

Victoria Road Primary School

Victoria Road, Ashford, Kent, TN23 7HQ

Inspection dates 20–21 June 2013

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|--------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|----------|
| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Inadequate | 4 |
| | 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:

- Teachers' expectations are not always high enough. The pace of teaching and learning is not always rapid enough to ensure that pupils, particularly in Key Stage 1 and more-able pupils across the school, achieve as well as they might.
- Although improving, progress is too uneven across the school.
- Pupils do not build rapidly enough on the gains they make in the Reception class.
- There are too few opportunities for pupils to be more active in their learning.
- Work is not always matched accurately to pupils' needs so sometimes it is too easy or too difficult.
- School plans of the overview of subjects to be taught do not make it clear how links are made across different subjects, especially to promote pupils' literacy, numeracy and communication skills.
- Actions taken by leaders and managers, including the governing body, as a result of monitoring and evaluation do not always result in rapid enough improvement

The school has the following strengths:

- Progress is improving, especially in Years 3 to 6.
- Pupils' skills in writing are improving throughout the school.
- Pupils feel safe and secure in school and are caring and considerate of each other.
- Pupils behave well and enjoy coming to school as shown by their above average attendance.
- The school takes good care of its pupils and provides good support to pupils and their families.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 15 lessons, including some joint observations with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. In addition, the inspectors talked to pupils about their work and listened to some of them read.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, other staff with key leadership responsibilities, groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documents including the school's assessment of its own performance, the school improvement plan, records of pupils' progress, monitoring information and the safeguarding procedures.
- The inspector took account of 12 responses to the online Parent View survey as well as the school's own survey of parents and carers and 22 questionnaires returned by staff.

Inspection team

Margaret Coussins, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jill Thewlis

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Information about this school

- Victoria Road is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is above average. The proportion supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives additional funding (the pupil premium), because they are known to be eligible for free school meals, are in the care of the local authority or are children of service families, is above average. At Victoria Road, most pupils eligible for the pupil premium are those entitled to free school meals.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The school makes provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage in a Reception class.
- In the previous inspection, significant improvement was required in relation to teaching and pupils' achievement in writing and mathematics from Year 2 to Year 6.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good or better by ensuring that:
 - there are more lessons that provide pupils with active, practical tasks using a broader range of resources and more opportunities for pupils to take risks with their learning
 - assessment information is used more effectively to plan tasks that are more precisely matched to the needs of learners of all abilities so that there are greater demands made to challenge pupils and more support for those who find learning harder
 - teachers have consistently high expectations of what pupils can achieve and there is a faster pace to teaching and learning.
- Raise achievement across the school by:
 - sustaining the improving progress being made by the current year groups in Key Stage 2
 - building more rapidly on the gains made in the Reception Year throughout Years 1 and 2
 - ensuring school plans show how pupils will use and apply their literacy, numeracy and communication skills across different subjects.
- Improve leadership and management, including governance, by:
 - strengthening the impact of monitoring and evaluation outcomes by ensuring more rapid improvement as a result of action taken.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because progress is uneven across the school. Consequently pupils do not consistently make good progress from their starting points.
- Children start at the school in the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and knowledge that vary from year to year and are often below expectations for their age but are currently as expected for their age. Children make expected progress in the Reception Year.
- Compared to the national picture, overall attainment in 2012 was considerably below average for pupils at the end of Year 2, and significantly so in writing as pupils do not build rapidly enough on the gains they make in the Reception Year.
- The school has successfully improved the progress pupils make in Year 3 to Year 6 and as a result, attainment at the end of Year 6 in 2012 was closer to average overall but lower in English than in mathematics. Fewer pupils than found nationally reach the higher Level 3 at the end of Year 2 or Level 5 at the end of Year 6. The provision for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs ensures that they make similar progress to others.
- In the 2012 tests, the attainment of Year 6 pupils who benefited from the pupil premium was similar to that of other Year 6 pupils in the school and pupils nationally in English. In mathematics their attainment was four months behind others in the school but better than found nationally.
- In English, progress in writing has improved in Key Stage 2 because of the introduction of 'the writing journey' which gives pupils more opportunities to write extended pieces of work, develop spelling, punctuation and grammar skills and write more extensively in different subjects. This approach has more recently been introduced in Key Stage 1 and has yet to have a similar impact on progress or attainment.
- In the 2012 Year 1 phonics screening check (linking sounds and letters) taken by pupils currently in Year 2, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected result was below average. The school has extended phonics teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 to include e books, which motivate pupils at school and home. Pupils have reasonable basic phonic skills to read unfamiliar words but some, particularly less able readers, are not reading confidently to make the text make sense.
- The school has worked hard to promote reading for enjoyment across the school. Older pupils can talk enthusiastically about favourite authors and express preferences for different types of books. More-able readers are encouraged through various lunchtime book clubs and develop higher level reading skills such as inference and deduction to help with their comprehension skills.
- Mathematics lessons start with a mental mathematics session to develop pupils' recall of number facts but these are sometimes too lengthy and not pitched at a fast enough pace to improve pupils' skills. More-able pupils in Year 5 and Year 6 are often taught in a different group, which is helping them to make faster progress at an appropriate level.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because the quality of teaching across the school is inconsistent and varies from good to inadequate. There is not yet enough good or better teaching to result in pupils' good achievement. Teachers do not always have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- Teaching does not always make the best use of a range of resources to encourage pupils to be active in their learning or take risks by finding things out for themselves. The pace of learning is not always fast enough especially when pupils have to listen for too long to teachers'

