

Victoria Road Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	118369
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	379605
Inspection dates	7–8 March 2012
Lead inspector	Angela Konarzewski

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	202
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lesley Charnley
Headteacher	Simon Way
Date of previous school inspection	3–4 July 2007
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Introduction

Inspection team

Angela Konarzewski

Additional Inspector

Gavin Jones

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors saw 10 teachers teach 17 lessons or parts of lessons. Meetings were held with staff, members of the governing body, and pupils. Inspectors spoke to parents and carers visiting the school during the inspection. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documents including information about pupils' achievement, development planning and self-evaluation records. They scrutinised pupils' workbooks from each year group for writing and in mathematics, and the minutes of governing body meetings. They took into account the questionnaires returned by 84 parents and carers, together with questionnaires from pupils and staff.

Information about the school

Victoria Road is an average-sized primary school with one class per year group. Pupils come predominantly from a White British background. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below the national average. The proportion of pupils identified as disabled or who have special educational needs is higher than in most schools. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for attainment and progress. The school offers extended services including a breakfast club and an after-school club, which are managed by the governing body. The headteacher was appointed in September 2011 and had been supporting the school from the previous June.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	4
Achievement of pupils	4
Quality of teaching	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- In accordance with section 13(3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to teaching and pupils’ achievement in writing and mathematics from Year 2 to Year 6, and for these reasons the school’s effectiveness is not satisfactory.
- Pupils’ attainment in English at the end of Key Stage 2 over the past five years, has been consistently below average. In mathematics it has been broadly average over time, but was just below average in 2011. The school’s own current data show that attainment in Key Stages 1 and 2 remains below average because too few pupils are making expected progress, especially the more able. However, reading attainment is rising across the school. Lower-ability pupils now receive good support and so their achievement is improving, especially in reading.
- As a consequence of weak teaching over time, including some poor quality marking and assessment, especially in writing and mathematics from Years 2 to 6, groups of pupils cannot write or use mathematics as well as they should. For these reasons, the quality of teaching overall is inadequate. Although teaching in Reception is outstanding, and some good teaching was seen elsewhere in the school, the quality of teaching varies too widely and has had insufficient impact on pupils’ achievements since the last inspection.
- Behaviour and safety are satisfactory. The majority of pupils behaved well during the inspection, but a minority of parents, carers and pupils report that this is not always the case. Occasional low-level disruption was observed in a minority of lessons where pupils were not challenged by their work. Attendance has improved and is now above average.

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- The effectiveness of leaders and managers is satisfactory. The ambitious drive for improvement, promoted by the new headteacher, is wholeheartedly supported by senior leaders. The leadership of teaching and management of performance are a priority, and have had an impact in reducing inadequate teaching. Parents and carers support the school and recognise that it is improving since the appointment of the new headteacher.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By July 2013, raise pupils' attainment in writing and mathematics, especially that of more-able pupils, from Years 2 to 6, so that it is at least in line with national averages, through:
 - developing teachers' marking so that pupils are clear about the next steps they need to take to improve their work
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to practise their literacy skills when writing in other subjects
 - improving pupils' punctuation and spelling
 - improving pupils' quick recall of number facts.
- Improve teaching by:
 - developing staff expertise in the teaching of writing and mathematics
 - using assessment information to plan lessons that are well matched to all pupils' abilities, especially for the more able
 - planning activities that are engaging and well matched to the lessons' aims
 - checking on pupils' understanding and progress during lessons.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Almost all parents and carers have a high level of satisfaction with the progress their children make. However, inspection evidence indicates that, although progress is improving and better in some classes, it is too slow in others, and over time pupils make inadequate progress. Currently pupils are not making the progress they should in writing and mathematics. Their attainment in these subjects is below the national average, with a lower than average percentage of more-able pupils attaining the higher levels. In mathematics, these pupils do not have sufficiently quick recall of number facts, including times tables, to solve problems.

Children enter the Reception class at levels that are below those found nationally. They make excellent progress because teaching across all the areas of learning is sharply focused on their individual needs and based on very precise and accurate assessment. Children's reading and writing skills develop at a rapid pace because of expert teaching, particularly about phonics (the way sounds and letters are linked). For example, in a lesson about alliteration of the 's' sound, children invented

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ingredients to put into a cauldron. High levels of engagement and enjoyment promoted good language skills as children added 'stinky socks' and 'slippery snakes' to the unappetising mixture. Good progress is sustained into Year 1 where the teacher liaises closely with Reception to ensure planning and assessments are accurate.

Pupils' progress is too slow across Key Stage 1 as a whole. In the current Year 2 class, achievement in writing and mathematics is inadequate because of a legacy of poor teaching over time, including slow progress where tasks were not always matched sufficiently well to pupils' learning needs. Progress is satisfactory in reading, and attainment is now broadly average by the end Key Stage 1 after a period of lower attainment, and also average by the end of Key Stage 2. Attainment in reading in Years 2 to 6 is higher than in writing because of effective support for pupils who struggle to apply their phonics skills; the gap between the least-able readers and the national average is closing.

Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs often make good progress in lessons because they are effectively supported. Similarly, the achievement of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals has risen as a result of their improved attendance. The few pupils who are at the early stages of learning English as an additional language make at least satisfactory progress.

