

St Aidan's CofE Memorial Primary School

Loyalty Road , Hartlepool , County Durham, TS25 5BA

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		Good	2
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

- Achievement requires improvement. This is because the higher-attaining pupils do not make sufficient progress, particularly in mathematics.
- Although teaching has improved, too much still requires improvement. Where this is the case, expectations are too low and pupils are not stretched so that they can make better progress.
- The headteacher and other leaders have not developed a rigorous enough approach to supporting those teachers whose performance requires improvement.
- The governing body does not yet analyse pupils' progress information so that its members can effectively challenge school leaders regarding the progress that all pupils and groups of pupils make.
- Leadership and management are not good because improvements to teaching and achievement have not been rapid enough. This is because improvement plans do not have precise actions, targets and timescales.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils are polite, friendly and considerate towards each other. This is because they thrive in a warm atmosphere with high levels of respect between adults and pupils. They feel safe and behave well.
- Some teachers have high expectations and match work well to the abilities of pupils.
- The effective impact of leadership and management is leading to improved achievement. Standards in English and mathematics at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 improved in 2012.
- Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They get off to a flying start in the Nursery where interesting activities help them to enjoy their learning and develop their confidence and language skills.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and their attendance is above average.
- Teaching of the links between letters and the sounds they make is of good quality.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 18 lessons taught by 15 teachers. In addition, the inspection team made a number of other short visits to lessons and listened to pupils read.
- Discussions took place with members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils.
- Inspectors took account of 14 responses from the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. They also took account of the school's own questionnaire to parents.
- They observed the school's work and took into account the work in pupils' books, the school's own data on pupils' current progress, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Margaret Armstrong, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Lesley Richardson	Additional Inspector
Tim Nelson	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for pupil-premium funding is well-above average.
- There are few pupils on roll from minority ethnic groups or who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is above average. The proportion at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also above average.
- The school meets the government current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Since the last inspection, the school has experienced a period of staff turbulence, including a high level of maternity leaves. Three newly qualified teachers have joined in the last year.
- A large number of governors are new in post. There was an acting chair at the time of the inspection.
- Significant improvements have been made to the learning environment provided by the school since the last inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to consistently good or better by:
 - providing interesting activities that stimulate the imagination of pupils and are well-matched to the different ability levels within classes
 - making sure that all pupils are actively involved in whole-class teaching sessions, particularly when teachers are asking questions
 - ensuring that all pupils consistently receive good quality guidance on what they need to do to improve their work and that they are given time to make the improvements needed
 - building on the existing strengths of teaching within the school.
- Increase the proportion of pupils exceeding the level expected for their age in mathematics at the end of Year 6 by:
 - ensuring that all teachers use information gathered from assessments to pitch learning at appropriate levels, particularly for the more-able pupils
 - giving pupils more problems to solve which have more than one solution
 - moving pupils on more quickly when they have made progress in lessons.
- Strengthen leadership and governance so that improvements to achievement and teaching are more rapid by:
 - making better use of monitoring information to identify the right priorities to move the school forward
 - making sure improvement plans have more detailed and precise actions with tight deadlines, and regularly checking progress against these actions to make sure the desired outcomes are being achieved
 - providing training for governors, which will make sure that they can analyse performance data and challenge school leaders regarding pupils' progress.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Most children start in the Nursery with skills and abilities that are below those usually found for their age. Consistently good and better teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage helps children to make good progress and gain the skills expected for their age by the time they start in Year 1.
- Standards in English and mathematics at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 improved to broadly average in 2012. The proportion of pupils making expected or better levels of progress between Year 2 and Year 6 in both English and mathematics was above the national average. However, there is some variability in pupils' progress between classes, linked to the quality of teaching. Progress is uneven from Year 1 to Year 4. It quickens in Years 5 and 6 where teaching is consistently good.
- Reading is encouraged and promoted across the school. Pupils develop good skills which help them to enjoy their reading. Good teaching of letters and sounds in the Reception Year means that, by Year 1, pupils have a good knowledge of key words and are able to apply what they have learnt to work out any new words they encounter and to self-correct. By the end of Year 6, pupils read widely and confidently choose their own books.
- The school has focused on improving standards in writing and this has been successful. Gaps are narrowing rapidly between how well this school's pupils and pupils nationally are doing.
- Pupils have a sound understanding of different mathematical functions and language but are less skilled at applying their knowledge to solving problems. This particularly affects the achievement of the more-able pupils.
- The attainment of pupils supported by the pupil premium is improving so that the gap between their achievement and that of other pupils in the school has improved considerably.
- The achievement of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs has improved at a similar rate to that of other pupils and, therefore, it also requires further improvement.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection but about half still requires improvement. All staff, including those new to the school, are keen to share good practice with each other although this does not happen as often as they would like.
- In the Nursery and Reception classes, teaching is good and staff are experienced at providing imaginative activities for this age range. As a result children enjoy their learning and get off to a good start. For example, in the Nursery class, staff made effective use of the snow to excite and stimulate children, which led to good learning.
- In the best lessons teachers plan interesting activities that are matched well to the different abilities of pupils and inspire them to succeed. These teachers have high expectations, involve all pupils in question and answer sessions and provide stimulating learning tasks. For example, in a Year 5 mathematics lesson, higher-ability pupils were given a challenging task to extend their skills in finding the mean of a range of numbers. They worked enthusiastically and made good progress in their understanding so that they were able to make their calculations with confidence and accuracy.
- Where teaching is of good quality teachers usually set work at the correct level. However, this is not always the case for the more-able pupils, when work is not hard enough to quicken their progress. In addition, progress in lessons sometimes slows because teachers do not assess pupils' learning adequately during the lessons and then adjust the work in response.
- Where teaching requires improvement, it is because the same, sometimes uninspiring, learning activity is given to all pupils regardless of their ability and pupils are not moved on quickly enough when they find work easy. In these lessons, teachers ask questions to provoke pupils to think but do not always expect all pupils to contribute and so some pupils do not make enough

