

Gobowen Primary School

School Lane, Gobowen, Oswestry, SY11 3LD

Inspection dates 21–22 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		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Teaching requires improvement because leaders and managers have not focused staff sufficiently on making sure that pupils make good progress throughout the school.
- Leaders and managers have not analysed test results well enough to give them information about pupils' achievement over time.
- Year 1 pupils know the sounds that letters make, but they often struggle putting them together to make words. They do not always understand the meaning of words they read.
- Some staff are not good role models for pupils to copy in terms of handwriting, grammar and spelling.
- Marking does not consistently show pupils how to improve. Pupils' writing is not marked properly in subjects other than English.
- There is not enough emphasis on encouraging pupils to use their literacy and numeracy skills in different subjects.
- School improvement planning is not precise enough. Staff, governors and parents are not sufficiently involved in it or in school self-evaluation.
- A significant minority of staff and parents are dissatisfied with the school and, in particular, the impact different changes in leadership, management and staffing have had on the quality of teaching and learning.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils have made better progress this year because actions taken during the period of temporary leadership, supported by the local authority, improved teaching and learning.
- Relationships between pupils and staff are good. As a result, pupils feel safe and well cared for, and say the school keeps them safe. They behave well.
- The gap in attainment between pupils for whom the school receives extra funding and other pupils has narrowed.
- Specific training is helping governors, several of whom are new to post, to fulfil their role in holding the school to account. They are doing this increasingly well.
- Attendance has improved and is now broadly average.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited 10 lessons, two of which were observed jointly with the headteacher. She also observed play and lunchtimes, and visited the breakfast club.
- Discussions were held with pupils, the acting Chair of the Governing Body, staff, and the school improvement adviser from the local authority.
- The views of the 20 parents who replied to the online questionnaire (Parent View) were analysed. Parents' views were also received informally at the start of the school day.
- Account was taken of the responses to the school's own surveys of parents, and the responses to the inspection questionnaire for staff.
- The inspector scrutinised a wide range of documents, including information about pupils' progress and attendance, the school improvement plan, the school's self-evaluation document and records and policies about safeguarding.
- The inspector also examined the work in pupils' books, sampled sessions where pupils were learning letters and sounds (phonics), and listened to pupils read.

Inspection team

Doris Bell, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Reception-aged children and pupils in Year 1 are taught as separate year groups. All other pupils are in mixed-age classes.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives additional funding, known as the pupil premium, is above average. This provides additional funding for children in local authority care, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, and children with a parent in the armed forces.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who are supported at school action is above average, as is the proportion supported at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is high.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Breakfast and after-school clubs, run by the school, operate each day during term time.
- The school shares its site with a pre-school, which is separately led and managed.
- There have been several changes at leadership and management level this year, caused by unavoidable illness.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching to consistently good or better across the school by:
 - making sure that all staff aim for at least good progress for all pupils
 - making better use of support staff in whole-class sessions and ensuring that all staff model good grammar, handwriting and accurate spelling at all times
 - improving marking so that it always gives pupils guidance on how to reach their targets, and breaking class targets down so that all pupils know what they need to work on individually
 - marking pupils' writing, wherever it occurs, so that pupils can see that by practising what they learn in literacy lessons in all of their writing, they could reach their targets faster.
- Help pupils to make faster progress in reading, writing and mathematics by:
 - making sure that they understand the words they sound out and read, and achieving greater fluency in reading by Year 2
 - marking writing, wherever it occurs, so that they can see that by practising what they learn in literacy lessons in all of their writing, they could reach their targets faster
 - encouraging pupils, at every opportunity, to use their reading, writing and mathematics skills in different subjects.
- Secure consistently good quality leadership and management by:
 - building on the improvements evident in teaching and learning this year to secure good achievement for all pupils over time
 - analysing all assessment information more rigorously and using the outcomes to gain an accurate view of achievement over time and to set targets to improve it
 - including in the school improvement plan very clear criteria against which planned actions can be measured to ensure that they are leading to better progress for the pupils
 - involving staff and parents in evaluating and improving the work of the school in order to restore the confidence of the significant minority who expressed concerns
 - stepping up even more, the governing body's involvement in holding the school to account.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils' progress over time is not good enough. Attainment is broadly average at the end of Reception, Year 2 and Year 6 because the school aims for pupils to make expected rather than good progress in each year group. The governing body minutes show that the school intends to aim higher, but that intention has not yet filtered down to class level.
- Pupils in Year 1 know their letters and sounds but they often struggle to combine them to read unfamiliar words. They also tend to sound out even the words they know. This means that their reading is not as fluent as it could be, and they sometimes lose its sense. Reading has improved in the rest of the school this year.
- Pupils use the skills they learn in literacy sessions in unaided writing, although weaknesses remain in spelling, grammar and punctuation. Because they are not sufficiently encouraged to do so, they forget to use what they have learnt in literacy when they write in different subjects. They therefore miss opportunities to meet writing targets sooner.
- The increased focus on investigative work is improving progress in mathematics. For example, pupils in Year 6 worked enthusiastically on calculating the areas of complex shapes because they knew they were going to use those skills to measure and cost changes to the playground. They did not all consider the most efficient way to calculate, however, in order to make the most efficient use of time. Mathematical skills are not supported well in other subjects, although, in a Year 3/4 lesson, explicit links between geography and mathematics as pupils explored maps, helped them to learn in both subjects.
- Pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium funding are only one term behind other pupils overall, compared with over two terms nationally. However, they are nearly a year behind in reading and just over a year behind in writing, while only half a term behind in mathematics. The pupils make slightly better progress than other pupils.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make progress similar to that of other pupils. They benefit from carefully selected support programmes and input from usually well-briefed support staff.
- Typically, children start Reception with skills below those expected for their age and start Year 1 broadly at the level expected, albeit with some weaknesses in language and communication. This represents overall good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching does not consistently get the best from their pupils, and marking does not always give pupils enough guidance on how to improve. These factors limit the progress pupils make in lessons and over time.
- Class targets, set out in different ways, provide the overall basis for what pupils are to learn. They are not broken down sufficiently to ensure that each pupil knows specifically what they need to do to improve, and the variability in teachers' marking does not help.
- Typically, writing is marked reasonably well in literacy books, though not elsewhere. The

