

Heron Hill Primary School

Hayfell Avenue, Kendal, Cumbria, LA9 7JH

Inspection dates 19–20 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Too few pupils are consistently making better than expected progress in Key Stage 1.
- There are examples of good and outstanding teaching but teachers do not always plan and provide tasks at the correct level to consistently get the best out of all of the pupils.
- Methods for teaching the links between letters and sounds are not systematic enough to develop secure reading skills in younger pupils.
- Although there are examples of detailed marking by teachers, there are inconsistencies across the school. Pupils do not always understand the targets which are set for them.
- The impact of recent initiatives to accelerate the progress that pupils are making have yet to be measured by leaders and managers, including the governing body.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 2.
- The headteacher has introduced many positive changes. The strong senior leadership team is driving improvement. All staff are dedicated to providing a caring environment in which pupils can learn successfully.
- Many staff have taken on new areas of responsibility for which they are now accountable. Pupils' progress is thoroughly monitored and used to provide support for those who are not learning as quickly as they should.
- Behaviour and safety are good. Pupils are respectful towards each other, the adults around them and visitors to the school. They enjoy coming to school, which is demonstrated in above-average attendance. They are keen to learn.
- Leaders and managers, including the governing body, have prioritised raising the quality of teaching and achievement. This is raising standards and ensuring that this is an improving school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 16 teachers and visited 22 lessons. In addition, a number of short visits were made to lessons.
- Discussions were held with school staff, groups of pupils, subject leaders, parents, a representative from the local authority, the headteacher from a local special school and members of the governing body.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation including safeguarding documents, reports of the school's checks on how well it is doing, development plans, and local authority reports. They also checked records of pupils' current attainment and progress, documents relating to pupils' attendance and behaviour and pupils' work.
- There were 62 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) prior to the inspection and these were taken into account when planning the inspection. Fourteen responses were recorded during the inspection and inspectors also took into account pupils' and parents' views which the school collates annually.

Inspection team

Naomi Taylor, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jane Holmes

Additional Inspector

John Shutt

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Heron Hill is much larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Almost all pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding provided by the government to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children looked after by the local authority and the children of service families) is much lower than average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is well below the national average as is the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage includes a Nursery.
- The school works in partnership with Sandgate Special School which delivers alternative education for a very small number of pupils who are on roll at both schools.
- The school is a member of the Kendal Collaborative Partnership.
- The school accommodates breakfast and after-school clubs which are independently managed and subject to a separate inspection.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that all is at least good or better by:
 - using the information about how quickly pupils are learning to plan, not just interventions but work in lessons that is at the right level to get the best out of all pupils, remembering that some pupils work more quickly than others
 - checking that pupils understand their work during lessons and swiftly adapting teaching when pupils find the work too easy or too hard
 - making sure that marking always tells pupils what they need to do to improve their work and regularly allowing time in lessons for pupils to correct their work.
- Ensure that all Key Stage 1 pupils are learning quickly enough in English and mathematics through:
 - developing further a systematic approach to teaching pupils the skills that are needed to improve their understanding of the way letters link to sounds and better preparing Year 1 pupils for the national reading check
 - setting targets for pupils in English and mathematics which ensure pupils reach their full potential and making certain that these targets are understood by all the pupils.
- Improving the effect of changes by ensuring leaders, managers and governors measure the impact of new initiatives on improving the quality of teaching and learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Most children start school with skills that are below those typically expected for their age especially in speech and language. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, there are exceptionally strong links between school and home which help the children to settle quickly and make good progress. Teachers provide opportunities for parents to find out how they can help their children with their learning. Parents value this. Children learn letters and their sounds in the Early Years Foundation Stage and practise linking them to work out words.
- In Key Stage 1, these skills are not fully extended and the slower rate at which pupils learn to read means that standards in reading are lower than age-related expectations at the end of Year 2. Pupils' below-average reading skills demonstrate that approaches to teaching phonics (the links between letters and the sounds they make) are not systematic enough.
- Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 2 so that, by the time they leave Year 6, pupils' ability to read is generally typical for their age.
- Pupils do not always understand their targets and the tasks they have been set and teachers do not always check that pupils understand these in English and mathematics. This also results in pupils not making fast enough progress or reaching at least average standards at the end of Key Stage 1 in these subjects.
- Throughout Key Stage 2, pupils make good progress so that, by the time they leave Year 6, skills in mathematics and English are in line with national expectations and improving. Writing has been an area for development and improvements to the quality of pupils' writing can already be seen across the school.
- Most disabled pupils and pupils with special educational needs achieve well given their starting points. Those supported by the pupil premium, including pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, make at least similar progress to their peers who are not eligible. The most recent 2012 data show this group of pupils did better than others and reached above average standards in English and mathematics.
- A very small minority engage in effective learning at a special school that supports their specific needs. These pupils make expected progress. This demonstrates that the school promotes equality of opportunity well.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- While there is some good and outstanding teaching, overall it requires improvement, especially in Key Stage 1. This is why most pupils are not making good progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 2.
- In some lessons, the tasks do not always get the best out of all pupils and the pace at which pupils are learning is not rapid enough. This especially makes the teaching of reading less effective. Examples of this were seen in phonics lessons in Key Stage 1, when some pupils were learning to recognise the different spellings of words which sounded the same. In the smaller groups, pupils were given individual attention and asked questions which made them work out the answer. In a larger group, pupils had to gather around what they thought was the correct spelling of a word but too many followed their friends and too little progress was made by some pupils.
- The most effective teaching captures the imagination of pupils and inspires them to investigate and find out things for themselves. For example, in a Year 6 English lesson, pupils were inspired by analysing and comparing extracts from both 'Macbeth' and 'Harry Potter' before embarking on drafting their own instructions for a 'revolting rhyme or recipe'. They clearly enjoyed the challenge and made outstanding progress.
- Teaching assistants and volunteers play an important role in supporting individuals and groups of pupils, giving much praise and using skilful questioning to encourage pupils to think for

