

Featherby Junior School

Chilham Road, Gillingham, Kent, ME8 6BT

Inspection dates

14–15 March 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

- Achievement over time is not yet good enough, despite some recent improvements.
- Attainment by the end of Year 6 is no better than nationally expected.
- The quality of teaching has not been consistently good enough over time for pupils to make the progress they are capable of.
- Teachers do not take sufficient account of pupils' learning and understanding throughout the lesson, and so opportunities to make sure subsequent learning meets the needs of pupils are missed.
- Teachers do not always use available resources effectively enough to support pupils' learning.
- Weaknesses raised in previous inspections have only been recently addressed, and the school has not yet been able to show the full impact of these changes.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher is an inspirational leader, who has an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development. The head, the restructured leadership team and governors are effectively tackling improvement priorities.
- The high expectations underpinned by the school's vision of 'aspiring, learning and achieving' are shared by staff, all of whom are committed to improving the quality of education provided.
- Leaders' actions have been successful in bringing about rapid improvements in the quality of teaching, and consequently progress made by pupils across all year groups is accelerating.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around school. They have good attitudes to learning and enjoy the wealth of enrichment activities that support their learning and enjoyment of school.
- Positive partnerships exist between the school and parents.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 21 lessons, six of which were joint observations with senior leaders.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, the two assistant headteachers, one of whom holds responsibility for Inclusion, subject leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body, two other governors, and two representatives of the local authority.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and talked to them about their written work and learning, as well as looking at samples of work with members of the leadership team. They scrutinised books across the full range of subjects, especially in Year 6.
- Inspectors observed pupils during break and lunchtimes, and talked to them about behaviour and safety in the school. An assembly was also observed.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of school documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, the school improvement plan, records of pupils' progress, monitoring information, safeguarding documentation, and records relating to behaviour, attendance, exclusions and bullying. Additionally, they looked at minutes of meetings of the governing body and external reports.
- Inspectors took account of 11 responses to the online Parent View survey, the school's own parent surveys and 18 questionnaires returned by staff. They spoke informally to parents and carers as they dropped off their children at the start of the day, and to one parent who requested to speak with the inspection team.

Inspection team

Helena Evans, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Michael Elson	Additional inspector
Janet Watson	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Featherby Junior School is a larger-than-average-sized junior school.
- Most pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is close to the national average. This is additional funding to support pupils eligible for free school meals, those looked after by the local authority and children of forces families.
- The proportion of pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs and receive support at school action, school action plus, or who have a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The school does not use alternative provision. Pupils are educated on site.
- The school meets the government's floor targets 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 it is consistently good by December 2013, to further accelerate pupils' progress, by making sure that teachers:
 - adapt lessons to suit the learning needs of individuals
 - improve targeted questioning to ensure that teachers are clear about who understands or does not understand what they are learning
 - use this knowledge to quickly adjust opportunities for learning within the same lesson, deviating from the lesson plan if necessary.
- Increase the progress pupils make in lessons by:
 - making clear that all adults have a clear role in different parts of the lesson and know how to help pupils learn well
 - ensuring that pupils start their activities more quickly so they don't spend too long listening to the teacher
 - providing pupils with an appropriate range of resources and visual prompts
 - giving enough time to practice their skills through extended independent learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Standards have been in line with the national average at the end of Year 6 for the last two years, and over time there has been significant underachievement.
- Standards in writing are now broadly average at the end of Year 6. Since the appointment of the new headteacher, leaders have given priority to developing writing skills. This has resulted in an increasing number of pupils achieving average standards in English. However, there is still too much inconsistency in providing opportunities for pupils to write for extended periods of time in English and across the curriculum.
- Standards in mathematics are also average. Progress in mathematics is better than in English. Even so, pupils' mathematical understanding is not developed sufficiently well. There are limited opportunities for pupils to apply their skills and knowledge through a planned and systematic approach to problem solving and investigations.
- Pupils' progress is now accelerating. Recently introduced systems to monitor pupil progress against challenging targets are rigorously applied. First-hand observations of books show that pupils are making quicker progress in English and mathematics this year. This is reflected in the school's tracking data. However, the pace of learning slows when the role of adults is not sufficiently well targeted in the different parts of the lesson or when pupils sit for too long listening to the teacher at the beginning of the lesson.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively to fund additional support in classrooms so that pupils work in smaller-sized groups and have access to enrichment activities. This targeted support has led to eligible pupils making faster progress than their peers. Subsequently, gaps between their achievement and that of their peers are closing.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress, equal to their peers. The assistant headteacher for inclusion works closely with teachers to identify the most appropriate support to meet their different needs, and has developed effective procedures to monitor their progress. Partnerships with parents and external agencies are good and this has contributed to improving progress. The school has rightly identified the need to further develop the role of teaching assistants.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching has been inconsistent over time. As a result, pupils' learning and progress have not been good enough, especially in writing and mathematics.
- Since the appointment of the new headteacher, the quality of teaching has improved. This is because teachers have received targeted training and support to develop their practice. Consequently, there is now a greater proportion of good teaching. However, there is still too little good teaching and inconsistencies known by the school, and observed through the inspection, remain.
- Teachers generally use assessment well during lessons to check pupils' understanding but they do not always change the activity or pace of the lesson in response to pupils who clearly demonstrate an understanding and are ready to be given greater challenge, or those who are not yet confident in their learning. This slows the pace of learning down. In a lower-ability Year 4 maths set, pupils were asked to use number lines to subtract nine from a number. The higher-ability pupils relished the challenge of extending their learning by applying their understanding by subtracting 19 and 29 from a given number. However, lower-ability pupils were not given the opportunity to consolidate their learning and they became muddled because the pace was too fast.
- In weaker lessons, pupils are not given enough guidance or support prior to independent work to enable them to work for extended times. In a Year 5 lesson pupils were asked to investigate the mathematics in a given illustration. Although the pupils showed an enthusiasm to tackle the

activity, they were not given enough prompts to enable them to plan and structure their chosen investigation and time was wasted. In a Year 4 maths set, pupils were investigating how to make a cube using mathematical equipment. Insufficient equipment resulted in pupils becoming too passive and learning slowed down.