marking of mathematics varies throughout the school and pupils' work is rarely marked, or only by ticks, in other subjects. 'Tick and fix' marking, and the use of colour coding, promoted by the new marking policy, are helping to improve learning where these are used consistently and pupils are given time to respond, as was noted in Year 2 and Year 6.

- Phonics is taught well and the teaching of reading has improved this year as a result of staff training. Pupils' underdeveloped vocabulary is evident when adults begin to explore the meaning of words with them. Sometimes, this is not done well enough.
- When questioning pupils, adults do not always probe their thinking sufficiently. They often accept short answers and expand on them themselves rather than seeking explanations from the pupils. Additionally, when scribing for pupils, less-than-good handwriting, and the occasional spelling and punctuation errors, mean that not all adults are good role models for pupils in developing these key skills.
- Most often, support staff are used well to support the learning of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Sometimes, however, they are not fully enough involved in whole-class sessions to enable the pupils to take as full a part as possible in them.
- The more practical approach to teaching mathematics is beginning to improve learning in that subject. For example, pupils in Years 2 and 3 thoroughly enjoyed using straws and sticks to learn about different shapes and combinations of shapes. Their faces were a joy to watch as they 'discovered' a wide range of information.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school.
- Reception children settle quickly because the school has good links with the pre-school and with parents of children in this age group. Children get on well together and soon learn to take turns, share equipment and follow instructions. They set about their tasks eagerly, thoroughly enjoying, for example, distinguishing between real and nonsense words.
- Pupils feel very safe in school. They talk about how 'nobody can get in', and how the school teaches them to keep themselves safe out of school; for example, through road safety training, including when riding bikes, and being aware of 'stranger danger'. They are respectful, caring and reflective, and have a strong sense of fairness and equality.
- The school does much to eliminate bullying. Pupils fully understand the different forms it can take. They describe, for example, the effect that persistent teasing, name-calling or inappropriate use of technology can have on others. They feel they are protected well against all of this, through the work of the anti-bullying council, and the confidence they have in the staff to help them should they have any concerns.
- Good levels of concentration, and the ability to persevere in their tasks, contribute to the pupils' increasing ability to work independently. They know where to go to find help with their learning without an adult being their first port of call.
- Pupils know their class's targets but do not always know what they themselves need to do to improve. This is because they do not have individual targets and teachers' marking does not always include guidance on how to improve. They are, however, learning how to assess their own learning against given criteria, as seen in their unaided writing books.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leaders and managers have not made best use of the school's systems for analysing data or managing teachers' performance, because both lead to targets aimed at securing only the minimum progress expected each year. Consequently, not enough pupils make good progress over time to raise overall achievement to good.
- The school improvement plan has well-focused short-term priorities based on the school's accurate view of where it is now. The plan does not project far enough into the future to show how current improvements will be built upon year by year despite the school having the information needed to do this. What is not made clear in the plan is how achieving the priorities will help pupils to make better progress.
- Leaders and managers have an accurate view of teaching and learning. Targets for improving staff performance are closely related to whole-school priorities, and staff are given support to achieve them. However, the contribution of staff, governors and parents to school improvement planning and self-evaluation is minimal.
- The lack of involvement, and the consequent lack of understanding of how the school operates, has led to dissatisfaction among several staff and parents. The concerns expressed centre mainly on current leadership and management, and the steps being taken to improve pupil progress, all of which the inspection found to require improvement.
- The school has addressed the recommendations from the previous inspection. It has a new marking policy, albeit not yet fully implemented, and, through different subjects, pupils now learn more about cultural diversity in Britain and abroad. This, and the recent improvements in teaching, learning and governance, show the school has capacity to improve.
- The school does much to promote equality of opportunity and tackle discrimination of any sort. As a result, pupils state confidently that 'everybody's the same' and 'you shouldn't make fun of anyone' because they look or act differently.
- The local authority provides appropriate support for the school, and the school is using the support well. As a result, there have been improvements in teaching and in reading, writing and mathematics this year.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - There is a clear determination within the governing body to make sure that the improvements seen this year continue. Training for new governors, and for governors new to their posts, is helping them to play a greater part in holding the school to account and driving up standards. Governors understand data and what it says about the school's outcomes. They have not been sufficiently involved in school improvement planning or in school self-evaluation in the past but have recently taken steps to ensure that they are from now on. They know about the performance of individual teachers and have supported the school in making decisions about salaries in relation to performance. They have rightly asked for regular reports on the effectiveness of what the school is doing to improve the performance of both pupils and staff. Governors keep a close eye on spending, including of pupil premium money, which they know is closing gaps in learning for the pupils concerned.

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	123366
Local authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	413056

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	131
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nick Jones
Headteacher	Steve Conroy
Date of previous school inspection	10 December 2009
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