

Bloemfontein Primary School

The Middles, Craghead, Stanley, County Durham, DH9 6AG

Inspection dates

13 December 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		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Pupils' achievement requires improvement. Although pupils achieve well in English, particularly in Key Stage 2, pupils' achievement in mathematics requires improvement.
- Teachers, especially in Key Stage 1, sometimes expect too little of pupils. They do not always provide pupils with imaginative and thought provoking activities that inspire their thinking.
- Pupils do not have enough chances to practise using their numeracy skills in other subjects and to solve complex problems.
- In a few lessons, teachers do not question their pupils well enough to challenge them or test pupils thinking and find out what they know, can do and understand. This means that the tasks they provide do not always meet pupils' individual ages, abilities and needs.
- Marking does not always provide well-defined steps to enable pupils to know how to improve their work, especially in mathematics.
- Senior leaders do not always check carefully enough how well pupils are learning in lessons or make sure the quality of teaching is equally good. As a result, overall the quality of teaching remains variable.

The school has the following strengths

- Since the previous inspection, the headteacher has taken very positive action to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. This is evident in pupils' good and rapidly improving achievement in reading and writing in Years 4, 5, and 6.
- Senior leaders have a good grasp of the school's strengths and have pinpointed the correct areas for improvement.
- Pupils are happy, feel safe and have a good understanding of how to stay safe.
- Pupils behave consistently well in and out of classrooms. Older pupils are sensible, polite and show good attitudes to learning.
- The school has established a strong partnership with parents, who appreciate the high quality of care provided. This relationship has led to a significant upturn in pupils' attendance which is now above average.
- The Chair of the Governing Body provides very good leadership, challenging and holding the school to account in many positive ways.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed eight lessons of which two were joint observations with the headteacher. In addition, the inspection team made a number of short walks around the school to check the quality of what is provided for pupils.
- The inspection team held discussions with: pupils; parents; members of the governing body; school staff, including those with responsibilities such as leadership of subjects; and the local authority educational development partner.
- No responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) were available for the inspection team to take into account.
- The inspection team observed the school's work and examined a range of documentation including the school's own records of pupils' current progress, records from the school's own observation of lessons and checking of pupils' work and improvement planning. Records relating to behaviour and attendance and documents relating to safeguarding were also considered.

Inspection team

Clive Petts, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Debra DeMuschamp

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Bloemfontein is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for pupil-premium funding (which is provided to support the learning of pupils who are entitled to free school meals, in the care of the local authority or the children of members of the armed forces), is close to double the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is close to three times the national average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- Almost all pupils are White British. A significantly lower than average proportion of pupils is from minority ethnic groups. None are at an early stage of learning to speak English as an additional language. Higher-than-average proportions of pupils join or leave the school at other than the normal time.
- The school meets the current government's floor standards, which sets out the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of teaching that is at least good by:
 - ensuring teachers expect more of all pupils regardless of their starting points, especially in Years 1 and 2
 - making sure that all teachers provide pupils with imaginative and thought-provoking activities
 - making certain that all teachers ask pupils questions so that they constantly check and find out what pupils know, can do and understand
 - ensuring that teachers' marking makes it clear the steps pupils should take to improve their work, especially in mathematics.
- Ensure that all pupils, especially in Key Stage 1, make at least good progress and achieve well by:
 - making sure teachers provide activities that are more closely matched to individual abilities, needs and interests
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy skills to solve increasingly complex mathematical problems, including as part of their work in other curriculum subjects
 - making sure senior leaders always check carefully the quality of teaching and ensure that actions aimed at improving pupils' achievement at a good rate are equally effective throughout the school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Children begin the Reception Year with starting points that are low for their age. A majority have underdeveloped speech, language and number skills and a few have complex learning needs. They settle confidently in the happy, friendly surroundings. Overall, children make progress at a similar rate to that expected nationally. Their progress in understanding the links between letters and the sounds, for example, for some is good while for others it requires improvement.
- Although pupils' progress through Key Stage 1 remains uneven, their progress in acquiring early reading and writing skills is getting quicker. This is because the quality of teaching of reading and writing, including letters and the sounds they make, has improved considerably. Pupils are increasingly confident at linking sounds and letters to make sense of new or tricky words. Even so, pupils' faster progress is yet to be sustained over time. In mathematics, for example, pupils' progress in Years 1 and 2 is not yet strong enough to raise their attainment significantly by the end of Year 2.
- In Key Stage 2, pupils' progress accelerates quickly, especially in Years 4, 5 and 6. In 2012, although in Year 6 national tests pupils reached below-average standards in English, this represented good progress from their previously lower starting points. Standards across the school in English are also rising quickly as a result of leaders' determined action to improve pupils' reading and writing skills.
- Although standards in reading for pupils in Year 1 in a national test in 2012 were well-below average, considerable progress has been made in developing the reading interests of older pupils, including establishing an after-school book club. Pupils speak enthusiastically about reading and demonstrate an increasing awareness of a favourite author's style or theme. By the end of Year 6, standards in reading are below average but are improving rapidly.
- In writing, more inspired use of themes and first-hand experiences, such as a visit to a pantomime, spark pupils thinking and motivation to write more imaginatively. Pupils are quickly becoming better readers and writers by describing and recording their views, feelings and emotions.
- In mathematics, standards are lower than in English. Although a more positive picture is starting to emerge, pupils' progress in mathematics remains too variable and requires improvement. Pupils do not yet have enough opportunities to develop their problem-solving skills and to practise them when they complete work in other curriculum subjects.
- Pupils with special educational needs and those supported by pupil-premium funding make similar, and sometimes better, progress to their classmates. This is because of the extra support they receive. An increasing range of interesting experiences is helping them to promote their curiosity and interest and is helping to improve their achievement.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Despite good improvements in the quality of teaching, overall it still requires improvement. Some teachers' expectations of what each pupil is capable of achieving are not always high enough and the level of challenge and pace in lessons is too variable. This is especially the case in Years 1 and 2. In Key Stage 1 teaching does not consistently provoke pupils' thought and some lessons are not inspiring and interesting enough.
- Staff enjoy very good relationships with their pupils and provide them with a lot of support and encouragement so that they show positive attitudes to their work. Behaviour is well managed because staff are excellent role models. They all adopt the same approaches to making sure that pupils are fully aware of the boundaries for their conduct.
- Pupils' progress is good when teachers:

