

Katherines Primary School

Brookside, Harlow, CM19 5NJ

Inspection dates

12–13 February 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

- Teaching has not been sufficiently challenging over time to see that pupils make sustained good progress and achieve well.
- Teachers do not make sure that pupils always get different and demanding work when they move into a new class.
- Sometimes the questions teachers ask are not well matched to the abilities of the children. Teachers do not always check how well pupils understand things before moving on to new learning.
- Teachers' comments on pupils' work do not always help them to do better next time.
- At times, teachers do not make sure that all pupils have demanding work from the start of the lesson.
- Subject and key stage leaders are not fully involved in improving the skills of their teams and holding teachers to account for pupils' achievement.
- The governing body does not take an active enough role in setting the strategic direction of the school, in checking the success of planned actions to improve teaching and learning or in holding the school to account for its performance.

The school has the following strengths

- Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage as a result of imaginative teaching.
- The school provides well for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through a range of subjects, trips and visitors to the school.
- The school is a caring and nurturing environment and provides well for vulnerable pupils and those with special needs.
- Pupils behave consistently well, whether they are in the playground, around the building or in lessons. They are polite and courteous and are keen to learn.
- Pupils are happy, safe and confident because they thoroughly enjoy school life.
- The headteacher has a commitment to improvement that is shared by the staff and governing body.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 23 lessons, one of which was a joint observation with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with staff, two groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative from the local authority and a telephone conversation took place with the school's school improvement partner.
- Inspectors took account of the 31 responses to the online Parent View survey in planning the inspection.
- Inspectors observed the work of the school and looked at a number of documents, including performance management documentation, records relating to attendance, behaviour and the monitoring of the quality of teaching, minutes of governors' meetings and documents relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors considered the 23 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Simon Blackburn, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Joanna Jones

Additional Inspector

Jackie Easter

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger-than-average primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding for looked-after children, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and for pupils with a parent in the armed services) is above average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is below average, as is the proportion supported at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is broadly average and the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The school has above-average numbers of pupils joining and leaving it outside normal times.
- The school occasionally uses the Star Centre off-site alternative provision to support behaviour but this was not in use at the time of the inspection.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen teaching so that pupils in Years 1-6 make more rapid progress, especially in Year 3, by making sure that all teachers:
 - expect the most of pupils so that they can help them to do their best
 - use the information they possess about pupils' progress to set tasks at just the right level for all pupils
 - carefully target their questioning, so that the more-able pupils get harder questions, and that they follow up on answers to make sure pupils understand what they are learning
 - make regular checks of pupils' progress during lessons so they can adjust their teaching as necessary in response to any misconceptions
 - through marking give pupils clear steps to improve their work and check that advice has been followed.
- Increase the impact that leaders and managers have on improving teaching and learning by:
 - involving more leaders in checks on the quality of teaching so that they can hone their skills and pass on the best elements of teaching to all staff
 - making sure that information about the abilities and learning of pupils is used well by their next teacher as pupils move up the school so that work is not repeated and progress slowed.
- Improve the role of the governing body in setting the strategic direction for the school and in checking the actions taken to achieve agreed goals.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Standards in mathematics by the end of Key Stage 2 were well-below average in 2012. This was because the leadership of teaching in mathematics was not rigorous enough to drive up standards. Standards and progress in mathematics are now improving as a result changes in the leadership of the subject and more consistent approaches to teaching.
- Pupils reach average standards in English by the end of Key Stage 2. However, progress is slower in Year 3 than in other years in reading and writing. Pupils in Year 3 and Year 4 are taught together in mixed-age classes and the school has not made sure that the pupils entering these classes have the skills to learn at their own pace.
- Standards by the end of Year 2 have improved steadily and are now average in all subjects. The schools' own information from assessments shows that pupils are now making better progress than previously although it is not consistent in all subjects or year groups.
- Most children start school with skills and knowledge which are typical for their age. As a result of lively and effective teaching, children make good progress in Reception, including in their language and personal development. Improved outdoor learning is enriching the children's learning.
- The resources made available from pupil premium funding, such as additional staffing for small-group teaching in English and mathematics, have been invested well and are helping eligible pupils to make better progress than their classmates in most year groups. This means that the achievement gap between those known to be eligible for free school meals and all pupils is closing.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs do at least as well as other pupils because their needs are identified early and schemes to help them are carried out by skilled teachers and learning support assistants who help them to improve.
- By the end of Year 6, pupils are confident readers and standards are above average because reading is taught well throughout the school. Pupils who were heard reading by inspectors in Year 2 were able to link letters to sounds to break up unfamiliar words. As a result they are reading with increasing fluency.
- Pupils identified as speaking English as an additional language and pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds make progress that is similar to other pupils in the school.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The level of challenge and pace in lessons is too variable across the school. The teachers of Year 1 pupils and the two mixed-age classes do not always use information about what pupils already know and are able to do which means they sometimes give them tasks they have done before and which are too easy.
- Teachers do not spend enough time making sure that pupils entering Year 3 have the skills to work on tasks on their own. Pupils receive a lot of support for their learning during Years 1 and 2 but are expected to be more independent in Year 3. However, they have not been taught to

make the most of their time and so the pace of their learning slows.

