

Arlecdon Primary School

Arlecdon Road, Arlecdon, Frizington, Cumbria, CA26 3XA

Inspection dates 26–27 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures.

- Leaders are not improving the school quickly enough. They have failed to address some of the areas identified for improvement by the previous inspection.
- Leaders and managers are not demonstrating that they are able to help the school improve without a lot of external support.
- Governors and the local authority have been concerned about the school's leadership but until recently have not done enough to address this issue.
- Leaders, managers and governors do not evaluate the work of the school well enough. Consequently, they do not know the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- Plans for improving the school are weak. Beyond July 2013, there is no evidence of planning for future improvement.
- Teaching is not improving. Targets set to help individual staff are vague and progress towards them is not being checked.
- Teachers do not vary work well enough to meet the different needs of all pupils. As a result, not all pupils make as much progress as they could.
- Teachers' expectations of the standard of pupils' writing are not high enough and this slows progress.
- The achievement of pupils requires improvement, particularly in writing. There are not enough opportunities for pupils to write imaginatively and at length.
- The unpleasant misbehaviour of a very few pupils unsettles many others and as a result, behaviour requires improvement. Records of misbehaviour are poorly kept.

The school has the following strengths

- Nearly all pupils enjoy reading and make good progress.
- Children in the Nursery and Reception classes make good progress.
- Nearly all parents say their children are happy and enjoy school; above-average attendance supports this view.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed all teachers and all classes, most of them twice. In all, eight lessons were seen.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, a representative of the local authority and the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body. Many informal discussions took place with staff and pupils.
- The inspector took account of the views of the 10 parents who responded to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View). The views of 25 parents who recently completed the school's own questionnaire were also taken into account.
- Responses to nine staff questionnaires were considered.
- The inspector looked at many examples of pupils' work and records of their past and current progress.
- Documents relating to behaviour, safeguarding, attendance, school improvement and the school's procedures for evaluating its own performance were looked at.

Inspection team

Alastair Younger, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Information about this school