- provide clear explanations to pupils about what they are expected to learn
 - use imaginative approaches, including skilled use of new technology, which are adapted to suit pupils' needs and interests
 - accurately mark and set targets for pupils so that pupils know how well they are doing
 - provide activities that are well matched to pupils' individual age and abilities.
- Where teaching does not enable pupils to make good progress, particularly in Key Stage 1, this is because:
- the activities provided do not match the ages and ability of each pupil
 - pupils sometimes have to listen to their teacher for too long and lessons, therefore, progress at a moderate, rather than good pace
 - teachers' questioning is too general and does not systematically build upon earlier learning
 - written advice in the marking of pupils' books does not always provide clear steps for improvement, especially in mathematics.
- Older pupils are provided with good opportunities to work independently or with a partner to share their ideas and views, such as when checking the quality of their partner's writing of a news report. In Reception, imaginative approaches are used to challenge children's thinking, such as how to rescue Stickman's friend and who is stuck in the ice. However, adults do not always follow children's learning closely enough or challenge their thinking, such as when they are solving practical problems. The positive involvement of parents in their children's learning is, however, helping to raise their achievement.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour and helpful attitudes of pupils are a clear strength of the school. They are friendly, cooperative and keen to help. This helps to provide a purposeful atmosphere in classrooms and a calm mood around the school. Relationships with adults are relaxed and amiable. Consequently, there is very little disruption to activities in lessons.
- Pupils, including those whose circumstances might put them at risk, work well with others in lessons. Their much improved attendance and punctuality reflects their enjoyment of school life. Staff work diligently to make certain all pupils are treated equally and can achieve success. Any discrimination is tackled promptly.
- Pupils show a good understanding of what constitutes bullying and the various forms it can take. They demonstrate confidence when discussing how they would deal with any of their worries or concerns. Pupils report that adults are always on hand to help them. Pupils are well aware of how to avoid risk and danger, such as when using new technology.
- Pupils take pride in their work and the achievements of their school. In lessons, attitudes remain very positive even when tasks are mundane. Pupils recognise that their views and opinions matter and so they feel valued. Individual pupils and families, especially those whose needs are sometimes complex, are really well supported by staff. This includes working well in partnership with local authority support services and specialist agencies.

The leadership and management are good

- Since the previous inspection, senior leaders have successfully improved the quality of teaching. The resources and facilities both in classrooms and outdoors have improved. Pupils' skills are improving, although this remains uneven between subjects and across the school. The headteacher's determination and vision to provide a much wider range of interesting learning experiences is shared by all staff. This includes a residential experience for older pupils.
- Staff responsible for leading subjects are now more confident in their roles. They are using their expertise to develop more interesting and exciting approaches to teaching in lessons. This is helping to raise pupils' achievement, especially in reading and writing.
- Senior leaders methodically check the school's performance by scrutinising information about

pupils' attainment and progress. In doing so, they correctly identify any gaps between the achievements of groups of pupils and spot any pupils who may be falling behind. Despite this, they do not always check carefully enough the impact of the initiatives designed to improve teaching and to speed up pupils' progress and, as a result, are yet to eradicate a few remaining inconsistencies, such as the quality of the teaching in Years 1 and 2, especially in mathematics.

- Teaching is well led. Staff training programmes are well managed and have a clear focus upon improving staff skills so that school priorities are tackled successfully. Performance-management targets for staff are appropriately linked to incentives, so that teachers are held accountable for the progress of their pupils.
- The local authority has been proactive, providing helpful support and encouraging the school to make effective use of teaching specialists, such as in Years 4 and 5, to ensure teachers provide more challenge to pupils in lessons.
- The curriculum is particularly effective in encouraging pupils' good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning. It enhances their personal development well. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Good and more frequent opportunities are now provided for pupils to develop their basic reading and writing skills in more thought-provoking ways. However, there are fewer opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy skills to solve more complex problems as part of work in other subjects.
- The improved provision for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs ensures all are treated and supported equally. Increasingly, successful partnership working with the adjacent child-care centre helps to boost the drive to raise the aspirations and self-esteem of families.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements, with good practice supporting the high quality of care and support for pupils.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The committed governing body supports and holds the school to account increasingly effectively. Under the very good guidance of the Chair of the Governing Body, they help to ensure that there is firm focus on improving pupils' achievement, including that of those pupils supported by pupil premium-funding. They demonstrate a detailed grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They know, for example, that some variations in the quality of teaching and in pupils' achievement remain. They are clear that their next steps are to help senior leaders to check this even more carefully. They make sure that performance-management targets reflect the school's improvement priorities. The governing body are well trained and work very successfully with the local authority and are ambitious in the drive for further improvement.

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	114034
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	401401

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	113
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tracy Davinson
Headteacher	Diane Abbott
Date of previous school inspection	18 January 2010
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