

Whitstable Junior School

Oxford Street, Whitstable, Kent, CT5 1DB

Inspection dates

2–3 May 2013

| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Good | 2 |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|----------|
| | 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 | | Require improvement | 3 |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement.

- Teaching over time has not ensured that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress and achieve well, especially those who are capable of harder work.
- Pupils' progress and achievement vary across year groups. Pupils' confidence and ability to apply their mathematical skills are hindered as there are not enough opportunities for pupils to apply them in everyday 'real-life' activities.
- The achievement for pupils eligible for extra funding known as the pupil premium requires improvement as gaps in their knowledge and understanding are closing too slowly.
- Not enough pupils are consistently confident in writing accurately or at length within different subjects.
- There are not enough opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology (ICT) in their day-to-day activities.
- Senior leaders and governors have coped with significant changes in staffing with some success. However, they have not yet managed to ensure that support for less experienced teachers and helpers in class results in consistently good teaching through the school.

The school has the following strengths

- There is a clear sense of purpose in the way the headteacher, senior leaders and governors provide a calm, secure and caring environment. They are realistic in their views of the school's effectiveness.
- Pupils speak and read confidently by the time they leave the school.
- The school's 'well-being team', aided by all staff, helps pupils to behave well, feel safe and want to find ways of making the school better.
- Teaching has improved recently. Stronger teaching in Years 5 and 6 is helping pupils make up for past slower progress, while science and themed topics are taught and planned more effectively.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at a range of documents, including its policies and the school’s own information on pupils’ current progress, planning and monitoring documentation, records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding. They took account of the work in pupils’ books through the school, but particularly in Years 3 and 6.
- Inspectors observed 15 lessons, four of which were jointly observed with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. Pupils of differing abilities were also observed working in small groups around the school and case studies of pupils with particular difficulties were examined.
- Meetings were held with staff, pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors. Inspectors met with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 47 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and of the 16 responses by staff.

Inspection team

Kevin Hodge, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Peter Thrussell

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who are supported by school action is above average. The proportion supported through school action plus and with a statement of special educational needs is also above average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding (additional funding provided by the government for groups of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children looked after by the local authority and those from service families) is higher than average.
- Most pupils are White British and few are at early stages of learning or speaking English.
- There is an early-morning breakfast club and after-school provision which is housed in part of the school building, but managed privately.
- There have been some significant staff changes as a result of promotions, resignations and maternity leave, and a fall in the number of pupils attending since the previous inspection. Senior staff responsibilities have been recently restructured as a result. Some significant refurbishment of classes took place at the beginning of the year which disrupted several classes in the lower school.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations of pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better by:
 - ensuring activities are consistently pitched at the right level, particularly for those who have special educational needs or are entitled to pupil premium funding
 - setting more challenging work, particularly in Years 3 and 4 and where appropriate, earlier in lessons for those pupils who are capable of doing harder work
 - ensuring that all teachers expect pupils' progress and learning to be good or better in all lessons.
- Raise all pupils' levels of understanding, confidence and progress, especially in writing and mathematics, by:
 - ensuring pupils practise their writing skills more regularly in other subjects and write at length, particularly younger pupils and those more able
 - ensuring there are more opportunities for investigative and 'real-life'-based work in mathematics.
- Improve and strengthen the effectiveness of the school's leadership and the quality of the curriculum by:
 - reviewing the support given to less experienced teachers and the training given to those adults who support pupils' learning within lessons or in small groups
 - ensuring that governors complete the review of their support and organisation in order to increase their support and challenge in raising the school's effectiveness
 - planning more opportunities for pupils to use ICT within day-to-day activities.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement requires improvement. Despite some recent success in raising pupils' achievement, particularly for older pupils, gaps remain in pupils' knowledge and skills which means that their achievement over time is not good. Results dipped to below average in last year's national tests, particularly in mathematics. Although improving, pupils are not consistently good at applying their mathematical skills to everyday problems.
- Pupils' ability to write at length using a wide vocabulary is inconsistent, particularly for younger pupils. For example, pupils' writing in a Year 3/4 lesson on myths and legends lacked sparkle or length. Writing within other subjects is sometimes limited.
- Pupils use a range of methods to help them read, and older pupils are confident readers, know a range of authors and enjoy reading. Additionally, the school is adopting a whole-school scheme for the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters and combinations of letters make).
- Pupils' current work and checks on their progress show that pupils' attainment is set to be close to national averages this year, and some pupils are set to exceed those levels expected in both English and mathematics as a result of more effective teaching in some year groups.
- Many pupils speak confidently and clearly, both within lessons and around the school, and willingly discuss and explain their work to classmates to test out their ideas or possible answers to questions.
- Pupils work well with partners and in small groups, are interested in learning and usually respond positively to their teachers. However, occasionally some are content just to listen rather than take a more active part in the lesson. More-able pupils are not stretched in their thinking or work rate and pupils' ICT skills are not fully extended in day-to-day activities.
- The progress and achievement of pupils supported through pupil premium funding, and that of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, lags behind the achievement of other pupils in both English and mathematics, sometimes by two or more terms. However, they are now catching up more quickly with others than had been the case, as their needs are identified more accurately.
- Those pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable benefit from support from the well-being team, often within class activities, which helps them to feel ready to learn and more confident in tackling their work.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because it is not consistently good or better through the school. It has not ensured that pupils' achievement has remained at the good levels noted in the previous inspection.
- In too many lessons, particularly in Years 3 and 4, teachers do not pitch enough work aimed at more-able pupils or allow them to start more quickly on harder work. Similarly, pupils who find work more difficult are not always supported effectively to keep pace with the majority of the class. In otherwise good lessons, such as work on writing about the adventures of Robin Hood in Years 5 and 6, pupils sometimes spend too long on preparatory tasks before getting down to writing at length.
- Teachers' marking is usually regular and helpful in guiding pupils in how to improve. There is evidence of pupils responding to teachers' comments for improvement, although sometimes the expectation of how this aids progress varies between classes.
- Good relationships are fostered between pupils and good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development contributes positively to them developing confidence, care and tolerance of others. Nearly all pupils are willing to learn and settle down to work quickly.
- Opportunities are sometimes missed for pupils to use their writing skills in different subjects or

