

Friars Primary School and Nursery

Constable Way, Shoeburyness, Southend-on-Sea, SS3 9XX

Inspection dates 23–24 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

- Pupils' achievement by the end of Year 6 has improved in recent years but remains below the national average. Their progress is not fast enough.
- School leaders have improved the quality of teaching recently but it remains inconsistent. Too many lessons do not provide work that stretches more-able pupils.
- The way that the school checks on the progress of pupils is not clear enough. This means that teachers do not consistently provide work that matches pupils' abilities.
- Teachers spend too long talking during lessons. During this time, some do not make good use of questioning to check learning.
- Pupils feel safe at school but there are occasional instances of poor behaviour in some classes.
- The middle leaders of the school (the subject leaders and those who lead the Early Years Foundation Stage) are not involved in making sure that learning is as good as it can be.

The school has the following strengths

- The school's senior leaders have a very clear understanding of what the school needs to do in order to improve.
- Teachers and teaching assistants have very good relationships with pupils and the school is calm and welcoming.
- There is a trend of improvement in standards of English and mathematics.
- Pupils feel safe in school. They enjoy coming to school and behave well in almost all of their lessons.
- The school has some very good teachers. In their classes, pupils learn quickly and develop very positive attitudes to their own progress.
- The governing body is committed and knows the school well. It has effectively managed a period of considerable change.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching in 24 lessons. They also made short visits to lessons during which phonic skills (linking sounds and letters in reading) were taught.
- Discussions were held with pupils, parents, the executive headteacher, the head of school, senior and middle leaders, two members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors examined a range of documents, including a summary of the school’s self-evaluation, the school improvement plan, the school’s own achievement data, attendance information and policies aimed at keeping pupils safe.
- The views of 25 parents and carers were analysed through the Parent View website.
- The views expressed by 36 staff who returned a questionnaire were also considered.

Inspection team

Christopher Moodie, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Matthew Klimcke	Additional Inspector
Fatiha Maitland	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- There are fewer pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds than in most schools of this size. Few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at 'school action' is broadly average.
- The proportion who are supported at 'school action plus' or have a statement of special educational needs is also broadly average.
- An above-average proportion of pupils are supported by the 'pupil premium', which is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, in local authority care or whose parents serve in the armed forces.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Seven new teachers joined the school in September 2012. Five of these were newly qualified teachers. The school does not use alternative places for pupils to learn away from the school.
- The head teacher and two other members of staff were suspended in the summer term of 2012. An investigation by the local authority is ongoing. An executive head teacher and a head of school were appointed by the governing body to temporarily lead the school from September 2012.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good or better and so raise achievement by:
 - making better use of assessment information to plan work that matches pupils' abilities
 - checking that pupils thoroughly understand their work through better questioning
 - increasing the pace of learning in lessons
 - reducing the amount of time that teachers talk to the whole class.
- Improving leadership and management throughout the school by:
 - helping middle leaders, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage, to become more effective and have a greater impact on learning
 - ensuring that the school's assessment procedures promote and accelerate learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Despite rising since the previous inspection, standards in English by the end of Year 6 are below average. Standards of writing have improved more rapidly than in reading.
- Standards in mathematics have also improved and are now in line with the national average. More pupils are achieving the higher levels than in the past.
- Many pupils make good progress in Key Stage 2. Some pupils make more progress than they are expected to make. Progress in Key Stage 1 and the Early Years Foundation Stage is slower, and very few pupils reach higher levels of attainment.
- Children join the Nursery with skills and knowledge that are below those typical among children of this age. A focus on the development of communication and language in the Early Years Foundation Stage is helping to prepare children for later learning.
- Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 have remained below average since the previous inspection. In 2012, attainment in mathematics and writing improved and was broadly in line with that in most other schools. Standards in reading were below average, and the phonics screening check confirmed that this is an area where pupils do less well than other pupils nationally.
- The school has revised the way that reading is taught. Small groups of pupils with similar abilities learn together every day. This is having a positive impact on reading and standards are rising.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs achieve well because they are provided with a good level of support. Their individual needs are understood by the school and their progress is closely monitored.
- More-able pupils do not achieve as well as they could in English. In too many lessons, the work that they receive is not challenging enough.
- Pupils supported by the pupil premium achieve well. The gap between their achievement and other pupils is much narrower than in most schools. These pupils are well supported through interventions that include one-to-one teaching and extra help from teaching assistants.
- In many lessons, pupils' learning is not fast enough. This is because expectations of the amount of the work that pupils can do are not matched to their abilities. This means that pupils spend too much time on straightforward activities that some of them can already do.
- Pupils learn well in lessons where teaching is well planned and the teacher has a good understanding of what they need to do to make progress. In these lessons, pupils have very positive attitudes to their work, typified by two pupils in Year 4 who held an animated discussion about the best way to solve a mathematics problem.

