

Alfred Street Junior School, Rushden

Alfred Street, Rushden, NN10 9YS

Inspection dates 24–25 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

- Pupils' reading is not as good as their writing or mathematics. Standards in reading do not compare well with other schools.
- Reading is not given a high enough profile to make sure pupils are gaining effective reading skills.
- Some groups of pupils do not achieve as well as others. Those eligible for the pupil premium have not caught up and pupils of average attainment are not making good progress.
- In lessons, teachers do not always give extra support to the groups of pupils at risk of making less progress than others.
- Marking of pupils' work does not always inform them how to improve and pupils do not routinely respond to teachers' advice.
- Teaching methods do not always suit the age of pupils and the subject being taught.
- Leaders' awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses is not clearly recorded and not used efficiently to decide upon priorities for school improvement.
- Staff reductions mean that the link between teachers' responsibilities and the pay they receive is not always clear.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders, managers and governors have taken steps which have led to standards in writing and mathematics improving since the last inspection.
- Accurate checking of teaching has helped maintain the quality of teaching and helped teachers adapt to changes.
- Pupils with special educational needs and those considered to be at risk are supported well and make good progress.
- Behaviour is managed well. Pupils listen carefully and disruption to lessons is very rare. Pupils are safe in school
- Changes in membership of the governing body have brought a fresh enthusiasm amongst governors to both support and challenge school leadership.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed six teachers. Of the 10 lessons seen, four were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' work in lessons and talked with them about their work. Pupils from Years 3, 4 and 6 read their books to inspectors and talked about reading.
- Meetings were held with members of the governing body, the headteacher, the senior leadership team and staff with specific responsibilities. The lead inspector had a telephone discussion with a representative of the local authority. An inspector met with a group of pupils and both inspectors held informal discussions with pupils.
- The inspection team took account of 17 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). They also noted the responses to the school's own recent questionnaire to parents and carers.
- Questionnaire responses from 21 members of staff were analysed.
- A range of school documents was scrutinised, including policies for safeguarding, the school's self-evaluation documents and improvement plans, results of the school's monitoring of teaching, tracking of pupils' progress and lesson planning.
- Inspectors examined records of behaviour and attendance. They examined the case files of two vulnerable pupils and discussed these with relevant staff.

Inspection team

David Speakman, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Michael Onyon	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Alfred Street Junior School is smaller than the average-sized junior school.
- The school uses alternative off-site provision, a specialist unit at Park Junior School, Wellingborough, to support pupils with behaviour issues.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. A very few speak English as an additional language and are at the early stages of learning English.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children with a parent serving in the armed forces and those in local authority care) is above the national average.
- An above average proportion of pupils are supported through school action and the proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is close to the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Over the past four years, the school has seen a significant reduction in pupil numbers due to changes in the local population. This has meant that leaders have had to reduce staffing and reorganise the age ranges in some classes due to a fluctuation of numbers in year groups.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all teaching is good or better in order to increase the rate of pupils' progress by:
 - providing immediate support for any pupils in danger of not doing as well as they can
 - improving the quality and consistency of marking so pupils in all classes are clear about what they need to do to improve their work and make sure they follow up any advice or instructions
 - using teaching and learning methods that are most appropriate to pupils' age, ability and the subject being taught.
- Raise the profile of reading in the school to improve attainment in reading by:
 - routinely providing all pupils with regular opportunities to read and improve their reading skills
 - providing all staff with appropriate training so they become highly skilled at teaching reading
 - involving parents and carers in the development of their children's reading.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - making sure the school's monitoring information is used efficiently to identify and clearly record school leaders' judgements on what the school does well and what needs to be improved
 - using this evaluation to set out priorities for school improvement planning
 - making sure there is a clear link between the level of responsibility staff have and the pay they receive.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement is improving but it requires further improvement because it is not yet good. Too few pupils who enter the school with average attainment manage to reach the higher levels at Year 6 through having made good progress.
- The progress of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium requires improvement. Although they are making similar progress to the others, it is not sufficient for them to catch up. In writing and mathematics, these pupils are about a year behind the others and in reading, about a year and a half behind. School assessment records show that pupils currently in school are making better progress and beginning to close the attainment gap.
- Most recent test results show attainment in writing and mathematics compares well with other schools. Results placed the school in the top 20% for writing and the top 40% for mathematics. For reading, results were in the lowest 40%.
- Progress of pupils currently in school is beginning to show improvement. Those with special educational needs receive well-focused support and make good progress. The few pupils who speak English as an additional language quickly learn to communicate and make expected progress.
- Pupils' writing is interesting to read because they use good, descriptive language which conveys their ideas clearly. It is usually neatly presented and punctuated accurately, but contains too many spelling mistakes. In mathematics, more-able pupils solve problems for themselves, but those of average attainment lack the knowledge and confidence to develop strategies or to explain how they arrived at their answers.
- Teachers' assessment shows too few pupils are making good progress in reading. Younger pupils in Year 3 read with confidence and enjoyment. Pupils use their knowledge of letters and the sounds they make well when they come across unfamiliar words. Pupils in Years 4 and 6 are unaware of how to use letter sounds to work out unfamiliar words, but do try to sound out words. Pupils do not read regularly enough in school.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- In lessons, teachers do not always focus their attention on the groups of pupils who are most at risk of not doing well enough. Not enough focused attention, through direct group teaching, is given to the average-attaining pupils, who sometimes struggle with harder tasks.
- There is some weakness in the teaching of reading. Some staff have been formally trained to teach phonics (letters and the sounds they make) but not all are knowledgeable in this area or know how to manage reading sessions effectively.
- Teachers and teaching assistants give good, well-focused support to pupils with special educational needs and these pupils make good progress. They help those who need extra help due to limited English and these pupils soon learn to communicate effectively. In addition, in many lessons, more-able pupils are sufficiently challenged and work effectively with others and help each other.