introductions before starting on their own work.

- Teachers do not always use assessment information effectively and so the tasks set in lessons are not always matched precisely to the needs of pupils of different abilities. This means that sometimes there are not enough demands made on more-able pupils and sometimes less able pupils struggle.
- Pupils' work is marked regularly. There are some very good examples of marking that gives pupils clear pointers about how to improve their work but this is not at the same level of quality in all classes. There are some opportunities for self-assessment by pupils but these are not always followed up by teachers.
- The stronger teaching, however, has started to make a positive impact on pupils' progress. For example, Year 5 pupils made good progress in an English lesson where they were learning to write and perform poetry because the lesson was well planned to meet the needs of all pupils and so they were all fully engaged and enthusiastic about their work. Similarly, teaching in a Year 3 mathematics lesson where pupils learned about capacity through well planned practical activities, ensured that they made good progress.
- Teaching assistants generally make a good contribution to pupils' learning through supporting individuals or small groups to fully participate in lessons. They are careful to support while promoting pupils' independence, particularly disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour is mostly good in lessons and when pupils are together at playtimes, lunchtimes and in assemblies.
- Older pupils say that teachers manage behaviour well in lessons. Inspectors agree with this except for a very few occasions where teaching does not fully engage pupils and the behaviour of a few pupils can slip as they become restless and inattentive, which is why behaviour is not outstanding.
- The school is very inclusive and supports its pupils who find it difficult to manage their own behaviour very well. Where needed, they receive effective one-to-one support, which minimises any disruption to other pupils in the class.
- On occasion, staff do not make their expectations clear enough to pupils, for example, how they should line up at the end of playtime and lunchtime.
- Pupils have good attitudes to school and are kind and thoughtful towards each other. They enjoy the opportunities to work together on tasks, are supportive and helpful and appreciate others' successes. They enjoy the responsibilities they are given, for example as house captains and buddies.
- Most parents and carers agree that the school keeps their children safe and that they are well looked after. They are not so confident that their children behave well although the inspectors found that they do. Scrutiny of behaviour records show this is the case over time too.
- Pupils say they feel very safe in school and understand how to keep safe in different situations. In discussion pupils say there is very little bullying in school and that they are confident that if any incidents occur, teachers sort things out quickly and fairly. They have a good awareness that bullying can take different forms such as name calling and physical, prejudiced-based and cyber bullying.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school as shown by their above average attendance and punctuality to school.