- Arlecdon Primary is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium (extra money for those known to be eligible for free school meals or being looked after by the local authority and the children of military personnel) is smaller than the national average.
- Nearly all pupils are White British.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The school has four mixed-age classes. They are: Nursery and Reception, Years 1 and 2, Years 3 and 4 and Years 5 and 6.
- Until October 2012, the headteacher taught for four days each week; since October, on the directions of the governing body, this has been reduced to two and a half days to allow more time for essential leadership and management duties.
- The Nursery and Reception class is currently being taught by a temporary teacher.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Urgently improve leadership, management and governance so as to secure rapid improvement in the school's performance and gain the full support of parents and staff by:
 - ensuring that leaders and managers have the necessary training to improve their ability to evaluate the effectiveness of the school, plan for improvement and improve teaching and behaviour
 - making sure that improvements in governance continue to be built upon, especially in the governing body's contribution to reviewing how well the school is doing and to improvement planning
 - ensuring that there is a formal and effective system to evaluate and improve the quality of teaching that includes clear, measurable targets for improvements in teachers' performance
 - making sure that remaining areas of weakness highlighted at the previous inspection are systematically and speedily addressed.
- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good and improves pupils' achievement, especially in writing by:
 - making sure that teachers plan work that is appropriate for all pupils
 - making sure that pupils' work is always marked in accordance with the school's marking policy and that pupils know what they need to do to improve their work
 - raising expectations of the quality of pupils' writing and providing more opportunities for pupils to write imaginatively and at length.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- When they enter the school, children's skills and abilities vary widely but taken overall they are typical for their age. Pupils leave Year 6 with broadly average attainment. Achievement requires improvement because not enough pupils make progress that is better than expected, given their starting points and capabilities, and in writing a few pupils do not make the progress they should.
- Currently, children in the Nursery and Reception class are making good progress. They enjoy learning indoors and out and are adventurous in their play and learning. In 2012, pupils in Key Stage 1 performed well in assessments but this year, some pupils are not on track to reach their targets and current standards are lower.
- By the end of Year 6, nearly all pupils meet the nationally expected Level 4. In 2012, pupils did well in reading, with all pupils reaching the higher Level 5. In contrast, in writing, no pupil reached the higher level of attainment. Standards in mathematics fall between that for reading and writing and are broadly average.
- Attainment has risen over the past two years, but from a very low starting point to a broadly average level. Most of the improvement is accounted for by better reading results. There has not been enough improvement in writing, which was identified as an area for improvement at the last inspection.
- Pupils like reading and most are good at it. The school fosters a good culture of enjoying reading and pupils can be seen taking books out into the playground as a favourite activity.
- The improvements in standards seen in 2012 are not being sustained. The current picture from the work seen in pupils' books, the progress in lessons observed during the inspection, and from information provided by the school, points to declining standards.
- Writing is a weakness. Pupils' work in this subject is very variable. This year, the school started to use different teaching methods aimed at improving standards in writing more rapidly. Pupils' current work shows that this has not yet worked well enough. Many Year 6 pupils, for example, use capital letters and punctuation erratically and there is very little imaginative writing of any length. There is no real celebration of pupils' writing. Other than a few poems, there is little on display in classrooms or communal areas to share any success in writing across the school.
- In such a small school, big variances in the data about pupils' achievement can often be as a result of the performance of a single pupil. Some groups of pupils, such as those known to be eligible for free school meals, those being looked after by the local authority, or disabled pupils and those with special educational needs only have a single representative each year. No group of pupils across the school is achieving significantly differently to any other. Not enough is done to review and compare the performance of different pupil groups over time in order to ensure they are given equality of opportunity to succeed.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Not enough teaching is good or better and this limits pupils' progress. There is no evidence of inadequate teaching but nor is there any evidence of outstanding teaching. This means that there is no role model in school for teachers to observe in order to see what outstanding teaching looks like.
- Teachers do not vary work enough to meet the needs of pupils of different ages and abilities. For some pupils this means that their work is too easy, for others, too hard. Teachers are not quick enough to check whether pupils understand what they are doing or whether they could be doing harder work. In a school where every class covers two year-groups this is a significant weakness. In a lesson in Year 1 and 2 for example, in which pupils were learning the sounds that letters represent, all pupils were learning the same letter combinations, even when it was clear that many already knew them and some were already fluent readers.
- There are some aspects of teaching that are good. In the Nursery and Reception class, the teacher shows a good understanding of how to use outdoor areas to best effect. In a Year 5 and

6 history lesson, pupils were given very clear instructions about the focus of the lesson, the importance of independent research using computers and the importance of using what they know about taking notes rather than just 'cutting and pasting' pieces of text from the internet.

- There are differences in the quality of teachers' planning. In Year 5 and 6, planning for the week covered five totally different areas of mathematics. This prevented pupils from using what they had learned before to help them with current learning. In contrast, in English lessons for the same week, pupils started on Monday by looking at ways some journalists persuade or mislead, building up to a Friday task of writing a balanced report.
- Teachers' expectations of the standard of pupils' writing are not high enough. Teachers are too tolerant of the careless mistakes pupils make in their writing. Misspelled words are often ignored, as is pupils' disregard for the need to use capital letters in headings to pieces of work, titles, and names. Pupils are rarely expected to write at any great length and this hinders their progress. Pupils' handwriting is very erratic.
- The quality of marking of pupils' work is very variable. It is better in the Nursery and Reception class and in the Year 1 and 2 class than it is higher up the school. Where it is good, it gives pupils a clear idea about what they have got right and what they need to do to make their work better. This good practice is missing in other classes. The school's marking policy is not being consistently followed.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- Most pupils behave well; they are polite to visitors and are keen to talk to them. However, pupils' behaviour and safety require improvement. Only a very small minority of pupils behaves badly but this misbehaviour has a big impact in such a small school. Isolated incidents of misbehaviour in lessons distract teachers, and pupils' learning is interrupted. A tiny number of very unpleasant instances of bullying, racism and sexist taunts taints the school.
- When pupils are taught well they show initiative, enthusiasm and a good attitude to learning. When teaching is weaker a few pupils are easily distracted and lose concentration. Some more-able pupils are happy to accept a lack of challenge and take the easy option of keeping quiet about it, while a few less-able pupils keep quiet about the fact that they cannot do the work, thus taking the equally easy option.
- Attendance is above average. Unauthorised absence is very rare. The school has clear guidelines about when absence in term-time can be authorised for holidays but the guidance is not helpful for those lower-attaining pupils who may not speedily catch up on the learning they would miss.
- Exclusions are rare and properly administered and managed. Incidents of racism are not always properly dealt with. No central record is kept of serious misbehaviour. This makes it very hard for the school's leaders and the governing body to accurately evaluate trends in behaviour.
- A few parents and staff express concerns about pupils' behaviour. They feel that it is not always well managed and that too much leeway is given to a few older boys. Until recently not enough had been done to address this. Last term the governing body made a decisive move to keep parents better informed and involved in maintaining the safety and well-being of their children in school activities.
- Parents unanimously report that their children feel safe and happy at school. They feel their children are well cared for. Pupils say they usually feel safe and happy but sometimes get worried when a small number of boys misbehave.

