given high priority, complies with current government requirements.

■ **The governance of the school:**

– Governors, highly ambitious for pupils and the continued success of the school, draw on a wide range of skills to hold the school to account vigorously. They scrupulously ensure that safeguarding is secure, and that achievement and teaching are ever improving. Governors regularly check that pupil premium funding, funds to develop physical education, and resources including staffing are used to best effect. They ensure that the headteacher has highly challenging targets of performance and see that staff are similarly challenged to do their best. They evaluate their own work unsparingly, always keen to do more.

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	103615
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	428951

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	122
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rachel Carter
Headteacher	Debbie Allen
Date of previous school inspection	9 May 2011
Telephone number	0121 675 2487
Fax number	0121 675 7295
Email address	enquiry@dameellenpinsent.bham.sch.uk

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