to plan mathematical activities which enable pupils to apply their skills in investigative or 'real-life'-based activities. In some lessons, teachers do not always expect pupils to learn or complete work quickly, by setting higher expectations of what they are capable.

- Where teaching is more effective, pupils are enthusiastic and enjoy practical activities, for example, when pupils in Years 5 and 6 learnt about the effects of different substances on their teeth and enjoyed biting into some cheese to see the bite pattern of their teeth. In an outstandingly taught mathematics lesson in the same year group, the teacher's high level of subject expertise helped pupils understand simple algebraic problems.
- The role of teaching assistants is effective for those pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable as support is sensitively provided, although those pupils with special educational needs are not always supported as effectively in their learning because the expertise of teaching assistants in supporting these pupils is variable through the school.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils are enthusiastic about their school and are eager to tell visitors what they enjoy – residential visits; Oscar, a 'reading dog' who visits the school to encourage less confident readers – their 'fruit café' or about how they have secured extra resources for the school.
- Pupils say they feel safe around the school, knowing that staff will respond quickly to any concerns they have. Pupils say that bullying is rare and should it occur, it is dealt with quickly, reflecting the school's accreditation as an 'anti-bullying school'.
- The majority of staff and those parents who responded to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire indicated that behaviour is typically good over time, although some pupils recognised that on occasion behaviour did dip around the school and occasionally in lessons. They understand different forms of bullying, such as cyber bullying on the Internet, name calling or comments about others' backgrounds and beliefs.
- Those whose circumstances might put them at risk are well managed and supported. The school's well-being team help pupils identified as having social and emotional needs to overcome barriers to their learning or to prevent others around them from learning. Close links with specialist agencies and well-organised support help vulnerable pupils and their families to feel more ready to learn.
- The school council plays an active part in the life of the school and regularly consults with other pupils to gain ideas about how the school can improve. For example, in proposing a football free Friday in the playground, newer equipment for the game zone, and decorative improvements to toilets.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because senior leaders have not managed to secure consistently good quality of teaching and pupils' achievement since the previous inspection.
- Staff generally work well as a team. Those who are new to the school or who are less experienced, despite having external guidance and support from senior leaders, do not feel this has been fully effective for them or teaching assistants. Staff are enthusiastic to have more support in order to enhance their teaching further as staff are encouraged to be self reflective.
- Better use of the information on pupils' progress is helping to reduce past slower progress and help pinpoint gaps in pupils' learning. This is particularly the case for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Clearer leadership on this area of the school's work is beginning to ensure that they make quicker progress, although changes are at a comparatively early stage.
- Senior leaders have refined and reviewed their systems to gauge the quality of teaching. This

identifies where stronger and weaker teaching exists and some weaknesses, such as in mathematics teaching, are being remedied more quickly. They have not been fully effective in raising the quality of all teaching to consistently good levels. Senior leaders ensure that salary levels and progression are now linked to measurable improvements in pupils' learning.

- There have been improvements to the curriculum for science since the previous inspection and in the way topics and themes are planned to make learning more fun. While dedicated ICT activities take place within the computer suite, activities in day-to-day lessons is not planned for effectively.
- The school's well-being team is appreciated by pupils and is effective in supporting those pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Parents indicated their children are happy in school as a result of the good level of care that the school provides.
- The local authority, recognising that there were weaknesses in the school's effectiveness, have been quick to provide a range of support, such as the proposed review of governors' organisation and structures due to take place shortly.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are supportive, particularly in the way they visit informally to support events, individual staff and in meeting with pupils. The recently appointed Chair of Governors, along with fellow governors, recognises that the school's effectiveness has declined, partly because of some significant changes in staffing and financial constraints caused by a fall in pupil numbers. This has prompted them to become more aware of how appointments and staff progression relate to the quality of teaching within the school. Ongoing training enables them to compare the school's performance with that of others, both locally and nationally. They also ensure that those pupils entitled to the pupil premium are monitored closely to ensure they make better progress. Governors are due to review their organisation shortly, in order that they can target their support more sharply. Governors ensure that discrimination of any sort is not tolerated and that pupils have equal opportunities to take part in activities and events. Staff appointments and vetting, along with safeguarding procedures, are carried out conscientiously.

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

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| Unique reference number | 118364 |
| Local authority | Kent |
| Inspection number | 412028 |

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

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| Type of school | Junior |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 7–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 247 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Anne Hooker |
| Headteacher | Gill Moody |
| Date of previous school inspection | 9–10 November 2009 |
| Telephone number | 01227 272385 |
| Fax number | 01227 772075 |
| Email address | manager@whitstable-junior.kent.sch.uk |

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