The leadership and management **require improvement**

- Leadership and management require improvement. Although the school is steadily improving, staff absences at senior leadership level have impeded the pace and full impact of the school's work to raise achievement and improve teaching. However, some improved teaching has resulted in better progress for the current year groups, especially in Key Stage 2. The school has improved teaching and achievement from inadequate at the previous inspection. This demonstrates its capacity to improve further, although it has not yet produced consistently good teaching over time or good achievement overall.
- Checks on teachers' performance by the headteacher and senior leaders are regular and more focused than previously on the quality of pupils' learning. Where weaknesses are identified, feedback is given to individuals and support is provided. However, weaknesses are not always eradicated at a fast enough pace. The school recognises that more work needs to be done to ensure that learning and progress are consistently good or better to improve achievement.
- Strong leadership in English has helped to successfully secure broadly average standards by the end of Year 6 and most notably, the better progress in writing, which was an issue to improve in the previous inspection.
- Pupils' progress is tracked efficiently. Targets are set for teachers that are linked well with the progress pupils make and teachers know they are accountable for pupils' progress and that this is linked to pay and salary progression.
- The school's understanding of its own effectiveness is accurate in some areas but a little too optimistic in others. However, there is a shared drive from a united team of staff to secure school improvement and staff express confidence in and share the ambition of the headteacher. Action taken as a result of monitoring and evaluation does not always result in rapid enough improvement.
- The efficient management of provision for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is a strength and is ensuring that these pupils make broadly similar and sometimes better progress compared with others' in the school.
- The subjects taught meet the interests of pupils well. There is an appropriate emphasis on developing literacy, numeracy and communication skills. In some classes, links between subjects are meaningful and afford pupils with opportunities to apply their basic skills in different areas but whole-school curriculum plans do not ensure that this is consistent in all classes.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well and pupils learn without fear of discrimination as the school is committed to ensuring equal opportunities for all pupils.
- Support for pupils whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable and the school's work with families and the community are strengths and enable the school to be alert to, and identify, specific needs. Pupils are cared for well and safeguarding systems are in place and meet all requirements, which ensures pupils feel safe.
- The pupil premium funding is targeted to provide a range of additional support that ensures pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals are not excluded from any aspect of school life, for example attendance at clubs and participating in school trips. Spending decisions make a positive contribution to pupils' emotional, personal and social needs as well as their academic needs.
- The local authority works with the school to focus on improving achievement for pupils.

■ **The governance of the school:**

Governors are familiar with the online information on pupils' achievement such as the Ofsted 'data dashboard' to inform them how the school is doing compared to other schools nationally. Beyond that, they rely on the headteacher to inform them and so know that improvements have been made, in writing for example, but have a slightly optimistic view of the school's current overall position. There are several vacancies on the governing body, which it is finding difficult to fill and which to some extent limit its work, particularly in independent monitoring to hold the school to account for its performance. They are involved in setting targets for the headteacher and know that staff undergo a similar process but are not fully aware of how the performance of staff links to increases in salary. They know about the quality of teaching and

have been supportive to the headteacher when staff have left who have not met expectations. Some training is undertaken, for example in safeguarding, and the governing body makes sure that effective safeguarding procedures are in place in order to keep pupils safe. Governors are aware of the pupil premium funding and how it is spent and are informed by staff of the impact of the spending decisions.

What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
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| 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 | 118369 |
| Local authority | Kent |
| Inspection number | 408872 |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 205 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Leslie Charnley |
| Headteacher | Simon Way |
| Date of previous school inspection | 7–8 March 2012 |
| Telephone number | 01233 620044 |
| Fax number | 01233 664211 |
| Email address | headteacher@victoria-road.kent.sch.uk |

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