

Pirton Hill Primary School

Butely Road, Luton, LU4 9EX

Inspection dates 23–24 April 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		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- The pupil premium is not being used well enough to help eligible pupils make rapid gains in their learning.
- The attendance of too few pupils is at average or better levels because too many families take their children on holiday in term time.
- Pupils' progress is not consistently good in writing and mathematics in all classes or year groups and requires improvement.
- Pupils have too few opportunities to practise and develop their numeracy skills in other subjects.
- Teachers do not always make it clear to pupils how well they are doing and what they need to do next to improve. The expectation that pupils will respond to the marking of their work varies between classes.
- Teachers do not always expect enough of pupils. More-able pupils sometimes find their work easy.
- Too often teachers do not seize the opportunity to help pupils use more varied vocabulary when responding to questions or giving explanations.

The school has the following strengths

- School leaders and governors have secured improvements in the overall quality of teaching and the progress pupils make.
- The standard of pupils' reading has improved rapidly and is now average.
- Children do well in the Reception classes because teaching is consistently good.
- Pupils behave well and are keen to learn.
- The way subjects are taught provides pupils with a wide range of motivating experiences that they thoroughly enjoy.
- The school is an inclusive community where pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is nurtured well.
- The school provides very effective pastoral care for pupils and their families and makes sure that pupils are safe.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 33 lessons and observed 22 teachers as well as teaching support staff who were teaching at the time of the inspection. Three lessons were jointly observed with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with a group of pupils, members of the governing body, senior and other key leaders, and the family support workers. A discussion was held with a representative of the local authority.
- Pupils' work was scrutinised, including the 'learning journey' records of the youngest children.
- Inspectors heard pupils from Year 1 and Year 6 read.
- Pupils were observed during playtime and during assembly times.
- Note was taken of the 35 responses to the staff questionnaire, the 14 responses made to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View), and the responses to the school's own survey of parents' views.
- A range of documents were looked at, including the school's data on pupils' progress, planning of the curriculum, school self-evaluation and monitoring records related to teaching, pupil behaviour, attendance and the central record of checks on staff and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Alison Cogher, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Ken Parry

Additional Inspector

Vreta Bagilhole

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger-than-average sized primary school.
- One third of pupils are of White British heritage. The remaining pupils represent a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds. Nearly one sixth of pupils are at the early stages of learning English as an additional language when they start school.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average. The school receives additional funding (the pupil premium) for these pupils and for those pupils attending the school who are in the care of the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school makes use of alternative provision at the Chantry Primary Academy to support pupils who have behaviour difficulties.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good or better and enables pupils to make good progress in writing and mathematics by making sure that:
 - teaching provides sufficient challenge for more-able pupils
 - in lessons, and through the marking of their work, pupils are given clear guidance about the quality of their work and what they need to do to improve it
 - pupils are given time to respond to the marking of their work
 - pupils have more opportunities to use and apply their numeracy skills in other subjects
 - pupils are helped to expand their answers and use a wider range of vocabulary when responding to their teachers' questions or providing explanations for other pupils during lessons.
- Improve the impact of school leaders on the performance of pupils by making sure that:
 - pupil-premium funding is targeted more closely to support eligible pupils with their learning
 - parents understand how poor attendance can slow their child's learning, and the taking of term-time holidays is reduced, so that the attendance of pupils improves to over 96%.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- In 2012, pupils' attainment in Year 6 was significantly below average. Typically, pupils were two terms behind but this was an improvement on the 2011 results. Progress was also below that found nationally.
- Differences in progress and attainment between different groups of pupils at the school are reducing as is the gap between pupils at the school and the national average. The proportion of pupils making at least expected progress is rising and the proportion of pupils attaining average or above average levels in both English and mathematics is increasing.
- Pupil-premium funding has been spent on improving eligible pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning rather than being targeted at their individual learning needs. This has helped many of these pupils to learn with greater success but the gap between their progress and attainment and other pupils at the school, and pupils nationally, is not closing fast enough. Pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium are typically one term behind their peers in English. As a result of recent improvements they are less than a term behind their peers in mathematics.
- Children join the school with skills and knowledge that are much lower than that typically seen for their age. Their personal development and early language skills are particularly low. They make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, although many remain below the expected levels in their learning when they enter Year 1.
- The teaching of phonics (the link between letters and sounds) has a high priority and pupils quickly gain confidence in sounding out words to help them with their reading and writing. In the first national phonic screening check for six-year-olds the results were very similar to the national average.
- Training for teachers and teaching assistants on teaching reading has been effective with the result that pupils' progress and attainment in reading across the school has improved quickly. By Year 2 pupils' attainment represents good and sometimes better progress from their entry points.
- Progress in Years 3 to 6 is accelerating in all subjects but is faster in reading than in writing and mathematics. School data and pupils' work show pupil attainment is markedly better this year than at the same point in 2012.
- The opportunities pupils have to read and write in other subjects supports their learning well. However, pupils are not given the same opportunities to practise and extend their skills and understanding in mathematics in other subjects.
- As for other pupils, those from minority ethnic backgrounds, including those at the early stages of learning English, are making better progress than in previous years and their attainment is rising. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are making better progress than they have in the past. Those pupils with challenging behaviour are particularly well supported in the school and through an alternative provision placement so they are able to engage in lessons and learn as well as other pupils.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- There is some inconsistency in teaching in Years 1 to 6. At times, the expectation of what pupils can achieve is not high enough, particularly for the more able, who sometimes find their work relatively easy.
- Teachers use questioning to tease out pupils' understanding and to correct errors in their thinking. Pupils have the confidence to answer questions and to contribute to class discussions. However, not all teachers use these times effectively to help pupils expand the variety of vocabulary they use and to develop their skills as speakers when giving explanations to others.
- The marking of pupils' work is good but too often they have limited or no time to act on the advice given, or to respond to the challenges they are set. Although the information is readily available, not all pupils are clear about how well they are doing or how they are progressing towards achieving their personal targets for improvement.
- Teaching in the Reception classes is consistently good. There is a clear focus on supporting children to develop early reading, writing and mathematics knowledge and skills through direct teaching and activities that capture children's imagination. Children learn well and develop into confident, independent individuals.
- Discussions with pupils and a scrutiny of their work and progress information show that teaching has improved over the recent past. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and engagement in lessons. They use the school's pupil management procedures in a consistent way so lessons generally move at a good pace. Relationships are positive and based on mutual respect and trust.
- Teachers make good use of resources, visits and visitors to stimulate pupils' enthusiasm for learning and to give it relevance. For example, pupils in Year 4 visited the Natural History Museum in London to support their understanding of animal classification in their science work.
- Across the school, skilled teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning. They work in partnership with teachers to see that pupils, some of whom have significant difficulties, are able to learn successfully in lessons.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils are proud of their school and behave well in lessons and around the school. They are polite, friendly, and helpful. Pupils are clear that behaviour has improved significantly over the last few years. They say it is 'because everyone thinks about what they do' so disruption in lessons is rare. Parental responses to the school's questionnaire support pupils' views. Pupils are clear that this improvement has contributed a lot to their enjoyment of school and their learning in lessons.
- Pupils consider bullying to be rare and, if it occurs, it is dealt with promptly by staff. Pupils have a good understanding of the different forms of bullying, including cyber-bullying and other on-line hazards. They understand how to minimise risk to themselves and are confident that should they have a concern, or need help, an adult would support them.
- When working together in pairs or groups, including 'house team groups', pupils work cooperatively and are able to listen to, and respect each other's views and ideas. For example,

