

Piper's Vale Primary School

Raeburn Road, Ipswich, IP3 0EW

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 is not consistently good. Not all teachers have high enough expectations of what pupils can do or allow pupils to use their initiative. Teachers do not always plan lessons that build on what pupils have learned before or engage them in conversations to improve their work.
- Attainment in reading, while improving, has remained low. Pupils do not have sufficient skills to tackle new words and understand what they are reading. The range of good quality children's literature is limited.
- National test results at the end of Year 6 are much lower than in most schools, and have been for several years.
- Children in the Nursery and Reception classes do not use spoken language well to communicate their ideas. They do not have sufficient opportunities to use their initiative or record their own ideas in their writing.
- Senior leaders and the governing body have made important decisions over the last year to enhance pupils' progress. New ways of working have been introduced and additional adults employed to work with small groups. Checks to show the impact of these decisions are at an early stage of development.
- Some subject and key stage leaders are new to their roles, and not yet trained to contribute fully to the school's development.

The school has the following strengths

- Determined senior leaders, staff and governors have a very clear view of what is needed to raise pupils' achievements and prepare them well for the next stage in their education.
- Since 2010, attainment has risen rapidly in Year 2 in writing and mathematics and is in line with the national average. The number of pupils making expected and better than expected progress in these subjects is rising steadily in Years 3 to 6.
- The home-school liaison officer plays an important role in keeping and helping pupils to feel safe.
- Staff are well trained in the management of the very small number of pupils with behavioural difficulties. Pupils learn in a purposeful atmosphere.
- Pupils are polite and behave well. They take pride in their school, and in presenting their work neatly.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 18 parts of lessons, often accompanied by the headteacher or deputy headteacher. They also made short visits to sessions involving the nurture groups, and individual tuition for pupils in reading and mathematics.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- Pupils read to inspectors and met with them to share their views of the school. Their previous work in literacy and numeracy was reviewed.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher; deputy headteacher; staff with responsibility for literacy, the Early Years Foundation Stage, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs; the home-school liaison officer; and representatives of the governing body. The views of the local authority were shared during a telephone call.
- Few parents completed the on-line survey Parent View. Some gave their views to inspectors before attending the school's open evening.
- A number of documents were scrutinised. These included the school's development and rapid action plans, its self-evaluation report, information about pupils' current progress, minutes of governing body meetings, arrangements for safeguarding and records of pupils' behaviour and attendance. In addition, reports from the local authority about the school's effectiveness were examined.