The leadership and management

are inadequate

- Leaders and managers are having too little effect on the work of the school, and the capacity of the school to improve is too weak. Too many areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection have not been dealt with. Teaching has not improved, nor has the effectiveness of leadership and management. Both were previously identified as areas for improvement, but weaknesses remain.
- The pace of improvement is too slow because the headteacher does not have enough time to

undertake essential leadership and management duties. Furthermore, although the governing body has recently taken decisive action to reduce the teaching commitment of the headteacher from four days to two and a half, the headteacher does not have the necessary skills to undertake the duties required to good effect. The responsibility for leading subjects, with the exception of art and information and communication technology, rests fully with the headteacher. In addition, the headteacher's commitment to undertaking break and lunchtime supervision duties limits the time available for driving school improvement.

- Procedures for gaining an accurate view of the school's performance are inadequate. Although leaders, managers and governors have a list of what actions are being taken to improve the school, this is not linked well enough to how well pupils are learning. Plans to involve all staff and governors in reviewing how well the school is doing have not materialised. Furthermore, there is no long-term vision for improving the school and short-term plans are weak. The current improvement plan was hurriedly put together earlier this year and looks no further forward than the summer of this year.
- The school does not pay enough attention to how well it is performing compared to other schools nationally to establish whether it is doing enough to help its pupils achieve as well as they can. A 'summary of self-evaluation' exists. It lists what is being done but there is no evaluation of its effectiveness.
- The local authority has given support to the school by observing teaching and making suggestions as to how it can be improved. The intention is for these observations to contribute to the school's checks on its effectiveness and whether it is fulfilling its obligation to provide equal opportunities to all pupils, which at present it is not.
- The performance of teachers is not sufficiently checked. This is one reason why improvement is too slow. There have been a few observations of lessons recently but teachers have not been set targets for improvements in their practice.
- The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers.
- Despite being asked for the information prior to and during the inspection, anonymised information about teachers' salaries, what their responsibilities are and how their pay is linked to their performance was not provided.
- Teachers are given many opportunities to undertake extra training but these opportunities seem randomly chosen and not in any way linked to the school improvement plan. One teacher, for instance, who declared that the teaching of mathematics was her weakness, has not taken part in any training to remedy the situation in three years. Over the same period, she has undertaken extensive training in literacy, which has always been her strength.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Although it has been too slow coming, governance is now improving quickly. There is a clear resolve to make things better. Governors realise that they do not have enough information about the quality of teaching and the progress and standards made by pupils. In recent months, they have become increasingly focused in getting information for themselves. Too often in the past they have accepted excuses for what has not been done and this has contributed to insufficient improvement. They have belatedly recognised that they need to gain a better understanding of how the performance of teachers is checked. This shows a growing awareness of what needs to be done to secure improvement. Governors responsible for assessing and monitoring the performance and effectiveness of the headteacher have recently judged that performance targets were not met and that no extra pay could be sanctioned. Governors have been particularly effective in improving safeguarding issues. They have made some very wise changes to safeguarding policies relating to residential trips and the risks they involve.

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	112151
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	405378

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	73
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ged Toman
Headteacher	Philip Harrison
Date of previous school inspection	15 March 2011
Telephone number	01946 861409
Fax number	01946 861409
Email address	head@arlecdon.cumbria.sch.uk

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