

New Town Primary School

School Terrace, Reading, RG1 3LS

Inspection dates

16–17 January 2013

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

- Teaching is not consistently good enough to ensure that achievement is at least good for all pupils.
- Expectations of achievement are not high enough. Although pupils reach average standards in reading, writing and mathematics, too few reach the higher levels in their work.
- Teachers are not thorough in checking that pupils are learning well enough in lessons. Their marking does not always clarify what the pupil needs to do to improve their work or to achieve the next level.
- Teachers spend too much time introducing lessons so pupils do not start their learning activities quickly enough. This means that some pupils, especially boys, lose interest and can distract other pupils, so that behaviour is not good.
- Leaders do not sufficiently analyse the achievement of different groups of pupils or ensure good teaching to ensure better progress over time.
- Information about pupils' progress is not always used effectively to plan lessons to cater for pupils' different abilities.

The school has the following strengths

- The school promotes equality of opportunity and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Pupils show good attitudes to learning and work and play harmoniously together, free from discrimination and harm.
- Achievement for children in the Nursery and Reception classes is good because they are taught well.
- Governors are well informed and have provided effective support to the school in carrying out changes in staffing.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors held meetings with pupils, staff, the Chair of the Governing Body, and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 20 parts of lessons, including two joint observations with the headteacher. They also conducted a joint learning walk with the headteacher.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and discussed their reading habits and preferences with them. They also met with a group of pupils to discuss their views about school activities and their learning.
- Inspectors looked at a range of evidence including the school's information concerning checks on pupils' attainment and progress, monitoring reports from the local authority, minutes from governor meetings, the work pupils were doing in their books, teachers' plans and the school's documentation relating to school improvement planning and safeguarding.
- Inspectors met informally with some parents and took into account the responses from parents and carers to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View). They also took into account the nine questionnaires returned from staff.

Inspection team

Christine Pollitt, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Philip Littlejohn	Additional Inspector
Jim McVeigh	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized primary school.
- An above average proportion of pupils is eligible for the pupil premium, which provides funding for children in local authority care, children from service families and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportions of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported by school action is below average and those supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs are broadly average. Their needs are mainly speech, language and communication. A small number of pupils have behavioural difficulties.
- Most pupils belong to minority ethnic groups, with the majority being of Pakistani heritage. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above average. The numbers of pupils who join or leave the school part way through their primary school education is well above average.
- In 2012, the school met the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The school has a Nursery, two Reception classes, and one class in each of Years 1 to 6. In September 2012 the local authority allocated the extra Reception class to the school with a view to increasing the school's numbers over the next five years.
- No pupils at the school are taught in alternative provision.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen teaching so that all pupils make good progress by:
 - securing a consistent approach to the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics with high expectations for all pupils, especially those capable of reaching the higher levels
 - ensuring that learning activities always start promptly to secure pupils' interest and involvement in their learning and to ensure good behaviour
 - checking regularly that pupils are learning well enough throughout lessons so that teachers can tailor lessons to better support pupils who are struggling, or to move those learning more quickly on to the next level
 - helping pupils understand, including in the marking of work, how they can improve their work and what they need to do to move to the next level, especially in writing and mathematics.
- Getting leadership and management to manage teaching more effectively by:
 - checking the performance of different groups of pupils in more detail, especially those pupils at risk of underachieving
 - ensuring teachers use assessment information when planning lessons so that activities are well matched to the ability of all groups of pupils, including those of higher ability, and to the interests of boys
 - identifying particularly successful ways of teaching that have resulted in better pupil progress, so that best practice can be shared throughout the school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because when pupils leave at the end of Year 6 they usually achieve no better than average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Too few higher ability pupils reach the higher levels in their work, especially in writing. The school has identified that boys do not do as well as girls. It is starting to use different approaches, particularly in teaching writing, to address this, and the gap in achievement is closing.
- The amount of progress that pupils make in the different classes is variable because of inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. Some teaching is dull so pupils lose interest and become restless. Some teachers spend too much time talking at the start of lessons so pupils do not have enough opportunity to practise their skills.
- Children join the Nursery with skills and capabilities that are very much below those expected for their age. They make good progress in all areas of learning and especially in language skills and personal, social and emotional development. This year an additional Reception class has been added to the school. This has meant that the school has had to cater for children who have not had the benefit of learning in the school's nursery. These children have settled well and are making the same good progress from their starting points as other children in the Reception classes. This is because their needs were assessed promptly and they received appropriate guidance and support so that they were quickly ready to learn. The school is similarly effective in providing for new pupils who arrive during the year in all year groups, so that they make the same progress as their classmates.
- In Years 1 and 2 children continue to make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. The daily teaching of letters and the sounds they make (phonics) has been particularly successful and at the end of Year 1 children show good achievement in their phonics check.
- Pupils continue to make good progress in reading as they move through the school. Older pupils read with confidence and with a good understanding of the text. They say they enjoy reading both fiction and non fiction, and can discuss their favourite authors.
- Pupils make insufficient progress in writing across the school. Pupils, including those of higher ability, are not making better progress because of the lack of clear direction on how to improve their writing.
- The strong promotion of equality of opportunity and prevention of discrimination ensures the needs of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, pupils who speak English as an additional language and those in receipt of pupil premium funding are met well. Any gaps in their achievement are closing. This progress is particularly rapid for those receiving pupil premium funding. Action has been taken recently to restructure teaching arrangements for pupils needing extra support. These pupils now receive individual help and guidance, are taught in small groups or have extra teachers in their classes. This has ensured that pupils in all groups, including those eligible for pupil premium, attain as well as their classmates as measured by average point scores in the assessments at the end of Year 6.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching requires improvement because it is too variable. This is the key reason why pupils are only reaching the average standard by the time they leave at the end of Year 6. Some pupils spend too much time on the carpet listening to the teacher. Opportunities are missed for pupils to work on short tasks from the start of lessons so that the teacher can check any misunderstandings. Some teachers do not check the work of all groups of pupils during the lesson so some pupils who are stuck, or those who have finished their work, do not make enough progress. At times expectations are too low, so pupils, especially boys and those of higher ability, do not always make as much progress as they should. Teachers do not always mark pupils' work regularly. They praise good work, but do not make it clear to pupils how to