Inspection team

Kath Beck, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Sally Lane	Additional Inspector
Stuart Gray	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is larger than most primary schools nationally. The number of pupils is rising.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium, the additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, looked after children and those with a parent in the armed forces, is almost twice the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is similar that found in most schools. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is high.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- All pupils are educated on site.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher took up their roles in January 2012. Some teaching staff with leadership responsibilities are new to the school and to their roles.
- A home-school liaison manager has been appointed since the last inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching to consistently good or better by making sure that all staff:
 - have high expectations of what pupils know and can do
 - plan lessons that build on pupils' previous learning
 - give pupils opportunities to be resourceful and to use their ingenuity across the curriculum
 - discuss with pupils the work they are doing in lessons so that they can make better progress.
- Raise achievement in reading by:
 - ensuring that pupils clearly understand the sounds letters make and the way they blend together to make new words
 - helping pupils to acquire a variety of ways to tackle unfamiliar words and gain full understanding of the texts they are reading
 - checking that all pupils have purposeful and engaging activities during guided reading sessions
 - extending the range of available novels and story books to capture pupils' interests.
- In the Nursery and Reception classes, help more children to develop their confidence and skills in expressing themselves and to speak in a range of situations by:
 - putting into practice the plan to introduce a programme to develop children's spoken language
 - giving children practical activities that extend their vocabularies and use their initiative
 - allowing children, especially when writing, to record their own ideas.
- Ensure that leaders, managers and members of the governing body:
 - check rigorously the impact of new ways of working on pupils' achievements
 - raise the skills of new subject and key stage leaders to play a full part in the school's development.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- National test results at the end of Year 6 have been much lower than in other schools for a number of years. There was a slight rise in attainment in 2012, but results remained low. Over half the pupils in the year group had complex learning difficulties. This is also the case this year. More-able pupils are challenged effectively, especially in mathematics.
- Attainment in reading is lower than in most schools. Many pupils have insufficient skills to tackle new words or comprehend what they are reading. Activities in daily guided reading sessions, and those where pupils learn the sounds letters make (phonics) vary in quality; those that pupils undertake on their own do not fully engage their interest. The range of literature for older pupils is not sufficient to enable older pupils to read widely.
- The progress of children in the Nursery and Reception classes is not good enough in communication, language and literacy and in personal, social and emotional development. There are not enough practical activities to extend children's vocabulary or make them want to develop their own ideas. Some adults talk for too long, give children little chance to reply, and tell them what to write.
- In Key Stage 1, pupils' attainment in writing and mathematics has risen quickly since 2010. One-to-one intense but engaging sessions for pupils falling behind are highly successful in developing their skills in mathematics and reading.
- In Years 3 to 6, more pupils than in previous years are making the expected and better than expected progress in writing and mathematics this year. The decision to employ additional teachers skilled in these areas is proving beneficial. Working in small groups or individually, pupils receive good quality guidance that helps them to acquire new knowledge, skills and understanding, filling gaps in their previous learning.
- To ensure that all pupils have an equal chance to succeed, the school provides additional support to disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, especially social, emotional, speech and language difficulties. Following advice from a range of professionals, staff build in different approaches to work and activities in lessons and nurture groups. This helps these pupils to make similar progress to their classmates.
- School information shows that pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and the pupil premium are making better progress than before. There is little difference between the attainment of these pupils and others of their age group in school. There is a wide gap between these pupils and those nationally, because many have special educational needs, but is narrowing this year.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Most teachers are ambitious for their pupils and are keen for them to succeed. While many aspects of teaching are good, these are not evident in all classes. Typically, in lessons that require improvement expectations of what pupils know and can do are not high enough, and lessons do not build sufficiently on what they have learned before. Not all teachers interact with pupils effectively during lessons or provide tasks that allow them to be resourceful.

- In the Nursery and Reception classes, the quality of teaching is inconsistent. Some staff use the outdoor area and model language well, for example, taking on the role of the shopkeeper in children's play. Others ask probing questions and provide captivating tasks where children can use their own ideas. This is not always the case because some activities limit what children can achieve. Where there are few opportunities for discussions with children to help them to develop their vocabulary or to learn outdoors, their progress is hindered.
- Where there is good teaching, teachers use imaginative ways to capture pupils' interest, especially that of boys, to motivate them to work hard and understand how their learning relates to the world around them. In a Year 2 mathematics lesson, a famous spy came to visit the class to talk about the secret codes pupils were going to devise while learning about ordering numbers in a sequence. In Year 6, pupils successfully wrote an article for a magazine in the right style to persuade others to visit Australia. Their internet research included facts and figures about the Great Barrier Reef.
- The characteristics of other good lessons observed included:
 - clear explanations of what pupils were to learn and achieve by the end of the lesson
 - work that is matched well to pupils' needs and interests
 - effective questioning to challenge pupils' thinking
 - good use of teaching assistants who understand their pupils' needs, and what they should achieve in lessons
 - opportunities for pupils to select the resources they need to help them to work independently
 - good management of behaviour.
- Marking has a good impact on pupils' learning. Staff point out what pupils do well and what they need to do to improve the next piece of work. Pupils have time to consider their teacher's comments and respond to them. They also know their targets for improvement and these are checked frequently.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school is good. Adults are excellent role models and insist pupils show courtesy and good manners to all. Consequently, pupils are polite and friendly. Pupils are proud of the awards they receive for their behaviour. Well-established governors say that behaviour has improved and is good.
- Pupils' attitudes to school are good. They take pride in doing their best and presenting their work well. Their books show that they cover a considerable amount of work in their lessons, indicating that over time they apply themselves well to their tasks.
- The pupils who act as play leaders, and who are part of the school council, say they are proud of their school. They take their duties seriously and carry them out in a responsible manner.
- The school does not tolerate discrimination of any kind. Pupils feel safe and are taught about different kinds of bullying and know what to do should they feel unhappy.
- Nurture groups and opportunities to eat lunch in a quieter atmosphere are assisting the very small number of pupils who find it hard to sustain good standards of behaviour to gain the social and emotional skills they need. The school uses exclusion as a last resort. The number of pupils who have not been allowed in school for half a day or more is reducing because staff have the skills to support the pupils.

