

Watlington Community Primary School

Rectory Lane, Watlington, King's Lynn, PE33 0HU

Inspection dates

20–21 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

- Pupils' progress is only average by the end of Year 6. The trend of improvement is steady rather than rapid.
- The quality of teaching is too variable. Too much of the teaching does not deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding. The lack of challenge has led to some groups, particularly the more able, those eligible for the pupil premium and girls not all meeting expectations.
- Pupils are very keen to learn, but expectations of what they can achieve are not consistently high enough.
- In lessons where teaching is weaker, there is a lack of urgency to push pupils to do good quality work. As a result, their work falls below the standard expected.
- Since the previous inspection, senior leaders, including the governing body, have used the performance management process to begin changing teachers' ways of thinking about pupils' achievement. The pace of change has been delayed because of the time it has taken to recruit new teachers.
- It has taken time to establish a new ethos that is focused on driving improvement.
- There is some unevenness in the way in which some subject leaders manage their work; all are not performing at a good enough pace to drive improvement.

The school has the following strengths

- The school is well led and managed. Good systems to challenge and hold staff to account are in place. Senior leaders provide clear direction for school improvement.
- Pupils are enthusiastic learners. The school is a safe place for them to attend and enjoy.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 13 lessons of which five were joint observations with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body, two groups of pupils and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspection team listened to six pupils read from Years 3 and 4.
- Inspectors took account of the 27 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), a letter and some comments from parents and carers.
- Inspectors observed the school's work, examined data about pupils' achievement, and policies, including those relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding. In addition, the inspection team scrutinised the minutes of governing body meetings and records of the school's monitoring of teaching.
- During this inspection, inspectors asked additional questions designed to ascertain the school's view of the impact and effectiveness of local authority services to support school improvement. This information will contribute to work being carried out by Ofsted to assess the use, quality and impact of those services.

Inspection team

Carmen Rodney, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Vreta Bagilhole	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Watlington is a much smaller than average-size primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for pupils for children in the care of local authority and for pupils eligible for free school meals, is in line with the national average.
- The proportion of pupils identified as receiving additional support at school action is above the national average, but the proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs or supported at school action plus is average.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- Mobility is higher than average, with a small minority of pupils joining and leaving the school part way through their primary education.
- In 2012, the school's results in the national tests for eleven year olds met the government's floor standard, which is the minimum expected for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school was led by a county headteacher who was seconded to the school to drive improvement from 2011 to 2012. The current headteacher, formerly the deputy headteacher, worked under the tutelage of the county headteacher before being appointed to the permanent post in 2012.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good teaching to ensure that pupils make good or better progress by:
 - making sure that teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are consistently high in order to deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding
 - developing teachers' questioning techniques to more effectively engage pupils and demand more when exploring work
 - ensuring that work is carefully and consistently matched to the needs of individual pupils in order to stretch them
 - using targets more consistently that are linked to the success criteria in lessons and help pupils know how they can improve their work
 - ensuring that pupils have opportunities to respond to feedback from teachers.
- Build on the work started to improve the capacity of middle leaders so that they are well placed to carry out their responsibilities effectively.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Children enter the Reception class with literacy, and personal and social skills that are below the expectations for their age. Over the last two years, too few have reached the levels expected by the start of Year 1. However, important changes in staffing, well-planned activities, improved assessment records and a more stimulating environment are enabling children to make better gains in recognising and forming letters, developing their social skills and working well independently or as part of a group. While observations and the school's records show that children are making better progress, they are likely to be below the age related expectations at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Year 6 pupils' performance in the national tests in English and mathematics was in line with the national average for the last three years with a notable improving trend in both subjects. Similarly, in 2012, Year 2 pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics was much improved and matched the national average. Although attainment is improving in Years 2 and 6, the overall results mask weaknesses in the performance of some groups of pupils. In Year 2, there were some weaknesses in writing and mathematics, while in Year 6, some pupils performed less well in writing.
- The school is determined to sustain and build on the recent improvements and has identified the reasons for the weaker performances in pupils' tests results. There is a strong drive to narrow the gap by providing focused additional support. For example, in literacy, there is a sharper focus on reading; in particular, comprehension and the correct use of grammatical structures. All pupils read daily, but boys were identified as reluctant readers. Well-selected reading resources were used to engage them and contributed to their improved performance. Similarly, in mathematics, well targeted support and an emphasis on the basic rules for number work are leading to pupils using calculation skills more accurately.

