

Plumpton Primary School

Southdowns, Lewes, East Sussex, BN7 3EB

Inspection dates 15–16 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		Requires improvement	3
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:

- Although most pupils make the progress expected for their age in English and mathematics, too few do better than this. Achievement requires improvement because pupils make good progress in some classes but not in others.
- The quality of teaching varies from class to class and this explains the uneven rate of pupils' progress. This means that provision for all pupils is not consistently good.
- Pupils' behaviour is not good enough. Even when supervised, behaviour is not good because the agreed policy for managing behaviour is not used by all staff. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to use their initiative or take responsibility for their own behaviour and learning.
- Turbulence in leadership has led to a loss of confidence in the leadership of the school by parents, carers and staff. Leadership has been strengthened recently. However, monitoring has not been rigorous enough and follow-up action has not been effective in making sure that teaching is good or better in all classes.
- New staff are not given enough opportunities to learn from best practice.
- The governing body has not rigorously evaluated the accuracy of the school's self-evaluation or checked the impact of past initiatives to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

The school has the following strengths:

- Children make a good start to their schooling in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and make good progress in all areas of learning.
- Teaching in Year 6 has improved and the small group activities provided for year groups are helping pupils catch up.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or are disabled are very well catered for and they make good progress from their individual starting points.
- Some subjects are very well taught. Pupils excel in music and performing arts by the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed six lessons jointly with the deputy headteacher. In addition, the inspector made a number of short visits to lessons and small-group sessions, some with the deputy headteacher and support headteacher.
- Meetings were held with three members of the governing body, a local authority representative and school staff. Additionally, the inspector talked to another representative of the local authority on the telephone, and informally to some parents and carers and with groups of pupils.
- The inspector took account of 56 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), and the outcomes of the recent parent questionnaire held by the governors. The 16 responses to the staff questionnaire were also taken into account.
- A range of documents was looked at, including the school's data on pupils' progress, planning and monitoring documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance and documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Juliet Ward, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- All pupils except for those in Year 6 are taught in mixed-age classes.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below average. This is government funding that schools receive for pupils who are eligible for free school meals, those who are in local authority care and the children of military personnel. In this school this funding is to support the small group of pupils who are eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action and school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- Most pupils are from a White British background and no child is at an early stage of acquiring English.
- The school currently meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- There are on-going interim changes in the leadership of the school, due to the illness of the substantive headteacher. The deputy headteacher has been leading and managing the school for periods since October 2012. Currently, the local authority has become involved by brokering a support package for the school. This includes support from a headteacher of a local school supporting the deputy headteacher on a day-to day basis, with a more strategic plan being put in place for the rest of the academic year.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve all teaching until it is good or better by:
 - ensuring that all teachers understand what good and outstanding teaching looks like, and that they use this to improve their own practice and the progress the pupils make in lessons
 - making sure that all teachers in Key Stages 1 and 2 plan and deliver lessons which offer appropriate levels of challenge for all pupils, particularly in writing and mathematics.
- Accelerate school improvement by ensuring that the headteacher, senior leaders and governors:
 - quickly establish a more accurate picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses and use this to identify and tackle the most important areas for improvement
 - regain the confidence of parents, carers and staff in the leadership and management of the school, setting clear direction and involving the parents and carers more in their children's learning
 - make sure that the targets set for improved performance for staff are more demanding and then take action to hold underperforming staff to account.
 - support new staff by increasing the opportunities for them to share good and better practice beyond the school.
- Improve the pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning by:
 - rigorously and consistently implementing the agreed systems and procedures across the school
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to use their own ideas and take responsibility for their learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Although most pupils make the progress expected for their age in English and mathematics, too few do better than this. Achievement requires improvement because pupils make good progress in some classes but not in others.
- Too often, the work is too easy for the more able or too hard for the least able. Part of the reason for this is because of the turbulence in leadership and the limited support for teachers to share good and better practice.
- Children settle very quickly into school as a result of good links between school and home. The staff ensure a secure and happy environment which contributes to the parents and carers saying their children 'love coming to school'.
- Most children start school with skills that are at levels similar to or below those typically expected for their age. They make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, as a result of a curriculum which provides activities led by adults and opportunities for children to play together and find out things for themselves both indoors and outdoors.
- Pupils make mixed progress in Key Stage 1. They enter Year 3 with broadly average skills in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Throughout Key Stage 2, pupils' progress is also uneven and, although by the end, most make expected progress, too few do better than that.
- Pupils with special educational needs and those supported by the pupil premium do as well as others in the school and across the country. Some make exceptional progress and this demonstrates that the school promotes equality of opportunity. The teaching assistants play an important role in supporting individuals and small groups of pupils both in the classroom and one to one.
- Overall, pupils' abilities in speech and language when they join the Reception class are lower than those expected for their age. Good teaching of reading skills in Reception and Year 1 ensures that by the time they reach the end of Year 2, pupils are reading at the level expected for their age. However, the pupils have not developed skills of decoding, using phonics, well enough to help them read unfamiliar words independently, confirming the poor results from the end of Year 1 phonics check.
- By the time they leave Year 6, pupils' ability to read is at least typical for their age. Pupils love reading and talk about the books they read at home and independently.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Although there is some good and outstanding teaching, too much needs to be improved. This is especially true of the teaching of writing and mathematics. As a result, overall, pupils have reached but not been exceeding the expected standard by the time they leave Year 6.
- Too often, in lower Key Stage 2, the whole class is given lengthy explanation by the teacher when the more-able pupils could move on more quickly to work independently. When pupils are finding work too easy or too hard, the teachers do not always adapt the tasks quickly enough to bring out the best in pupils. This particularly applied to the lesson observed on problem solving tasks set in Years 3 and 4.
- Teachers' expectations of the standard with which pupils present their work, including their accuracy in spelling and punctuation, vary too much across subjects. This slows pupils' progress in English overall.
- Teachers check on pupils' understanding of what they are learning during lessons but this is not as accurate or rigorous as it needs to be. Teachers regularly mark pupils' work but time is not always set aside in lessons for pupils to respond to teachers' comments in order to improve their work.
- The more effective teaching captures the imagination of pupils and inspires them to investigate

