

Powers Hall Infant School

Spa Road, Witham, CM8 1NA

Inspection dates 19–20 September 2012

| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Satisfactory | 3 |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|----------|
| | This inspection: | Requires Improvement | 3 |
| Achievement of pupils | | Requires Improvement | 3 |
| Quality of teaching | | Requires Improvement | 3 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | | Requires Improvement | 3 |
| Leadership and management | | Requires Improvement | 3 |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- pupils' achievement in Years 1 and 2 is too variable over time
- teaching is not consistently good across all year groups
- in some lessons pupils are not well motivated because teaching does not always meet their needs
- actions by leaders, including the governing body, have not yet brought about improvements in pupils' achievement
- the school does not engage fully enough with some parents, some of whom express concerns about behaviour.

The school has the following strengths

- good teaching in the Nursery and Reception classes means pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress.
- senior leaders have tackled any inadequate teaching
- leaders, including members of the governing body, are committed to raising standards
- there is good quality of support for those pupils who attend the specialist resource provision for speech, language and communication
- the monitoring of pupils' progress is based on accurate, rigorous and regular assessments of their achievement
- achievement in mathematics across the school is good.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in all classes. They visited 20 lessons. Two of these lessons were jointly observed with senior leaders from the school. The inspectors held discussions with pupils, teachers, the headteacher, representatives of the governing body and a local authority officer.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents including the school improvement plan, school data on pupils' progress, records relating to performance management, minutes of meetings of the governing body and the school's self-evaluation summary.
- The views of 45 parents were analysed through the Parent View website. The views of 28 members of staff were analysed through the voluntary staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

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|--------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Peter Lacey-Hastings, Lead inspector | Additional inspector |
| Kanwaljit Singh | Additional inspector |
| Piers Ranger | Additional inspector |

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is an average sized school compared to similar schools nationally with a similar of proportion of girls to boys.
- Nearly all pupils speak English as their first language. There are fewer pupils from minority ethnic groups than in most schools of this size.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is above average.
- The proportions of disabled pupils and pupils supported at school action, at school action plus, or with a statement of special educational needs are broadly average.
- The school has a specialist resource provision for pupils with speech, language and communication difficulties.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the overall quality of teaching and accelerate rates of progress, especially in Key Stage 1 by:
 - minimising low level disruption and engaging pupils effectively in their learning through well paced lessons which ensure that pupils have sufficient time to apply their basic skills, especially in literacy
 - using assessment information to precisely match work to meet the needs of all pupils, particularly more able
 - consistently checking pupils' progress in lessons and using this information to adapt lessons effectively
 - ensuring that pupils understand the feedback they receive from their teachers on how to improve their work and provide pupils with time to respond to this
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills.
- Ensure that key stage leaders are included in the monitoring and modelling of teaching to promote good practice across all year groups.
- Engage and improve communication with parents and the local community through a planned set of actions that include increasing opportunities for parents to come into school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Children enter the school at below age-related expectations and leave the Reception class broadly in line with national expectations. This demonstrates good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes in relation to children's starting points. Children demonstrate good levels of engagement and their information technology skills are also good.
- Children make good progress in both reading and in number skills, but progress is less rapid in speaking and social development because opportunities to use questioning in order to encourage language skills are not sufficiently used.
- Over time, pupils in Key Stage 1 have attained broadly in line with national expectations, but this is not consistent as there has been a recent downward trend. By the end of Year 2, pupils' achievement is much stronger in mathematics than in reading and writing. Too few pupils achieve the higher levels in all subjects.
- Progress is not consistent in lessons. In some lessons, pupils make good progress but in others pupils' lack of engagement means they do not apply themselves to the task in hand as well as they should. This is because activities are not always sufficiently well matched to meet the needs of all abilities.
- Achievement for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is generally in line with other pupils in the school. The small group of pupils who receive specialist provision due to their speech, language and communication needs often make good progress in their specific areas of difficulty. Pupils eligible for the pupil premium also achieve in line with their peers.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Much good teaching was seen in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Most lessons are well planned, expectations are high and children know what they need to do to succeed in the activities they are given, or those they choose for themselves.
- The teaching of reading and mathematics is stronger than that of language and communication because opportunities are missed for children to develop their speaking skills. While some good use is made of questioning, on occasion closed questions fail to exercise children's language skills; and pupils are insufficiently asked to volunteer their own views, which could make a contribution to their personal and social development.
- Teaching at Key Stage 1 requires improvement. The teaching of reading, though not yet good, is now more systematic. This is because of a more structured approach to teaching phonics (the sounds that letters make).
- In some lessons work is not matched closely enough to pupils' abilities. In particular, more-able pupils are not challenged sufficiently, and this has led to some underachievement, with pupils in Year 2 not always achieving the higher levels. As a result fewer pupils achieved Level 3 in 2012 than the school had predicted.
- On occasion, as a consequence of inadequately planned work and low expectations, pupils lose interest and become disengaged to the extent that they ignore their teacher's