improve their work or what they need to do next to achieve even further. Where work is incorrect, pupils are not always given time to correct their faults or to check their understanding.

- Children in the Nursery and Reception classes benefit well from a good mix of practical activities and short teaching sessions which inspire them so that they want to learn. Teachers in these classes have high expectations of achievement, which is one reason why these children make better progress.
- The recent introduction of pupil premium funding has enabled the school to increase staffing levels to provide additional support in lessons. This has enabled daily phonics to be taught around the school in very small groups which are well chosen to match ability. Good use is made of time during these sessions, so progress is rapid.
- Although pupils have the basic numeracy facts at their fingertips, when they are asked to use basic number facts in solving written problems some struggle and need an adult to help them work through the process.
- Classroom displays are exciting and celebrate pupils' achievements and their work on different cultures around the world. Displays include checklists to help pupils with their writing and mathematics and enable them to work more independently.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- The behaviour and safety of pupils are not good and require improvement because a few pupils with behaviour difficulties cause disruption in some lessons. Additional staffing in the school means that these pupils can be taught individually when their behaviour prevents them from remaining in class. When this happens, the other pupils are remarkably good at continuing with their work.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are not always good. In lessons where activities do not start quickly enough, because the teacher spends too much time talking, pupils lose interest and become restless. They say some computer lessons are boring because the teacher 'goes on and on' when they know what to do already. They say sometimes work is too easy.
- Behaviour in the playground and around the school is generally good. Pupils understand the reward systems and enjoy the weekly attendance challenge.
- Parents express mixed views about behaviour. Pupils are more positive and say they feel safe and well cared for. They know how to keep safe outside of school, including around the adjacent canal. They know about different forms of bullying and say that any instances of concern are effectively dealt with.
- Pupils say they enjoy school, and attendance has improved. They are proud of their work and were keen to show inspectors the progress evident in their books since September.

The leadership and management

require improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because the checking of pupil progress is not rigorous enough. Leaders do not analyse the achievement of different groups of pupils carefully enough to check their progress over time. Teachers do not always have accurate and detailed information about all groups of pupils in their class needed to make sure that pupils who are not making enough progress catch up with the others. Information about pupils' progress is not always used by leaders to check that teachers are adapting their lesson plans to cater for pupils' different abilities.
- When leaders check teaching and learning they do not always identify successful ways of teaching so that best practice can be shared. For example, in some classes teachers are very clear what the pupils will learn in their lessons. Pupils have key vocabulary to help them understand, and expectations of what they will achieve in the lesson are written prominently on the board, which help them to make good progress. This is not the case in all classes.

- The headteacher, senior leaders, members of staff and governors have secured good relationships with parents and carers. Adults working with the youngest children make every effort to include parents and carers in their child's learning. Parents are keen to continue to support their child's learning through the school, and would particularly appreciate more work for their child to complete at home.
 - The school very much celebrates the cultural diversity in the school. There is a total absence of discrimination or disagreements between pupils from different backgrounds. Pupils know the difference between right and wrong, and the importance of saying 'sorry' and meaning it.
 - The curriculum allows pupils to practise their writing and computer skills in subjects other than mathematics and English, but there are not enough chances to use their mathematics skills. The curriculum is strengthened by a range of visitors and visits including a residential field trip to interest and motivate the pupils. Teachers from the local secondary school provide specialist teaching for Year 6 pupils. This includes an after-school mathematics club, which parents say helps their children to make better progress.
 - The local authority provides effective support to the school, including some specialist training to help teachers to raise the quality of their teaching in English and mathematics.
 - Leaders have identified key priorities for school development. They have planned recent actions well and these have resulted in better progress for pupils, especially those receiving the pupil premium. Consequently, the school demonstrates capacity to improve further.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have a good understanding of the standards of teaching and the achievement of the pupils, and how this compares with achievement nationally. They know the strengths of the school well and the actions it needs to take to improve. The minutes of governors' meetings show that the governors ask probing questions concerning the effectiveness of the use of the pupil premium in furthering pupils' progress and the performance of teachers. They check how this is managed so that staff who are effective role models are rewarded. They have provided good support for the headteacher in the resolution of a significant number of personnel matters since the last inspection. They undertake regular training, and are keen to increase their capacity to hold the school to account.
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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	109785
Local authority	Reading
Inspection number	405252

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	256
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Malcolm Morrison
Headteacher	Linda Sujeewon
Date of previous school inspection	18–19 October 2010
Telephone number	0118 9375509
Fax number	0118 9375510
Email address	head@newtown.reading.sch.uk

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