themselves.

- Topic work has helped pupils to explore areas which are of particular interest to them. They particularly enjoyed their chocolate and Titanic projects.
- Teachers check on pupils' understanding of what they are learning during lessons but they do not always adapt their plans when pupils find the work too easy or too hard. Teachers' marking is variable in quality and not always precise enough about how pupils can improve and extend their work. Pupils are not consistently given time in lessons to correct and improve their work and this slows progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Heron Hill is a strong school community which is highly valued by pupils, their families, staff and visitors to the school. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school and show respect for each other and the adults around them. The growth in pupil numbers illustrates the good reputation that the school has.
- Pupils have good attitudes to learning and generally find lessons interesting. They particularly enjoy topic work when they are given the freedom to develop their own particular areas of interest.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school and they learn how to stay safe in their own community and other environments. The curriculum ensures pupils have a good understanding of different types of bullying and are clear that they could turn to any adult if they had concerns. The older pupils were able to explain the potential dangers of making friends through the internet and how to stay safe when using computers. Parents and staff are confident that the school provides a safe and secure place where there is equal emphasis on pupils' personal growth and academic development.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school. This is due to the school's ethos and the opportunities for personal development through the new creative curriculum and a raft of extra-curricular activities. Pupils have a link to an inner-city school in Liverpool and others overseas and this broadens their horizons.
- Heron Hill plays a key role in the local community. For example, the school council presented a proposal to the local council to develop a nearby area of woodland as a conservation area. This idea was so convincingly presented that the project is now being developed.
- Those pupils whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable are extremely well supported by the school and, when appropriate, external agencies. One parent talked about a medical condition which had made her child less confident and how well the school supported not just her child but the whole family.
- Pupils' enjoyment of school is clear and demonstrated in above-average attendance.

The leadership and management are good

- The strong headteacher has a very clear view of how successful the school can be. School leaders, including the governing body, are very committed and determined to drive forward improvements. Improvements have already been made to the quality of teaching and the pace of pupils' progress is starting to quicken.
- The local authority now provides 'light touch' support due to the work of the headteacher and new responsibilities taken on by staff who are successfully bringing about positive changes to the school.
- Leaders and managers now regularly check the progress that individual pupils are making through the new tracking system. There are procedures in place to check how well teaching is helping pupils to learn. For those pupils whose progress is not as quick as expected, interventions are put in place to support them. However, staff are not consistently using this information to plan lessons to meet the needs of the wide range of abilities within their class.

- A more creative curriculum is now being used and this gives pupils the opportunity to learn through topics, which they clearly enjoy.
- Governors and the school's leaders and managers have yet to measure the impact of recent initiatives, such as the movement of teachers to different year groups and the impact on improving pupils' achievement, particularly in Key Stage 1.
- Those responsible for the quality of teaching are ensuring improvements are being made, although these changes are not fully effective, especially in Key Stage 1. Teachers are now set challenging targets with a direct link to pupils' progress and school priorities. Support and training are provided and there are direct links between the quality of teaching and teachers' pay.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governors ensure that the school fulfils its statutory responsibilities; all staff have been vetted and trained appropriately to keep pupils safe and free from harm. They have an accurate overview of the school's overall provision and understand the data that show how well pupils are doing. Governors now play a more central role in shaping the long-term plans for the school based on how well pupils are progressing compared to other schools. They have taken important spending decisions, including creating new roles and changing responsibilities of staff. There is evidence of the governing body working closely with senior leaders to address weaker teaching and to make sure that there are robust links between outcomes for pupils and teachers' pay. They have also agreed the use of pupil premium funding to ensure that these pupils at least make similar progress to other pupils in the school.

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	112190
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	403170

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	450
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Morag Knight
Headteacher	Peter Hicks
Date of previous school inspection	6 June 2008
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