

# Emerson Valley Junior School

Hodder Lane, Emerson Valley, Milton Keynes, MK4 2JR

**Inspection dates** 17–18 January 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Inadequate</b>	<b>4</b>
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Require improvement	3

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that has serious weaknesses

- Pupils' attainment in English and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2 has been too low in recent years given their starting points when they start at the school.
- Over time pupils have not made enough progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teaching requires improvement because it has not been good enough over time to encourage consistently good progress.
- Pupils who are disabled and who have special educational needs make inadequate progress, especially in reading and writing because of weak phonic skills.
- Pupils do not use computers regularly enough in classes to put into practice skills that they have learned in information and communication technology (ICT) lessons.
- Senior staff do not make sure that reviews of teachers' performance are linked closely enough to their pupils making good progress.
- The school has suffered from some serious staffing difficulties during the past eighteen months which leaders have not fully resolved.

### The school has the following strengths

- Leaders and governors have improved the quality of teaching through various means, including further training and regular checks.
- Pupils are now making faster progress in mathematics because of better teaching.
- The introduction of new resources for reading and writing are beginning to benefit pupils' learning.
- Behaviour and safety are good. Pupils get on well together and they behave well in lessons and around the school. They feel very safe and well cared for.
- The school is developing a lively curriculum that links different aspects of pupils' learning together. Pupils particularly enjoy the after-school opportunities to take part in sport and music.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 23 lessons, including three that were observed jointly with members of the senior management team.
- Pupils were heard to read and samples of pupils' work were examined.
- Inspectors examined the 55 responses on Parent View, the government's website for parents' views of schools. They considered the views of staff who responded to a staff questionnaire.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher and other staff, including the deputy headteacher and senior leadership team, the Chair of the Governing Body, a group of pupils and a member of the local authority's advisory staff.
- The inspectors examined data about pupils' progress and other documents, including that relating to safeguarding.

## Inspection team

Peter Sudworth, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Lynne Lowery	Additional inspector
Michael Lafford	Additional inspector

## Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

### Information about this school

- This is a larger-than-average-sized junior school with 16 classes.
- The school currently supports an average proportion of pupils with disabilities and special educational needs at school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- Most pupils are of White British origin, although the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is above the national average. About a fifth of the pupils speak English as an additional language, which is slightly above average. Very few are at an early stage of learning English.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is lower than the national average. The pupil premium is extra government funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, pupils in the care of the local authority and those from families with a parent in the armed forces.
- The school experienced major staffing problems during the academic year 2011–12. During the inspection, temporary teaching arrangements were in place for two classes.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is at least good by:
  - improving the teaching of phonics (linking sounds and letters) so that pupils who have disabilities and special educational needs, in particular, make better progress in reading and writing
  - teachers taking more direct responsibility for the progress of pupils who find learning difficult and effectively overseeing the work of teaching assistants
  - ensuring there are more opportunities for pupils to apply their ICT skills in other subjects
  - ensuring teachers adopt similar strategies in helping pupils to learn words which they use frequently but spell wrongly
  - improving teachers' understanding of how pupils are progressing so they can give them harder work when they need it.
- Raise pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics, by:
  - developing in pupils a love of reading by getting pupils to talk more to each other about books and stories that they have read
  - improving pupils' comprehension skills, especially in looking more deeply and carefully at the meaning of the text they read
  - helping pupils to remember mathematics vocabulary by providing more visual support for them on classroom walls and in their books
  - providing more opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical skills to real-life settings.
- Improve leadership and management by:
  - ensuring that the annual reviews of teachers' performance carried out by all school leaders are clearly linked to the progress pupils are making so that the teachers' success in meeting their targets can be measured

- developing more rigorous systems to check that the action taken to improve teaching and pupils' achievements is working
- taking effective action to settle the long-standing staffing difficulties.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### is inadequate

