

Picklenash Junior School

Ross Road, Newent, GL18 1BG

Inspection dates 27–28 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		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Not enough pupils leaving the school in recent years have achieved the results of which they were capable.
- Not enough pupils have made good progress in English and mathematics as they move through the school.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, and those who are eligible for the pupil premium, have not attained as well as their peers in the school.
- There has not been enough good teaching over time to ensure pupils achieve well.
- There is still some teaching that requires improvement. In these lessons, teachers do not have high enough expectations of how well their pupils can learn, and learning happens too slowly for pupils to make good progress
- There are not enough opportunities for pupils to develop and practise their writing skills in different topics and subjects across the curriculum.
- Marking is not always effective in letting the pupils know exactly what it is they need to do in order to improve their work.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils feel safe in the school, and their behaviour around the school and in lessons is good.
- Pupils play an active part in school life, for example the school council fundraises for playtime equipment.
- Pupils' attendance has improved as a result of carefully thought out plans to reinforce the importance of attending regularly, and pupils are punctual to school and to lessons.
- Strong leadership and management, formed after the school was federated in 2011, has swiftly put into place actions to bring about improvements in the quality of teaching, and pupils' achievement.
- Governance is a strength of the school. The governors work in partnership with the inspirational leadership of the headteacher to ensure that the school is continually improving.
- The federated status of the school means that there are shared policies, staff and resources with the infant school, and these provide good value for money.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 14 lessons, of which two were jointly observed by the headteacher. Several other short visits to lessons were made as well.
- A range of pupils' work was looked at by inspectors, and formal and informal discussions held with pupils from all year groups.
- Inspectors looked at school documentation, including that relating to the progress and attainment of pupils currently in the school, safeguarding and attendance, and how teachers' performance is monitored by school leaders.
- Discussions were held with two representatives of the governing body, including the Chair of the Governing Body, and a representative from the local authority. Conversations were also had with senior and middle leaders responsible for aspects of school life.
- Inspectors took account of 33 responses by parents to the on-line Parent View questionnaire and other communication with parents during the inspection. Staff were invited to complete a questionnaire, and 20 responses to this were considered as part of the inspection process.

Inspection team

Clare Saunders, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Alwyne Jolly

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average-sized junior school, where most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The school has been federated with the neighbouring infant school since May 2011, forming the Federation of Newent Schools, and shares the same governing body. Since the previous inspection there have been some staffing changes, and middle and senior leaders now have responsibilities across the junior and infant schools. The headteacher is the executive headteacher for both schools.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium (in this school, additional funding from the government for pupils who are looked after or who are eligible for free school meals) is lower than the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils or those with special educational needs and who are supported by school action is above the national average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and who are supported by school action plus or by a statement of special educational needs is below the national average.
- No pupils are taught in alternative provision away from the school site.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teaching is always good or better across the school, so that all pupils consistently achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics, by:
 - making sure that teachers always have high expectations of what their pupils are capable of learning
 - enabling teachers to always use information about what their pupils know and understand to help them plan learning activities that mean that pupils learn quickly and no time is lost in lessons
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to write creatively in all subjects they study
 - ensuring that teachers' marking always provides pupils with information about how to improve their work to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding so they learn quickly.
- Narrow the gaps in attainment in English and mathematics for pupils supported by pupil premium funding, by:
 - rigorously checking the progress of eligible pupils and providing additional support where necessary to enable them to make at least good progress
 - reporting termly to the governing body on the effectiveness of the use of funding.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- In the past, pupils have left the school with below average results in English and mathematics because they have not made enough progress, as they moved through the year groups, in developing their reading, writing and mathematical skills.
- However, since the school was federated in 2011 with the neighbouring infant school, the newly formed leadership and management team has made sure that pupils in the school make good progress in their learning in all year groups, especially in reading and mathematics. Consequently, pupils are making up lost ground and remedying gaps in their knowledge, understanding and skills. This has yet to be reflected in external national tests and pupils' achievement over time from their starting points is still not consistently good.
- Pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs, and both groups for whom the pupil premium provides additional support, have not achieved the standards that they were expected to achieve. For example, the average point score in 2012 of Year 6 pupils eligible for support from the pupil premium showed that these pupils were nearly two years behind their peers in English and mathematics. The gaps in attainment are being addressed but are not closing quickly enough.
- Lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and the school's own tracking confirm the rising trend in pupils' attainment and progress. For example, pupils in Year 6 are now on track to achieve results that are in line with the national average. Pupils are developing the skills of writing less quickly than those in reading and mathematics throughout the school.
- Pupils who are disabled and who have special educational needs now make good progress in their learning across the school, due to careful identification of their individual needs and close tracking of how well they learn. This effective approach is common across the federated schools.
- The pupil premium is being used increasingly well to make sure that all eligible pupils benefit. For example, the additional help for pupils in Year 6 to develop their reading skills has resulted in these pupils making very good progress in the last year. In addition, the small group teaching for some pupils in Years 3 and 4 builds on their knowledge of phonics (the sounds that letters make) that they learned in the infant school to develop their competence and confidence in reading. All of these initiatives are helping to promote equal opportunities for all groups of pupils more effectively than previously.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching over time has not resulted in pupils' good achievement. Currently in the school there is mainly good teaching, but there is still some teaching that requires improvement.
- In those lessons which require improvement, teachers do not have high enough expectations of how well their pupils can achieve. Work set is often too easy, and does not encourage pupils to think deeply about their learning or challenge them into thinking and working independently of the teacher. The rate at which pupils learn in these lessons is not fast enough, and pupils are not always enthused or engaged in their learning.
- Marking of pupils' work is of variable quality throughout the school. There is some that provides timely and relevant advice on how pupils can improve their work, and pupils value this and respond readily. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 have personalised targets that are routinely referred to. However, there is some marking that just focuses on whether the learning activity has been completed or not and does not identify what the pupil needs to do in order to improve their skills in English and mathematics.
- Where teaching is good, pupils are interested in their learning and keen to talk about it with their peers or with adults. They have several opportunities to reflect on their work and offer sensible suggestions on how they can improve. Teachers ask probing questions that help them