instruction. They also become frustrated where the teacher spends too much time introducing a learning activity and are left with insufficient time to practise and develop key skills such as writing.

- There are examples where feedback, including marking, is well used to let pupils know how well they have done and what they need to do to improve. However, this is not always accessible to pupils or used by them to demonstrate new learning.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development contributes towards a cohesive school community, but more needs to be done to promote pupils' social development.
- Provision for those pupils who attend the specialist resource provision for speech, language and communication is good. Adults are well focused to meet the needs of these pupils. This provision is enhanced via weekly session delivered by a speech and language therapist. While these pupils are taught separately during the mornings, carefully planned integration into other classes means that provision for these pupils is well balanced.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- During the last school year there were concerns about pupils' behaviour. There were four fixed term exclusions and one quarter of parents who used Parent View either disagreed or disagreed strongly that pupils are well behaved. However, decisive action taken by the school, including tackling inadequate teaching, has brought about much improvement.
- During the inspection pupils were generally polite and well behaved with no serious incidents of disruptive behaviour. Any challenging behaviour was well managed and the behaviour policy was effectively applied. Pupils themselves say that they feel safe and happy at school. There are no recorded incidents of racist or homophobic bullying and incidents of bullying are rare.
- It remains the case that in some lessons requiring improvement there is low-level disruption arising from pupils' lack of engagement with the work at hand. On occasion this interrupts lessons and some pupils are not engaged so that they do not make the progress that they should.
- Attendance is broadly average.
- Pupils, parents and staff all say that the school is a safe environment.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- The headteacher and senior leaders are committed to making improvements. Along with governors they work increasingly effectively to monitor achievement and the quality of teaching.
- Senior leaders ensure that pupils' progress is tracked accurately, rigorously and regularly. This includes specific meetings to discuss pupils' progress, which identify areas for improvement such as writing in Key Stage 1. However, such initiatives have not yet worked

through to have an impact on rates of progress.

- Since the last inspection inadequate teaching has been tackled, including the use of performance management. However, this has not yet brought about necessary changes to ensure that teaching is consistently good or better.
 - Leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. The tracking of pupils' progress is rigorous and data is well used to plan further improvements. This leads to good teaching during lessons. However, lesson observations are not formal enough and feedback is too general, without giving individual teachers guidance on how to improve. The good practice in the Early Years Foundation Stage is not used enough as a model across the school.
 - The school's curriculum has recently been reviewed to ensure more collaborative planning between teachers, better coverage of subjects through cross-curricular themes and to link more closely to the National Curriculum. The curriculum is further enriched by partnerships such as with a company helping pupils to make musical instruments.
 - The local authority knows the school well and has carried out a review of the school in the last year. It accurately identified issues raised by this inspection and supported the school with a set of suggested actions and areas for consideration.
- **The governance of the school:**
- is based on good knowledge acquired from monitoring performance through visits to classrooms, regular meetings with subject leaders and with the headteacher
 - ensures that all statutory safeguarding requirements are met
 - needs to ensure it monitors and records its knowledge of rates of progress so it can demonstrate more in-depth challenge on school effectiveness.
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What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
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| 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

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| Unique reference number | 114944 |
| Local authority | Essex |
| Inspection number | 405550 |

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

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| Type of school | Infant |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 3–7 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 284 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Gemma Ford |
| Headteacher | Claire Edwards |
| Date of previous school inspection | 16-Sep-10 |
| Telephone number | 01376 512605 |
| Fax number | n/a |
| Email address | admin@powershall-inf.essex.sch.uk |

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