- Pupils' achievement is inadequate because although their attainment on entry to Year 3 is above average, it is only average by Year 6. Over time, progress has not been good enough in reading and writing in particular, and is still below expectations in mathematics.
- Pupils are now making better progress in mathematics, but they still have to make up the shortfall from previously weaker progress in the subject. More opportunities to carry out investigations have helped this improvement but pupils still do not apply their mathematics skills sufficiently well to real situations.
- Pupils' progress has not improved enough in reading and writing. Pupils' comprehension skills, especially in looking deeply and carefully at the meaning of the text they read, are not well developed. Pupils do not have enough chances to share their views about the books and stories they have read to encourage in them a love of reading. Pupils do not always use their phonics skills (linking letters and sounds) well enough when they read.
- The school has not been rigorous in promoting pupils' basic skills, especially in reading and writing, by providing work which meets their different needs and abilities. Some actions have been taken to improve progress, such as grouping by ability, but the impact of this strategy is not yet evident in higher attainment in reading and writing.
- All pupils made good progress in mathematics last year because of an improved curriculum, better setting out of work and providing work which was hard enough for different groups of pupils. This improved progress has been maintained, but pupils do not always remember key mathematical vocabulary, for example, that related to shape. They receive too little support with, for example, the provision of visual support on classroom walls and in their books.
- Pupils entitled to pupil premium funding have made slower progress than others in the past. However, the funding is now being used effectively and the gap between their attainment compared with all pupils nationally, as shown in their average points scores, is closing.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs have been making inadequate progress, especially in reading and writing because their phonic skills are weak. Pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language make similar rates of progress to their peers.
- The school's commitment to equality of opportunity has not been successful because of the inadequate achievement of some groups of pupils.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Teaching over time has not always met pupils' needs well enough in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The teaching of pupils who have disabilities and special educational needs has not been good enough. Too much of the responsibility has been left to the teaching assistants. The teaching of phonics, for these pupils in particular, has not been good enough to show pupils how they could use these skills when reading unknown words.
- Teachers do not always support aspects of pupils' learning well in class. They do not, for example, ensure that pupils have good opportunities to use the ICT skills gained in the computer suite in daily class work.
- Teachers display pupils' work from different subjects. However insufficient writing is displayed so that pupils can learn from one another. Not all teachers use effective methods to ensure that pupils learn to spell words correctly.
- The more recent focus on teaching reading is increasingly successful with the purchase of new resources and the more effective use of reading in groups. There is evidence of improved progress in writing because of the introduction of more interesting topics.
- Teachers work well together in year group teams so that there is a good deal of consistency in what is being taught in the classes. Staff have good relationships with the pupils and

manage them well.

- The introductions to lessons are generally good. Occasionally teachers rush through the prepared slides so that pupils do not have time to absorb the information. Teachers are now planning lessons better for pupils of different abilities, supported by the grouping of pupils by ability in English and mathematics across the school. Pupils are supported well by teaching assistants in these arrangements, but they sometimes have too much responsibility for those pupils who find learning difficult.
- The staff make good use of 'paired talk' to develop pupils' speaking and listening skills. Sometimes, however, this technique is used too frequently and it affects the flow of the lesson.
- Teachers share the main focus of the learning with pupils, helping them to understand how they can be successful. The good balance of discussion and activity keeps the pupils interested.
- Pupils' interest is also maintained by the good use of interactive whiteboards which show photographs and video clips that excite pupils and stimulate them to work harder. In a Year 4 science lesson, for example, good images were shown about different joints in the human body, including moving illustrations of joints that helped their understanding.
- The marking of pupils' work is generally good and is linked to the main aim of the lesson, although not enough guidance is provided about spelling. A good balance of 'praise comments' and guidance to bring about improvements ensures that pupils know what they need to do to improve their work.
- Assessments of pupils' work are based on the levels in national guidance, but staff do not acknowledge when pupils are well on their way to the next level.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- Pupils typically behave well and are polite and friendly to one another. They respect their teachers. They show good attitudes to work and follow the routine of putting up their hands to answer questions. Pupils cooperate, work well together in pairs and small groups, and help each other. Pupils move around the school in a very orderly fashion.
- Attendance is above average and pupils are punctual for school.
- Pupils have a good understanding of different forms of bullying. They say that bullying happens occasionally but they know that teachers will sort it out if they are told. Exclusions are rare. Racist and bullying incidents, although rare, are correctly recorded and taken seriously.
- Pupils receive training and undergo a test for the responsibilities they take on, such as playground pals. They undertake such duties effectively in helping others and sorting out possible quarrels. Some fulfil roles as house captains and prefects and, as members of the school council, represent the views of other pupils.
- Pupils like school. 'We can do fun things and learn at the same time,' they say. Year 6 pupils are expected to raise money themselves to contribute to the costs of their annual school trip. Pupils appreciate the good range of extra activities that are provided such as the orchestra and various sports.
- Pupils are aware of issues relating to the safe use of the internet. They have a good understanding of other matters concerning personal safety, such as contact with strangers and road safety, including safety when cycling.