In the most recent national tests, pupils with special educational needs made good progress. In contrast, other groups made the progress expected. Progress was markedly better than in previous years; nevertheless, achievement for all groups requires improvement because variations remain across year groups and among different groups of pupils. The achievement of girls, higher attaining pupils and those eligible for the pupil premium was not as rapid. The school recognises the need to ensure that monitoring is rigorous and helps enable all groups to achieve equally well.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- There is not enough good quality teaching to challenge pupils in all year groups to make good progress and achieve well over time. In too many lessons, teachers do not match work sufficiently well to the individual needs of pupils or ability groups. Where work is too easy and higher attaining pupils are working ahead of the class teacher, it is not customary for all teachers to change direction and extend pupils' thinking.
- The most effective lessons are very well planned and the pupils understand the skills and knowledge they need to achieve well. For example, in a good Year 1 mathematics lesson, pupils worked very well collaboratively to measure different units and weigh a range of familiar objects before discussing and recording their findings without the constant supervision of the class teacher.

- Pupils make good or better progress in lessons when teachers involve them through using open-ended questions, with additional questions to improve their communication skills and understanding of the work. In these lessons the pace is fast, expectations of work are typically high and pupils are absorbed in their work. This was well illustrated in an outstanding Year 6 mathematics lesson where pupils worked independently on coordinates and percentage problems that were set at the right level of difficulty. This high quality teaching is not evident in all year groups.
- Where teaching requires improvement, teachers fail to stimulate pupils' thinking. They do not use their subject expertise effectively to ensure that there are sufficient levels of challenge for all pupils. Too often, teachers take a lot of time to work through a question and review previous work which is already understood. On these occasions, teachers fail to recognise that pupils are sitting and waiting patiently to begin the set work.
- The converse to this is pupils racing ahead to do the work, but lacking the necessary instructions to make good progress because insufficient time was used to explore the key vocabulary and what they had to complete. Questioning techniques are not used well enough to encourage pupils to respond at length and build on their views. Sometimes teachers miss opportunities to share and demonstrate good quality answers. In these lessons too few teachers use targets to demonstrate the level pupils should aim for. Occasionally, teaching is inadequate and fails to inspire pupils.
- Teaching assistants work very well with individuals and small groups. They help them to keep up with the work by explaining and using pupils' responses to demonstrate how they can shape their answers.
- The more effective teaching of early reading and writing is being established in Reception under the new leader. There is now more emphasis on improving these skills as pupils progress through the school. For example, the school acknowledges that on entry, pupils' phonic skills (knowledge of letters and the sounds they make) are very weak and is ensuring that pupils with low reading scores benefit from additional support to improve their literacy skills.
- Teachers use learning objectives and success criteria to mark pupils' work by identifying how well they are using grammatical features and the skills taught. This good practice is a strength of marking; however, teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to respond to the often detailed feedback and next steps recorded in their work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils are very keen to learn and remain positive even when teaching does not challenge them. Most pupils in discussions with inspectors explained that they are very ambitious; they want to enter university and pursue professional careers after secondary school. Pupils' desire to achieve well was clearly articulated when a few of the more-able indicated that at times work could be more challenging for them.
- Behaviour is never less than good in lessons and around the site, and occasionally it is exemplary. For example, pupils demonstrated a high level of cooperation and concentration during the assembly led by visitors on the meaning of Easter. Pupils are well mannered and described their school as a 'nice place where everyone is friendly.' They enjoy coming to school and mixing with their friends and different people. They expressed the benefits to be gained from learning about other cultures. The school records show no reported incidents of racist behaviour.