Quality of teaching

While it is improving, the quality of teaching over time is inadequate overall. It remains too variable, ranging from outstanding to inadequate. Weaknesses in teachers' marking, even where classroom practice is satisfactory or better, contribute to this judgement. Pupils are not consistently guided as to what they need to do to improve the composition of their writing, and many basic errors, most notably in punctuation and spelling, are not corrected. There are insufficient opportunities across the curriculum to promote pupils progress in writing. Similarly, in mathematics, variations in the quality of teaching, assessment and marking result in significant proportions of pupils making inadequate progress. Planning is not always sufficiently effective because activities are not chosen well. For example, in a Key Stage 2 mathematics lesson, pupils were confused because the teacher did not use the computer program in a way that matched the learning intention about subtracting money to find change. In too many lessons, where planning does not take account of pupils' prior knowledge and understanding, the lack of challenge results in pupils not learning fast enough. Although teachers question pupils' knowledge, they do not always challenge or extend pupils' thinking sufficiently, especially that of the more able, nor do they check pupils' understanding regularly during lessons. Teaching is not always engaging and expectations are sometimes low, for example where pupils were allowed to draw mathematical shapes without using a ruler.

In subjects where lessons are carefully planned and work is well directed and managed, pupils make clear gains in their learning, For example, in a Year 4 science

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class, pupils consolidated and developed their understanding of fair testing through an investigation into melting. Pupils with weaker literacy skills recorded their results successfully in a way that meant that their learning in science was not impeded by difficulties with writing. In a Year 4 English lesson, pupils made paper puppets to dramatise their own Mrs Pepperpot adventures. They developed imaginative ideas because of motivational teaching and an enjoyable, active task that engaged them. Similarly, in a Year 6 art lesson the teacher's good subject knowledge supported pupils in successfully drawing portraits in the style of Picasso's 'Weeping Woman'. These lessons contrast sharply with the more typical satisfactory teaching and the small proportion of inadequate teaching.

The very large majority of parents and carers who returned the inspection questionnaire consider that their children are well taught. Inspection evidence, including scrutiny of marking and feedback in pupils' workbooks, does not support this view, although improvements have been made. Teachers establish good relationships with pupils and encourage sound personal, moral and social skills, and respect for people from different backgrounds and cultures, but teaching is of insufficient quality to accelerate pupils' progress in writing and mathematics.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The headteacher has introduced a new behaviour policy and pupils report that behaviour has improved since his arrival, leading to satisfactory behaviour and safety. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes observed during the inspection were positive, especially in lessons where they often remained attentive, even when the pace of learning was slow. Parents, carers and pupils are broadly happy with behaviour in the school, although a few have reservations. Inspectors found that pupils with behavioural difficulties are well aware of the school's strategies for improving their behaviour and are responding to the school's guidance. Although occasional low-level disruption was observed in some classes, the pupils involved responded to the school's behaviour strategies. Behaviour in breakfast and after-school clubs is typically good.

Bullying of any type is rare, and pupils, parents and carers report that it is dealt with effectively when it does occur. The school has worked particularly hard to ensure that pupils are protected from cyber-bullying through their e-safety guidance. The vast majority of pupils say they feel safe and know about the main risks they might face. They praise the support of the learning mentor at playtimes. Attendance has improved, with particular improvements among pupils considered to be vulnerable, including some pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. This increase in their attendance has, in turn, had a positive impact on their achievement. The work of the family liaison officer in engaging with parents and carers has also helped to improve attendance in recent months.

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Leadership and management

The school's satisfactory capacity to improve is demonstrated by the trend of sustained improvement in the achievement of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, and of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. Such closing of gaps in attainment for groups of pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable to underachievement, reflects well on the commitment of leaders and managers to promote equality and counter discrimination. Improvements in the quality of teaching, most notably in Reception, as well as improved behaviour and attendance also illustrate the capacity to improve under the current leadership.

The headteacher has an ambitious vision for the school. In partnership with the newly-appointed senior leaders, he provides a systematic and effective approach to school improvement. Planned actions have raised the quality of teaching so that very little is now inadequate, and have had a significant impact on the achievement of some groups of pupils. Professional development has improved teaching, but not all staff have had the opportunity to focus on skills of teaching writing and mathematics. Most staff and pupils are fully committed to the drive and ambition articulated by senior leaders, but there are inconsistencies. For example, the revised marking policy is still not being rigorously applied by all staff and this directly inhibits pupils' achievement. However, systems for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school are leading to accurate self-evaluation and governors are providing sound challenge and support to senior leaders.

The curriculum is broad and balanced. Although it is not fully effective in developing writing skills, the wider curriculum is well matched to pupils' needs and aspirations, with a good range of enrichment activities such as participation in Crime Week, World Book Day and after-school clubs. The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in assemblies and across the curriculum is satisfactory.

The school works well with parents and carers, including those who might find working with the school difficult, resulting in the rise in attendance. The school's arrangements for safeguarding children meet statutory requirements.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.

9 March 2012

Dear Pupils



Inspection of Victoria Road Primary School, Ashford TN23 7HQ

Thank you for making us so welcome and for telling us about the school in our discussions with you and in your questionnaires. We have given your school a notice to improve because although there are some strengths, there are also some important weaknesses. The new headteacher, other leaders and the governing body know what the problems are and they are keen to make sure the school continues to improve. The following are particular strengths.

- Teaching in the Reception class is outstanding and the children make a really good start to their education.
- Those of you who find reading hard are improving rapidly, because of the extra help you receive.
- Your behaviour is satisfactory and improving, as many of you told us.
- Almost all of you say you feel safe and know who to go to if you are worried.
- Your attendance is above average and this is helping you to make better progress because you are not missing as many lessons as you used to.

We have asked governors and senior leaders to make sure that:

- your writing and mathematics improves
- teachers' marking tells you to know how to improve
- the work you are given is chosen well so that it challenges and interests you
- teachers check on how well you are doing so that you are achieving your best.

You can help by taking extra care with your spelling and punctuation, and by practising your number bonds and times tables so you remember them immediately. You can also look out for advice given in marking and do your best to act upon it.

Yours sincerely

Angela Konarzewski
Lead inspector

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