to see where pupils have grasped new concepts and developed their understanding, and there is reference to 'steps to success' to help identify the progress that pupils have made.

- This good teaching has led to improvements in pupils' achievements, especially in reading and mathematics. Progress in pupils' writing is less well developed, as there are not enough opportunities for pupils to write creatively across different subjects and topics to develop and practise their writing skills regularly.
- School leaders have correctly identified where there are strengths in teaching and where there has been a need to improve some areas. As a result of this, much of the teaching in the school is now good, there is no inadequate teaching, and the quality of teaching has improved strongly since the previous inspection.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils are polite, considerate and respectful of others in the school. They move around the school sensibly and enjoy playing with a range of equipment during playtimes and lunchtimes. Pupils in Year 5 visit the infant school playground regularly to help infant pupils with their playtimes, while Year 6 pupils act as 'playtime pals' looking after younger junior school pupils when they need it.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations, including how to use the internet safely. They are aware of what would constitute bullying, including prejudice-based bullying, and are adamant that bullying occurs rarely, and that it is swiftly and effectively dealt with by the school.
- Pupils' attendance has improved as a result of the school's actions to reinforce the importance of good attendance to pupils and to parents. Pupils arrive punctually to school and to lessons.
- In lessons where the teaching is good, pupils are motivated to learn, and apply themselves to learning tasks with interest. They demonstrate the positive spiritual, moral, social and cultural education that the school promotes.
- Pupils play an active part in the life of the school. The school council is very active in raising funds and then deciding what these funds are spent on for the benefit of all pupils. For example, recent purchases include playground equipment.
- This positive view of behaviour and safety of pupils is supported by the positive views of parents gathered during the inspection.

The leadership and management are good

- The leadership team and the governing body were newly formed shortly after the school federated with the infant school in May 2011. They quickly evaluated the school's performance and put into place plans which are successfully improving the quality of education for the pupils.
 - School leaders have an accurate awareness of the strengths of the school, and correctly prioritise the areas to further develop. All leaders have a clear understanding of the areas for which they are responsible, and they are regularly held to account during school meetings.
 - Middle and senior leaders have developed a clear plan for improving the quality of teaching, and there is a clear structure of lesson observations, professional development opportunities and targets set for teachers that are based on the continuous review of their performance. This has led to the eradication of inadequate teaching, and to much of the teaching being good. As a result, the progress that pupils now make in lessons is significantly improved from the previous inspection.
 - The curriculum has been developed to provide a structured approach to assist teachers in assessing how well pupils understand the key facts in each subject. It provides several opportunities for pupils to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. For example, pupils have many opportunities to learn a range of instruments and whole-school
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assemblies provide opportunities for pupils to celebrate and reflect on aspects of school life.

- There is a coherent strategy for managing the performance of teachers that is shared across the two federated schools. Teachers are set challenging targets that are closely linked to pupils' achievement, and reflect the position and expectations of teachers that are on the upper pay scale.
- The local authority provides light touch support for this school, recognising the strong leadership and the improvements that have already been implemented by the leaders throughout the federated schools.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body is passionate and committed to the continuous improvement of the junior school. It has a clear strategic overview of the strengths and areas to develop, including in the quality of teaching and how well the school is doing compared to others nationally, and allocates resources accordingly in order to bring about the improvements in pupil achievement seen since the school federated with the infant school. Governors ask challenging questions of school leaders, for example about how quickly pupils learn in each year group, and offer effective support to the headteacher. The governing body rewards good teaching, and makes clear to staff its high expectations of teachers' performance. Governors ensure careful allocation of financial resources, and have processes in place to analyse how pupil premium funding is used to benefit targeted pupils. There are encouraging signs but, given the legacy of underachievement, there needs to be even closer scrutiny to ensure that gaps in attainment are closed more rapidly. The sharing of resources and staff between the federated schools means that there is good value for money. Governors ensure financial stability and that all legal responsibilities for safeguarding are met.
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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	115733
Local authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	405598

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	7-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	166
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Aidan Dowle
Headteacher	Lin Griffiths
Date of previous school inspection	23 -24 May 2011
Telephone number	01531 820589
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