

Lipson Vale Primary School

Bernice Terrace, Lipson, Plymouth, PL4 7HW

Inspection dates 12–13 June 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		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Over time, teaching has not been consistently good enough across the school to ensure that pupils achieve well by the end of Year 6, including in writing.
- Recent improvements to teaching and additional adult support given to pupils have not been working long enough to fully fill gaps in pupils' previous learning by the time they leave the school.
- The quality of response marking varies and not all pupils have a clear enough understanding of what they have to do to improve their work over time.
- Teaching is not always well matched to pupils' abilities. Occasionally, tasks are too easy for them and do not capture pupils' interest.
- The extent to which there are planned opportunities to practise literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects varies across the school.

The school has the following strengths

- The progress that pupils make is rapidly improving because the quality of teaching is rising.
- Good relationships between staff and pupils mean that pupils have good attitudes towards learning, behave well and feel safe.
- The leadership, including that of the governing body, offers strong and clear direction. This is helping to develop more consistently good teaching and quicken the pace of improvement.
- The school makes a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development by ensuring that they are all very well cared for and have frequent opportunities to participate in a variety of activities and events.
- There is a strong emphasis on team working that creates a positive atmosphere for learning and a shared determination to continue the improvement of the school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed learning in 24 lessons. Three of these observations were conducted jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspectors observed the breakfast club, choir practice, school council meeting, morning breaks and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors heard pupils read from Year 2 and met with a group of pupils from Years 3 to 6. Lessons, breaks and lunchtimes were used to talk to many other pupils.
- Inspectors spoke to members of the governing body, members of the school leadership team, members of the middle management team and had telephone conversations with a representative from the local authority and a headteacher of a partner school.
- Inspectors observed the school's work, looked at a number of documents, including the school's own information on pupils' progress, planning, school self-evaluation, governing body documentation, leaders' checks on the quality of teaching, records relating to behaviour and documents relating to safeguarding.
- The inspectors also took account of 50 parents' and carers' responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, in planning and undertaking the inspection. In addition, the team received and analysed 31 staff questionnaires and one visit from a parent or carer.

Inspection team

David Nebesnuick, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Alex Baxter

Additional inspector

Susan Smith

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This primary school is above average in size.
- Most pupils attending the school are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is below the national average. The proportion supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children who are looked after by the local authority and the children of service families) is above average.
- The proportion of pupils joining or leaving the school at other than normal times is below the national average.
- The school has for some years had several classes with over 30 pupils and some mixed-age classes.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching over time so that it is at least good by ensuring that:
 - tasks set and support are matched more closely to pupils' differing abilities
 - there is a consistent approach to marking pupils' recorded work so that all pupils have a clear understanding of what they have to do to improve.
- Raise pupils' achievement by the end of Year 6 by:
 - increasing the opportunities given to pupils to practise their literacy and numeracy skills in a range of subjects across the school
 - ensuring that, especially in writing, pupils sustain equally good progress in all year groups of the school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Over time, rates of pupils' progress have varied due to inconsistent teaching. Past national test results at the end of Year 6 and well below average attainment this year in English and mathematics show that the progress of some pupils has not increased quickly enough.
- Despite some rapid progress in Year 6 over recent terms, overall achievement by the end of Key Stage 2 still requires improvement.
- Children begin school in the Reception classes with skills that are well below those expected for their age, especially in literacy skills and social and emotional attitudes. As a result of better teaching now across the school, pupils' progress in English and mathematics continues to improve strongly.
- Evidence from lessons and in the work seen shows a picture of improving progress, especially for pupils in Years 1 and 2 where there is now broadly average attainment, for the first time for some years. In a Year 1 literacy class seen during the inspection, for example, a number of pupils referred to the use of connectives and the need to write their ideas in order.
- The school's own checks of pupils' progress also show that all groups of pupils are now making faster progress than in previous years in mathematics. Progress in writing has not been as rapid, particularly for higher ability pupils.
- Pupils' reading skills are also improving strongly now in response to strengthened teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make), in lessons and in the small intervention groups, especially in Years 1 and 2. Pupils in Year 1 attained below average scores in the phonics screening check at the end of last summer, but a much improved picture is expected this year. Effective adult support when pupils are taught in reading groups is also enabling more pupils to improve their reading skills.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress throughout the school because of the additional support they are given, delivered by capable teaching assistants. These pupils are also developing their self-confidence and communicational skills well.
- Pupils supported by the pupil premium also benefit from extra adult support in literacy and numeracy. In 2012, the attainment of Year 6 pupils from this group was the equivalent of four terms' progress less than other pupils in both English and mathematics. However, in response to effective support, indications for the current year are that this gap has narrowed to less than half a term's progress for mathematics and the gap has been closed for English.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because not enough has been of sufficiently high quality over time to overcome previous gaps in pupils' learning.
- Inconsistencies in the quality of teaching mean that at times there is some variation still in the challenge given to quicken pupils' progress, notably in writing.
- Teachers benefit from a regular cycle of lesson observations and informative advice and support from senior leaders. As a result, teaching is rapidly improving. Teachers mark work regularly, but there are inconsistencies across the school in the guidance on what pupils have done well and how they can improve their work even further.
- There is a very clear focus on the learning of core skills of literacy and numeracy in discrete English and mathematics lessons, which is contributing well to the improved progress of pupils in these subjects. However, opportunities for the pupils to practise and improve these skills in other subjects are not planned for consistently well across the school.