progress.

- Across the school the teaching of mathematics does not always meet pupils' needs, as activities are not always sufficiently challenging, particularly for the most able. On occasions, where pupils have a sound understanding of their work, teachers do not move them onto the next step in their learning quickly enough. In addition, they do not always provide enough opportunities for pupils to practise their mathematics skills when solving problems.
- Marking is frequent but does not always suggest how pupils can improve and there are not enough planned opportunities for pupils to make these improvements.
- Teachers are skilful when supporting pupils through intervention programmes. This has enabled pupils who have difficulties in consolidating their letters and sounds to make good progress. Teaching assistants are used well to support lower-ability pupils. This helps pupils to maintain their concentration so that they make progress in lessons.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The school is a very peaceful, caring community. Pupils of different ages play and work very happily together and are proud of their school. The oldest pupils act as excellent role-models for the younger ones.
- Pupils' behaviour is nearly always good and sometimes exemplary. Pupils who have behavioural difficulties are supported well and this enables them to play a full part in the life of the school. Scrutiny of behavioural records and discussions shows that behaviour is good over time too. Attitudes to learning are good even when work is too hard or too easy.
- Pupils work and play well together and there are few instances that require adult intervention at play times. Pupils are proud of their school and talk confidently about the interesting activities the school provides which 'make learning fun'.
- Pupils have a good understanding of what constitutes bullying and say that it does not happen very often. When it does, pupils know what to do and that it will be dealt with immediately. Playtime 'buddies' help to organise games but are also there to listen to pupils who may be upset for any reason. Pupils say they feel safe and they know how to keep themselves safe in a range of contexts, including on the internet.
- Attendance has improved and persistent absence has decreased since the last inspection, as a result of the relentless work by the school and because pupils want to come to school to learn.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are given ample opportunities to explore values and beliefs and reflect upon their own achievements. Pupils willingly take responsibility when involved in sport, music and other creative activities.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leaders and members of the governing body share a strong determination to improve achievement and the quality of teaching. The fact that achievement improved in both Year 2 and Year 6 in 2012 shows that senior leaders have the capacity to secure further improvements in the future. Leadership and management are not yet good because these improvements have not been rapid enough and there is still too much teaching that is not good.
- The school's procedures for gaining an accurate view of its performance require improvement. This is because leaders do not use monitoring information sufficiently well to gain a clear picture of the school's strengths and areas for improvement.
- The school-improvement plan identifies some of the developments that are needed but actions to achieve these priorities are not specific or detailed enough and some of the timescales are too long.
- The performance of teachers has been managed in line with nationally recognised standards. All teachers have similar targets and this approach has led to a general improvement in the quality of teaching. Teachers are observed regularly but feedback lacks clarity and teachers do not

always know what they need to do to improve their practice. Consequently, some teaching is still not good enough. In cases where teaching is less than good, leaders do not adopt a rigorous enough approach to ensure that targets are specific to individuals and are checked more often.

- The curriculum is planned well to respond to pupils' interests with a good range of opportunities for pupils to take part in activities outside of the school day, such as a residential visit to Robin Wood Activity Centre. It is effective in promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development so that there are high levels of mutual respect and no evidence of discrimination. The curriculum is not yet good because it is not yet enabling pupils to achieve well. In particular there are insufficient opportunities for the more-able pupils to solve problems and carry out investigations.
- Parents have a very positive view of the school with the vast majority saying they would recommend it to a friend. Parents say they appreciate the range of activities on offer and that communication with staff is good.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements.
- The local authority provides valuable support and has assisted in evaluating the performance of the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are supportive of the school, they are proud of the improvements that have taken place but are also aware that there remains scope for a further increase in standards. However, governors do not yet hold the school fully to account by making sure improvement plans have clear actions and then checking that those actions are having the impact that is needed. The governing body manages resources well to ensure funding is available to support improvements that are needed, for example, pupil-premium funding has been used successfully to help eligible pupils catch up. Through the headteacher's report and by visits to the school, governors are made aware of the quality of teaching in the school and how teachers' performance is managed. They do not always ask searching questions of the headteacher because they do not have the skills needed to check data about pupil performance thoroughly.

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	111690
Local authority	Hartlepool
Inspection number	405353

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	283
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Melinda Gloss
Headteacher	Ian Railton
Date of previous school inspection	15 March 2011
Telephone number	01429 273695
Fax number	01429 284567
Email address	admin.staidans@school.hartlepool.gov.uk

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