### **The leadership and management require improvement**

- Leadership and management require improvement because weaker aspects of pupils' learning have not always been tackled well enough in the past. When there has been a focus on improving one area, other areas have not been given sufficient attention. For example, when there was a focus on improving writing, less attention was given to maintaining pupils' progress in reading. Improvement has also been hampered by significant staffing issues.

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher form a good working partnership and are driving improvement effectively but this has yet to be seen in improved results at the end of Year 6. Rigorous action to eliminate inadequate teaching has been taken and continues to improve the quality of teaching. This is leading to improved progress for pupils, notably in mathematics. Year group leaders work well together with their teams of teachers and ensure that agreed procedures for teaching and learning are met.
- Oversight of the arrangements for teachers' appraisals is delegated to key staff. The quality of the targets set, however, varies depending on which person has led the appraisal. They are not always closely linked to the progress of pupils. Drafts of appraisals are not reviewed by senior staff to ensure they are of a consistently good quality.
- Pupil premium money is spent in various ways, including the employment of extra staff and teaching resources. These arrangements are successfully closing the gap in attainment between the pupils for whom the money is intended and other pupils.
- Arrangements to safeguard pupils are good. The school checks all staff who work regularly with the pupils and staff are kept up to date through regular training.
- The curriculum includes interesting topics, with good links established between subjects. However, not enough opportunities are provided for pupils to apply their mathematics skills to real life settings. Pupils make visits that are linked to their studies, which helps their understanding. Opportunities are given for pupils to improve their writing skills in subjects other than English, although this has yet to result in improved attainment in this aspect. There is a good range of additional activities for the pupils to attend after school, for example, in art, sport and music, which support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- Very few parents responded to Parent View. Those that did expressed a range of views about the school but the numbers were too small to draw clear conclusions.
- The local authority has funded teachers' attendance at courses to improve the quality of their teaching. This support has been successful, seen in the improvements that have taken place in the quality of teaching.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body offers good support to the school. It is keen and interested and members attend suitable training events. They have a range of expertise, including the ability to analyse data about pupils' progress, and they understand the school's finances. They ask questions about the performance of different groups and hold the school to account. They visit the school to follow up matters on the school improvement plan and establish links with subject leaders. Reports following the regular visits to the school by the Chair of the Governing Body give them a clear view about the quality of teaching. They have worked hard to try and overcome staffing difficulties. Time spent by governors in dealing with long-standing staffing issues has deflected them from a full understanding of the impact of pupil premium spending. They understand that teachers' appraisal is linked to the teachers' standards and rates of pay to performance.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	131190
<b>Local authority</b>	Milton Keynes
<b>Inspection number</b>	406418

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	450
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Lynne Smith
<b>Headteacher</b>	Janette Brown
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	21–22 June 2011
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