The quality of teaching**requires improvement**

- Teaching varies throughout the school. There is a small amount of outstanding teaching and some that is good. Most of the teaching is not to this high standard and this limits the amount of progress that pupils make.
- Where teaching is not yet good, the planning does not take pupils' abilities into account. Explanations of what pupils need to do are not clear enough and teachers do not check pupils' understanding as lessons proceed.
- Where teaching is good or better, questioning is used well and there are high expectations of the pupils' responses. Teachers are very clear about what they wish pupils to do and this leads to a brisk pace in lessons and good learning.
- The use of questioning is inconsistent across the school. In many lessons, teachers ask questions which do not require pupils to explain their thinking. Questions often require only short answers and this means that opportunities to check how well pupils understand their learning are missed.
- Pupils often listen to introductions to lessons that are too long. As a result, more-able pupils are listening to teaching that they already understand, while the less-able pupils find the teaching too difficult. This restricts how usefully the time in this part of lessons is used.
- Marking has improved since the beginning of the school year. Most teachers mark pupils' work and point out what they need to do to improve. As yet there is no consistent system for making sure that pupils read the marking, and respond to it by making corrections.
- The teaching of reading in Key Stage 1 is good. Pupils enjoy their small-group sessions and are learning important skills in reading new and 'tricky' words. A combination of teachers and teaching assistants work well across the key stage to make very good use of time and help individual pupils to make progress.
- The way that teachers check how well pupils are doing is inconsistent. The school's assessment information shows that there are different views on how well pupils are learning and making progress.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage provides good opportunities for children to explore an interesting and wide variety of activities. Too much adult support often means that children do not have the chance to develop their own ways of solving problems and interacting independently with other children.
- The use of the teaching space in the Reception class makes the teaching of reading difficult for some children. Several groups are at work at the same time and the noise levels from one group can disturb others.

The behaviour and safety of pupils**requires improvement**

- The overwhelming majority of pupils behave well in and around the school. Pupils enter the school promptly and get straight on with their 'early morning work'. This gives a purposeful start to the school day.
- A small number of pupils behave poorly. When this happens, teachers and teaching assistants

generally manage the situation well so that other pupils' learning is not disrupted. On a small number of occasions, such behaviour is not well managed and this limits learning.

- Pupils' behaviour is sometimes outstanding. On occasions, teachers provide lessons that inspire pupils and their enthusiasm contributes to very good learning. At other times, pupils behave exceptionally well as role models for the rest of the school. Pupils in Year 5 led an assembly, for example, and their behaviour set a very high standard for other pupils to aspire to.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school and the majority of parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire agreed. A small proportion of pupils, parents and carers expressed concerns that the school has not been quick enough to respond to bullying, although most stated that this has improved recently.
- Pupils are aware of different types of bullying. They are clear about what to do if bullying occurs, and are confident that they will be listened to.
- Pupils' attendance has improved since the previous inspection, and is now broadly in line with the national average for primary schools.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The school's new leadership team has wasted no time in evaluating the school's strengths and weaknesses. It has a very clear view of what needs to be done to improve achievement and senior leaders have already improved aspects of teaching.
- Staff have confidence in the new leadership. This is clear from the overwhelming support for the way the school is led and managed, as expressed in all of the staff questionnaires.
- A significant amount of the school's allocated budget is in reserve. Plans to spend this on improving the building for the pupils are now in place and, once completed, this will leave the school with a reserve that is typical for similar schools.
- Improving teaching has been a priority for school leaders. A programme of observations and support for teachers is in place and is already having a positive impact. Teachers' marking, for example, has improved across the school.
- The leadership and coordination of the support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is good. A large team of teaching assistants is well managed and this is the main reason that this group of pupils make good progress.
- The school's middle leaders, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage, are not involved in checking how well pupils are doing. They are effective at maintaining the smooth running of the school but have not been empowered to evaluate learning and the quality of teaching.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. There is a good range of activities beyond lessons which add to the pupils' enjoyment of school.
- School leaders have made sure that all the required subjects are taught. There are some links between subjects, but these are not consistently planned for across the school.
- The local authority has provided good support for the school. Advisers have worked very

effectively alongside the governing body and the school's new leadership team to ensure that the school has been able to improve during a period of staffing turbulence.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Good governance, with a clear focus on the needs of the children in the school, has been a key factor in the schools' recent improvement. The appointment of the executive head teacher was made only after the governing body was reassured that her track record of proven success would match the needs of Friars. Since the previous inspection the governing body has become increasingly aware of the quality of teaching and where it needs to be improved. Governors are now more informed about how assessment data can be used to analyse the school's performance. They are involved in setting targets to improve teachers' performance, and require data on progress that allows them to make informed decisions on pay increases. The governing body has a rigorous approach to ensuring that all national safeguarding requirements are met. The governing body makes informed decisions about the school's direction and how funding should be spent. The extra funding received through the pupil premium is used well to meet the individual needs of those pupils supported by it.

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	134704
Local authority	Southend-on-Sea
Inspection number	402628

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	418
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Debby Dawson
Headteacher	Cheryl Woolf
Date of previous school inspection	5 May 2010
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