- Marking of pupils' work is not consistent from class to class, or across different subjects, in order to help pupils develop an understanding of how they can improve their work and routinely follow up any advice or recommendations made. Teachers' comments do not sufficiently focus on the most significant weaknesses that need to be addressed by pupils so they can improve more rapidly. Teachers do not always insist that pupils follow up anything that needs correction.
- Teaching methods are not always appropriate to the age and the subject being taught. In some personal, social and health education lessons, young pupils were expected to concentrate on difficult topics for too long, without enough support or direction. As a result, they lost concentration too quickly.
- In other lessons, such as mathematics with lower-attaining pupils, methods were well considered. There were high levels of discussion between adults and pupils, making sure that pupils understood what they were doing, and the pace and challenge matched pupils' capability well.
- Where teaching is most effective, pupils at all levels of attainment make good and sometimes outstanding progress. Teachers continually assess pupils' progress and intervene appropriately, moving pupils onto the next level or explaining common errors. Questions are searching and make pupils think and work things out for themselves. Lessons move at a rapid pace so pupils learn quickly.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils are positive about their learning. Behaviour is good and pupils are keen to start their learning tasks. At its best, pupils' behaviour is characterised by a high level of successful collaboration with others, where they challenge each other very effectively, taking responsibility for the pace at which they learn.
- Some pupils, who have found difficulty in behaving well, comply and cause no disruption. They respond well to the management of their behaviour and understand the system of rewards and sanctions, both in school and in the alternative provision, responding positively.
- Pupils speak well of behaviour. They are safe and are happy to come to school. Attendance is average and pupils are punctual. All parents and carers who responded to Parent View and to the school's questionnaire say their children are happy, safe and well looked after, and that behaviour is good. Pupils are confident there is no bullying and say, 'If there were any it would be dealt with by teachers.'
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is developed well. Good-quality care for all pupils means they develop good social awareness. Pupils work well together in lessons, listening carefully to each others' viewpoints and ideas. They know the difference between right and wrong, make good choices and understand the consequences for making poor choices. In lessons, such as personal, social and health education, there are good opportunities for pupils to think and reflect on life's issues.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The school's awareness of what it does well and where there are weaknesses is not clearly documented. In the self-evaluation document, there is too much description and too little evaluation of the data to make clear the priorities for improvement. As a result, school improvement is not always focused on the most important areas for development. For example,

in responding to the recommendations of the last inspection, a lot of attention has gone into improving the use of computers while the development of reading has fallen behind.

- Leaders and managers have high aspirations for the school, as seen in the targets set for teachers to manage their performance. There is a good level of consistent expectation across staff and governors, so all are working to a common goal.
 - People with responsibility model good teaching. There has been much change in staffing since the last inspection. On the whole, this has been managed well with staff being deployed to their strengths. This has meant that the quality of teaching has been maintained with some improvement in progress and standards so the school is demonstrating the capacity to improve.
 - As a result of the changes in staffing, there is no longer a clear link between the level of responsibility teachers have and the pay they receive. The headteacher has taken on additional responsibility, leaving him with a heavy work load. The setting of clear and challenging targets for teachers to improve their work is effective.
 - The curriculum requires improvement. There is too little planned opportunity for pupils to develop their reading skills through regular reading sessions and formal teaching of letters and the sounds they make. Otherwise, pupils' personal development is supported well through an effective personal, social and health education programme. Pupils with special educational needs are provided for well and make good progress.
 - The equality of opportunity provided requires improvement because not all groups of pupils are given the same chances to make good progress in their work and achieve to their full academic potential. In other aspects, this area of the school's work is a strength. All pupils are fully included and the personal support they receive, regardless of ability, ethnicity or need, is good.
 - The local authority has an accurate view of the overall effectiveness of the school and confirms it is improving. Advisers routinely visit the school and know what its main strengths and areas for improvement are. They support the headteacher in his drive to improve teaching and raise achievement and standards through rigorous target setting.
- **The governance of the school:**
- The governing body has changed in its membership since the last inspection. New governors and a change in responsibilities have brought about an enthusiasm to support and challenge the senior leadership team. Training is up-to-date and governors are knowledgeable. They know how the school is doing compared to other schools both nationally and locally. They have analysed new data available on the Ofsted website, the Data Dashboard, and compared the school's performance to others.
 - Governors are more involved in the school and have first-hand knowledge of what is happening, through volunteering, taking 'learning walks' with the headteacher and engaging in joint observations. They have regular contact with staff with responsibilities. Their knowledge of the school places them in a good position to support and challenge. They are engaged well in checking school development and have an accurate knowledge of how well staff are doing, through managing their performance.
 - Statutory requirements are met, particularly for safeguarding, where vetting procedures for staff and visitors are completed and all training, including their own, is up to date.

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	121857
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	402056

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	155
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Brenda Hunt
Headteacher	John Kidney
Date of previous school inspection	21 April 2010
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