pupils in Year 6 worked enthusiastically in their 'house teams' to think of synonyms for words such as easy, cheerful and happy.

- Pupils have a strong sense of community both in and out of school. They talk excitedly about their involvement in team sports and in taking part in the Pirton Hill Carnival. Pupils carry out their responsibilities as school prefects, for example, in a mature way.
- The enrichment activities provided to extend pupils' experiences are extensive and include access to a wide range of sports, visits, and before- and after-school clubs. Pupils say 'these help us to learn in lots of different ways' and are highly valued by them.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Procedures for improving attendance are not enough to make sure that the attendance of the majority of pupils is at least average. To a large extent this is because too many parents continue to take their children on holiday during term time and do not appreciate the negative impact of absence from school on their child's progress.
- The progress and attainment of pupils supported by pupil premium funding has improved but it has not been quick enough. Support has not focused enough on tackling pupils' individual learning needs so they are able to do as well as other pupils.
- Since the last inspection, leaders and managers at all levels, including governors, have pursued school improvement in a determined and forthright way. Priorities have been identified and tackled in a systematic and well thought through manner. For example, whole-school procedures for managing behaviour have been introduced and are consistently applied. Their success is reflected in the good behaviour now evident in lessons and around the school and the marked fall in pupil exclusions.
- The overall quality of teaching has improved. This is a result of thorough checking of the performance of individuals with appropriate action being taken to secure improvement. Whole-school expectations have been raised and agreed.
- The local authority has provided well-targeted support for the school through a mix of challenge, guidance and access to training at all levels.
- Procedures for evaluating the quality of the school's work are good. Pupils' progress is checked often so those needing additional help are spotted and supported quickly. These procedures also help to identify what aspects of teaching need improvement and action plans are drawn up to secure improvement. The impact of this approach is reflected in the improvement to the teaching of reading and the resulting improvement in pupils' progress and attainment.
- The curriculum is designed to reflect pupils' interests and to make their learning relevant. It contributes well to pupils' enjoyment of learning and to the school's good promotion of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Equality of opportunity is at the heart of much of the school's activities and discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.
- Very good provision is made to support pupils and families who are experiencing difficulties through well-established links with outside agencies, and targeted work carried out, for example, through family learning.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors are well informed about the quality of teaching and pupils' performance and have been involved fully in improving the school, providing a good balance of support and challenge. Governors' skills in areas such as financial planning and health and safety are used well by the school and give all governors valuable first-hand information about the school's work. Governors know how the pupil premium has been used but are not clear about how it has supported pupils' learning specifically. Governors understand the school's strengths and weaknesses, including those related to pupil progress and attainment. Governors play an active role in staff recruitment and promoting staff within the school. They are well aware of how salary decisions are linked to managing teachers' performance and actively support staff to develop their skills further through appropriate training. They know what the school is doing to tackle any underperformance.

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	109574
Local authority	Luton
Inspection number	401062

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	456
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jeni Byrne
Headteacher	Debbie Thompson
Date of previous school inspection	11 November 2009
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