and work together in groups. For example, in Year 6, the pupils tackled how to present the best methods they had agreed for their mathematical investigation. Meanwhile, the youngest children made their own books about their favourite toys, which included taking photographs of their toys for the books. It is these examples of best practice that the school is planning to share to help all staff to improve.

- Adults give much praise and some use skilful questioning to encourage pupils to think for themselves. Good use is made of information and communication technology (ICT) to encourage older pupils to find out things for themselves. The topic themes are well planned to take advantage of local history, such as Roman sites, to stimulate pupils' interests. The youngest pupils in Reception and Year 1 were digging for Roman artefacts after their visit to the local Roman site and museum.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

require improvement

- Behaviour is not yet good, particularly because behaviour in lessons is not always as good as it should be. There are other occasions when pupils do not behave well, such as in the dining hall and in assemblies. The staff do not always implement the school's behaviour policy. As a result, behaviour worsens and pupils do not follow the agreed rules.
- Most pupils have positive attitudes towards learning. They enjoy coming to school and say that they feel safe because the adults are always willing to listen.
- Pupils say there is no bullying in school of any kind and understand the difference between bullying and simply 'falling out'. Of those parents and carers who responded to Parent View, most felt that bullying was effectively dealt with by the school. Similarly, racist incidents are extremely rare.
- Pupils understand the difference between right and wrong and generally treat one another with respect. They are clear about the rules and expectations, but say these are not always fairly applied.
- Most pupils arrive at school on time. Attendance is higher than found nationally and parents and carers are supportive of the school's policy to ensure pupils attend school regularly, and on time.

The leadership and management

require improvement

- Leadership and management overall are not good enough. Although there have been improvements in pupils' progress by the end of Year 6, the school has struggled to improve the quality of the teaching and accelerate pupils' progress quickly enough across the school. Although improvement plans are focused on the right priorities, they have not been carried out rigorously.
- Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and pupils' progress have been systematic, but the results have not been used well enough. For example, performance management targets for teachers are not linked to the progress the pupils in their classes make.
- During the period of turbulence with the on-going absence of the headteacher, the local authority has organised some well-focused support for the deputy headteacher. Although this support is recent it is already having a positive impact, and the deputy headteacher is leading the school well.
- There is some good and better practice in the school, for example, in the way the provision for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is managed. However, these strengths have not been used to best effect to inform whole-school improvement. The new leadership team is setting up an appropriate action plan to address the weaker areas and make better use of the strengths of the school.
- A majority of parents, carers and staff have felt for some time that they cannot communicate with the headteacher. Parents and carers consider that they are not sufficiently involved in supporting their children's learning.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet all requirements. The school is highly inclusive and welcoming,

so pupils are happy and develop as well-rounded individuals. The pupils enjoy a broad curriculum which includes many enrichment opportunities which contribute to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. A good example of this is the successful choir which has been successful in the County Festival for several years.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body is very committed to seeing the school improve. The governors ensure that the school fulfils its statutory responsibilities; all staff have been vetted and trained appropriately to keep pupils safe. They have an accurate overview of overall provision. However, governors are not yet challenging staff enough on the links between the quality of their teaching and pupils' progress and on why progress in every class is not consistently strong. The governors have struggled with how to challenge the accuracy of the information they have been given by the headteacher. Governors have audited the views of the parents and carers and have appropriate plans for using this information to improve the way the school involves the parents and carers in their children's learning in school. Together with the support of a headteacher from a neighbouring school, the governors are responding well to plans for immediate action to be taken to manage any underperformance by staff in the school. Governors have agreed the use of pupil premium funding to provide one-to-one help and small-group work to ensure that the achievement gap with other pupils is closing.

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	114410
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	413129

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	105
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs J McBrown
Headteacher	Mrs A Rogers
Date of previous school inspection	5–6 July 2012
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