- The home-school liaison officer makes an important contribution to the safety of pupils. This helps to ensure that those whose circumstances are known to make them vulnerable are safe.
- Attendance is improving from a low level and is broadly average. Punctuality has improved through attendance at the breakfast club and an earlier informal start to the day. All pupils can go straight to their classroom where they too can enjoy a piece of toast.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- In January 2012 the school was challenged robustly by the local authority to raise pupils' attainment. The headteacher and deputy headteacher who were in acting roles at that time responded rapidly and with determination. Since being appointed to their substantive posts they have driven many of the required changes with a high degree of success. The local authority has confidence that the school is improving and has reduced its strong level of support and monitoring to a much lower level.
- Many of the leadership and management procedures are new. Much of the work to raise the quality of teaching and pupils' progress has been undertaken by the headteacher and deputy headteacher. Membership of the senior management team has rightly been extended to share responsibilities for the school's overall development more effectively.
- Subject and key stage leaders who were at the school at the time of the previous inspection have been trained to carry out their roles. Those who are new understand what is expected of them but they have yet to undergo training to increase their effectiveness in checking the impact of targets in their development plans on pupils' achievements.
- The ambition of leaders, managers and governors to pursue excellence is enshrined in the school's new motto, 'Aspiring to greatness', that was agreed by all.
- The well-focused development and rapid improvement plans are based on rigorous self-evaluation. They identify the key areas for improvement, including the need to improve children's spoken language in the youngest classes.
- Training, visits to classes and links between pupils' progress and pay reviews are bringing about a rapid rise in the quality of teaching. A new system to track pupils' progress is has been introduced for all staff to identify that pupils are making the progress they should.
- The school has a strong commitment to equality and diversity. Its support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, and their families, is high. Courses and workshops for parents and carers, to help them raise their aspirations of what their children can achieve and understand how they can support them at home, are becoming increasingly popular. Established partnerships with alternative providers and specialist support mean that, when necessary, pupils who might otherwise be excluded remain in school and continue their learning.
- The curriculum, while not yet delivering higher levels of attainment, is inspiring pupils to make faster progress. It has recently been adapted to stimulate boys' learning. Visits to places further afield and to a university are raising pupils' aspirations for their future. Opportunities to make stained glass windows, work in groups, play a musical instrument and take part in science experiments contribute well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

■ The governance of the school:

- The local authority's robust challenge made governors fully aware of the school's poor performance at that time in relation to other schools nationally. The governors undertook training to broaden their skills, in challenging the school. They moved swiftly to draw up an action plan and appointed the then acting headteacher and deputy headteacher to permanent posts. Key strengths and areas for development were identified, and funds were allocated to support the priorities and boost those allocated to the school for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. These rightly included the employment of a home-school liaison officer to focus on safeguarding matters, allowing the new headteacher to concentrate on teaching and learning. Additional teaching assistants and teachers, some with specific skills in reading and mathematics, were appointed to work with individuals or small groups. Through their regular visits, involvement in the school's pay review procedures and the headteacher's reports, governors now have a clear view of the quality of teaching. The budget is reviewed, and a new governors' committee meets regularly with the headteacher to check on pupils' progress. Funds have been allocated to increase classroom resources, and to provide staff training to introduce new ways of working and to improve the teaching of reading. However, the impact of this funding on pupils' achievements has yet to be checked rigorously.

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	132836
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	406499

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	362
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	George Thomas
Headteacher	Paul Arch
Date of previous school inspection	9 June 2011
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