- Pupils say that they are safe and bullying is very rare. They are confident that the school deals promptly with any form of bullying. Pupils show a good awareness of different types of bullying and talked knowledgeably about the dangers of cyber bullying. They know how to keep themselves safe when using the internet. Parents who took part in the survey agree with their children that they are safe in the school.
- Much has been done to improve pupils' attendance and there is an increasing awareness that there is no reason why each class cannot achieve above average attendance. Attendance for the current school year is average, due to some sickness absences across all year groups.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher leads with determination and is committed to moving the school forward. She has been focussed on establishing clear systems of accountability to eradicate the static school performance. The governing body and local authority have provided good quality support when decisive actions have been taken to bring about change.
- When the headteacher was appointed to the interim position in 2012, she continued to build on the organisational changes started by her predecessor. A group of skilled and energetic senior staff work as an effective team with the headteacher to bring about the changes necessary to improve.
- The performance of teachers is well managed. For the first time in two years or more, there are systems in place to challenge staff about their work. Teachers recognise that they have clear responsibilities and are accountable for ensuring that pupils make better progress. Monitoring of pupils' progress is robust and regular, and includes book reviews, progress meetings, and informal and formal observations of lessons. There are tailored training programmes for newly qualified teachers, and for teachers requiring extra support as well as for staff who need to gain professional accreditation.
- The new systems have resulted in some staff leaving. The process has been long and has led to delays in improving teaching at a faster pace. The school has employed some strong practitioners who understand what is expected of them in order to drive improvement.
- Senior leaders frequently check on how well pupils are doing. They ensure that pupils are making the progress they should and that the support provided is carefully matched to the needs of individuals. This approach ensures that there is equality of access to support regardless of pupils' ability or starting points.
- The additional pupil premium funding is used to target extra literacy and numeracy support. In 2012, while pupils with special educational needs made good progress, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals made less progress. Senior leaders are focused on ensuring that additional resources, including teaching assistants are targeted at potentially under-achieving pupils, so they make better progress.
- Subject leaders provide accurate reviews and action plans based on their monitoring of work across the school. However, as the school acknowledges, there is variation in their performance. There is more to do to ensure that all middle leaders can drive improvement quickly.
- The curriculum provides pupils with a good balance of subjects and some memorable experiences. Ecological themes underpin work across subjects and enable pupils to know more

about their immediate environment and wider afield. The curriculum is enhanced by specialist activities such as sports, learning French or Spanish and learning to play a musical instrument. Good partnerships with parents and the local community are contributing to parents becoming more involved in their children's learning.

- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral and social development extremely well. The strong emphasis on partnership work provides opportunities for them to learn from professional visitors and visit places of interest. While pupils express their respect of other cultures, and are involved in links to other countries, their grasp of cultural diversity in the UK is underdeveloped.
- Despite being aware of weaknesses in the school, the local authority did not begin to provide effective support until after the 2011 inspection. Following the inspection, good support from the local authority enabled the school to begin moving forward under the guidance of strong leadership. This led to continuing and effective professional support from the county headteacher. . The local authority has been instrumental in supporting the school in its use of performance management to drive improvement while supporting staff who are under-performing. A good range of support packages have enabled the school to improve the quality of reading materials and resources in the Reception class. Effective training and support have contributed to the governors becoming more rigorous when checking the school's performance. The school's positive response to the local authority's involvement has increased its capacity to move forward. Consequently, external monitoring of the school's performance now rests in the hands of the improvement professional who reports directly to the local authority.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body has been restructured to reflect the changing national expectations of school improvement. The restructuring has enabled governors to be more focused on holding staff to account for pupils' achievement. Members of the governing body now bring a wealth of expertise to the school. For example, the teaching and learning committee includes experienced governors with links to education. Governors receive detailed reports from the headteacher and middle leaders, and are now better placed to challenge staff about pupils' progress, in particular, those eligible for the pupil premium. They are aware that the most vulnerable pupils are catching up and are requiring more of staff. Governors with specialist expertise have delegated responsibilities to pursue all matters on teaching and pupils' achievement. Consequently, more than ever, there is a clear message that mediocrity is unacceptable. The governors have a clear understanding of how pupils' performance relates to the national averages, but the training received on assessment data is not up-to-date. In addition, performance management is now kept under closer review and there is a clear understanding that pay is linked to staff performance. They check on all safeguarding matters and equalities legislation, and ensure that requirements are met. Finances are well managed, including the pupil premium, which governors ensure is well targeted to the needs of vulnerable pupils.

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	120888
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	405975

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	169
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Ward
Headteacher	Ruth McGlone
Date of previous school inspection	7 March 2011
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