- Teachers prepare a wide variety of learning materials for their classes, but they are not always matched well enough to individual pupils' learning, with the result that some pupils find the work too easy and then begin to lose concentration. When this occurs, pupils occasionally become inattentive.
- In the better lessons, teachers are innovative in ensuring that the pupils are fully involved and challenged to their learning capacity and beyond throughout the lesson. In a Year 6 literacy lesson seen where teaching was judged to be outstanding, pupils responded very effectively to the teacher's questions, exploring their own emotions arising from two contrasting poems. In addition, the lesson theme of animal captivity contributed strongly to the pupils' spiritual and moral development.
- Throughout the school, the adults' good management of behaviour promotes very supportive relationships, including in Reception where the adults' high expectations and skills successfully promote good learning.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are fully included in all activities. Teaching assistants' work in supporting pupils either individually or in groups to make up gaps in learning is now having a positive effect on improving their progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour in lessons is typically good. Pupils work well together and enjoy discussing their learning. They readily help each other and are also happy to work independently.
- For example, the harmonious singing of the school's choir and the joyful way that children in Reception learn and play in and out of doors fully illustrate the close relationships that underpin pupils' enthusiasm for school.
- Pupils behave well around the school. This view is supported by staff, parents, carers and pupils. Pupils know what constitutes bullying and confirm that it is rare in the school. They feel safe because they get on well with each other and because the adults look after them well.
- Pupils have a strong sense of their responsibilities to their community and to the global community. They have worked hard to improve the environment in the dining hall and they enthusiastically engage in fund-raising activities for their partner school in Nepal.
- During the inspection, pupil representatives on the school council were discussing their welcome for their partner school in Cornwall. The pupils also welcome responsibility and say that they are carefully listened to by the staff.
- Attendance has steadily improved in recent years and is now average, enabling some pupils to take more regular advantage of the learning opportunities provided and again reflecting their enjoyment of school. A rewards system was introduced at the beginning of this year and pupils have responded well to this initiative. The school works effectively with individual pupils and their parents and carers to improve the attendance.

The leadership and management are good

- The positive views of the staff, governors and parents and carers reflect the effective way that the headteacher and deputy headteacher have developed a new vision for improvement this year. Their commitment to continued improvement is driving the school forward again after a period when pupils' attainment remained below the national expectation.
- The senior leadership team has led a concerted drive for improvement based around raising the quality of teaching and the rate of pupils' progress. The large majority of staff share this vision and it has led to more effective teamwork and a high level of staff morale, evident in the staff questionnaires and inspectors' discussions with them.
- Performance management is well focused on teaching and the raising of pupils' achievement. It is a rigorous and robust process with the headteacher holding staff to account, where necessary,

for their roles and responsibilities. Examples include the improved use of assessment to strengthen the planning of lessons and the work of teaching assistants to support disabled pupils and those with special educational needs through the intervention groups. There are clear links between classroom performance and professional development. This has led to leaders moving teachers into different classes to strengthen the teaching.

- The school, through its school improvement plan, has identified areas where it needs to strengthen its own performance and expertise and has sought support, this year, from an outstanding school and from the Plymouth Teaching School Alliance to support its own relentless drive for improvement.
 - Teachers provide a wide range of learning activities in response to pupils' needs and interests. Singing and the playing of musical instruments are widespread events within the school and pupils also participate in a wide range of sports. These aspects make a strong contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of every pupil.
 - Additional funding such as the pupil premium is well used to promote pupils' equal opportunity and achievement. External school visits are also subsidised by the Parents' Association so that all pupils have the opportunity to take part fully in all the learning opportunities available.
 - The diligent and high quality care and procedures implemented by the staff also reflect the secure way that the school safeguards pupils' welfare, ensures equal opportunity and prevents discrimination.
 - The local authority provides effective guidance and works supportively with the school to check steps taken to raise the progress and attainment of pupils.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The knowledgeable governing body has a range of skills and experiences and shares the ambition and vision of the senior leaders. Governors are very clear about the priorities for improvement and check the progress of development plans. They are well informed and ask searching questions of the school leaders, including about how performance management improves standards and how well the school prepares the pupils for the next stage of their education. They are also aware of the need to ensure that teachers' pay is closely aligned with how well pupils achieve.
 - Governors make regular visits to the school and receive detailed reports from the headteacher. They check information about the school's performance and understand that inconsistent teaching over time has constrained pupils' progress so that standards have not compared well with other schools.
 - Governors make sure that the extra funding through the pupil premium is used wisely to benefit eligible pupils and they check that the gaps in attainment are closing.
 - They regularly check and review policies, including safeguarding, and ensure that staff are vetted and trained in order to keep pupils safe and free from harm. All current safeguarding requirements are met.
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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	113298
Local authority	Plymouth
Inspection number	412956

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	387
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jill Straw
Headteacher	Diggory Vowles
Date of previous school inspection	30 June 2010
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