- In the best lessons, teachers plan carefully how adults can support learning. For example, in a Year 3 literacy lesson the teaching assistant was used well to write down the pupils' understanding of effective features of diaries. They also provided skilled intervention for a pupil requiring extra support by allowing them to compose their writing on a larger piece of paper. This timely intervention enabled the pupil to make similar progress to that of their peers. Another teacher in Year 3 provided targeted support for a small group of pupils as they reviewed their work on shape from the day before. This provided a good opportunity for them to share any misunderstanding and check that they were using the correct subject vocabulary.
- Teachers are now beginning to provide pupils with a curriculum that interests and enthuses them and provides a wider range of opportunities for them to practise their reading and writing skills. For example a Year 6 group were highly motivated by creating a holiday advertisement for the extra-terrestrial excursions brochure!

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

- The principles underpinned by the values of 'the Featherby family' are evident in the way pupils work and behave towards each other. Pupils are polite and courteous and respectful towards each other, adults and visitors in school.
- There are positive relationships between adults and pupils because of the school's ethos, which is promoted by all staff.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. Expectations are clear of how they should treat each other, and pupils understand that they have a shared responsibility to help each other.
- Good behaviour makes a positive contribution to pupils' learning. However, in some lessons, where pupils sat for too long in the introduction to the lesson, they were too passive and not actively engaged in their learning. This was also the case where learning was not pitched at the right level or supported by appropriate resources to enable sustained levels of concentration and independence.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school and enjoy coming to school. They have a good understanding of the different kinds of bullying, but say that it is rare and are confident that the school deals quickly with any issues that arise.
- The vast majority of parents and carers who returned the online questionnaire agree that their children are happy and well behaved, and feel that their children feel safe in school.
- A range of successful initiatives has led to improved attendance and punctuality since the last inspection. Attendance across all pupil groups is now above average.
- Incidents of exclusions have been reduced. There have been no exclusions this year.

The leadership and management

are good

- There has been a relentless focus on improving teaching and raising achievement since the previous inspection. The headteacher and senior leaders have managed the pace of change sensitively but robustly. Aspirations for what the school can achieve are high and these aims are clearly translated into plans which make it clear how the school can continue to improve.
- Regular lesson observations followed by feedback and a successful programme of support which combines a 'universal offer' for all staff and tailored individual support have ensured an increasingly good profile of teaching. Inadequate teaching has been eradicated.
- Performance management is now in place, and this is effectively managed. Teachers and senior leaders are set challenging targets which are beginning to contribute to school improvement

priorities, particularly in raising standards and accelerating pupils' progress.

- The headteacher has introduced robust systems for checking how well pupils achieve. Members of the senior leadership team make a good contribution to this process. There are frequent opportunities for checking if pupils are on track to make good progress from their starting points. There are increasing opportunities for middle leaders in monitoring activities and this is positively supporting school improvement.
- The school has fostered good partnerships with parents and carers. The positive responses from the online questionnaire show the new-found confidence in the school. Parents spoken to say they are pleased with the information they receive from the school and the approachability and availability of the school's leaders and staff.
- The subjects taught give appropriate emphasis to learning basic skills and there are increasing planned opportunities for children to use their reading, writing and communication skills across different subjects. Pupils say they enjoy the new topic approach, and recall with enjoyment the 'wow' day that marks the start of termly projects. The range of subjects and activities on offer contributes strongly to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It is further enriched through after-school clubs. Pupils say that they particularly enjoy the opportunities to engage in musical, sporting and art activities. A highlight for many pupils, which they talk about with pride, is the range of over-subscribed pupil-led clubs.
- The school is beginning to work effectively with schools in the immediate locality, and this has provided additional opportunity for monitoring of the school's work and professional development for staff.
- The local authority has provided highly effective support, especially focused on the quality of teaching and strengthening leadership skills through a coaching programme.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have a visible presence in the school. They are actively involved in monitoring the work of the school and planning for improvement with school leaders. Because of this they are aware of the school's strengths and areas for development. They know that teaching is not yet consistently good and that a key priority is to accelerate progress. They hold senior leaders to account and set challenging targets for improvement. They are able to discuss pupils' attainment and how well they are making progress. This is because tracking systems that are now in place and the information provided by leaders and managers give them an informed overview of the school. Financial management is secure and governors know how pupil premium funding is spent. They are now in a strong position to be able to monitor the impact of any initiatives on pupils' achievement. Governors meet their statutory duties and ensure safeguarding requirements are met.

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	118420
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	465769

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	336
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Ainsley
Headteacher	Barry Symons
Date of previous school inspection	31 January–1 February 2011
Telephone number	01634 231984
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