- Evidence from pupils' books and observations of learning show that planning which takes account of previous learning is not always used to make sure that pupils have work that stretches them from the start of lessons. On occasions, more-able pupils in particular have to sit through explanations about learning that they already know.
- Questions asked by teachers are sometimes too easy because the teacher hasn't thought about which pupil should answer which question carefully enough. This means that teachers are missing opportunities to check how deeply pupils understand what they are learning and to pick up on errors.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Lively and imaginative openings to lessons lead to purposeful learning, with children exploring the class and outdoor space where one boy was found making a 'river' and other children had created a restaurant using the theme of the Chinese New Year. Children are good at working on their own but also share well and take turns at activities. Teachers and teaching assistants assess accurately and plan effectively.
- Where work is pitched at just the right level for pupils they make good progress. For example, in a mathematics lesson, the teacher gave pupils work calculating and measuring weights at five different levels of difficulty and then the teacher and teaching assistant provided extra challenge through their questioning.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and with care. They write in detail how well pupils have completed tasks but some teachers do not explain how the work can be improved. The very best marking seen in pupils' books goes on to check that improvements have been made and asks more demanding questions, but this good practice is not widespread across the school.
- Teachers work hard to develop pupils' writing skills in a range of subjects and pupils at both key stages have opportunities to write longer pieces in their topic work or in science. The use of numeracy skills in other subjects is not so well developed.
- Staff enjoy very good relationships with pupils and provide them with a lot of support and encouragement so that they show positive attitudes to their work. Pupils feel their teachers do a good job and parents agree. Homework is set regularly and is well marked and pupils think it helps them to improve.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is a key strength of the school. They have a very good understanding of the school's rules and expectations, relationships are good and pupils are encouraged to behave well by lots of praise and rewards. There were very few pupils excluded in the last year.
- Pupils are very keen to learn. They very rarely misbehave, even when the pace of learning slows. They work well in pairs and larger groups, cooperating to complete tasks or to respond to questions. They move purposefully and quietly around the school and play energetically but considerately in the playground.
- The management of behaviour is very positive across the school. Individual pupils who experience behavioural difficulties are well managed and supported so that they have a caring and nurturing environment in which to grow. In their responses on Parent View, the vast majority of parents said that the school makes sure its pupils behave well.

- Pupils say they feel safe because they are well supported and always have a member of staff they can talk to. They are well aware of risk and the steps they can take to minimise it and avoid danger. Pupils show an understanding of what constitutes different forms of bullying and they can confidently discuss the actions to take if they have any concerns.
- The school takes a very strong line on attendance and works very well with outside agencies to reduce absence. Attendance is broadly average and punctuality is good.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Leaders and managers other than the headteacher are not routinely involved in checking the quality of teaching through observing lessons. This means that their skills in judging the effectiveness of teachers and the quality of learning are not sharp enough and they are not sufficiently helping to improve the skills of their teams and holding teachers to account for pupils' achievement.
- Performance information is not always analysed accurately to determine the amount of progress pupils are making. This results in staff not being held to account sufficiently for the performance of pupils.
- The headteacher has a strong commitment to school improvement and this is shared wholeheartedly by the school community. She has a capable team of senior and middle leaders who support her but are currently not being fully used in checking the school's work.
- The headteacher knows what the school does well and where it could improve. This is reflected in well-structured improvement plans that set out clear targets. Leaders set challenging targets for teachers to meet and give useful training to help them improve. There is a strong link between the quality of teaching and salary progression.
- The range of subjects and topics taught provides a well-balanced learning experience for pupils which is further enhanced with trips, visiting speakers and a wide range of after school clubs that are well attended and enjoyed by pupils. As a result, there is strong support for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Assemblies and wall displays add to this and make sure that good relations are fostered and discrimination is tackled effectively.
- The local authority is now a commissioning authority and keeps an oversight of its schools but offers no support.
- Safeguarding is carried out effectively at the school and all arrangements meet statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body knows how well the school is doing because it receives a wide range of information from the headteacher about the progress of pupils, how this compares with all schools nationally, and the quality of teaching. Governors are only just beginning to seek out first-hand evidence to support their understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and rely too heavily on the information they are given. Governors do not take an active role in setting out the strategic goals for the school and then checking the success of the steps taken to achieve them. This means that they are unable to ask searching questions of the school and hold leaders to account effectively. They share the commitment of the headteacher to improve teaching and learning and are aware of what the school is doing to reward good

practice and to tackle any underperformance. They know that only those teachers whose teaching is good or better make progress on the salary scales. Financial systems are well established and governors know how the pupil premium funding is allocated. Some governors are not so clear about its impact for eligible pupils.

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	115245
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	405575

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	339
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Graeme Dykes
Headteacher	Suzanne Ryan
Date of previous school inspection	25 May 2011
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