

Fir Ends Primary School

Smithfield, Kirklington, Carlisle, Cumbria, CA6 6AY

Inspection dates 16–17 July 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

- Progress through Years 3 to 6 is too variable, particularly in mathematics and specifically for more-able pupils, and so pupils do not attain highly enough.
- Not enough pupils make good progress in mathematics.
- The quality of teaching is not consistently good. In particular, it is inconsistent throughout Years 3 to 6.
- A few teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough and so pupils' progress requires improvement.
- Joint leadership by the whole-staff team in driving improvements in subjects, including English and mathematics, is not consistently effective in raising standards.
- Governors do not challenge leaders rigorously about the school's performance, particularly in relation to the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.

The school has the following strengths

- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage achieve well.
- Most pupils make expected progress in reading and writing in Years 1 to 6.
- Gaps between how well different groups of pupils perform are narrowing, particularly for those with special educational needs.
- Some teaching is good, particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2.
- The school has developed a useful assessment system that helps teachers to identify where pupils are in their learning.
- Attendance is high. Pupils are proud of their school, they feel very safe and behaviour is good. They enjoy school and this is reflected in their high attendance.
- A wide variety of enrichment activities motivates and interests pupils.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching in nine lessons.
- The inspector spoke to groups of pupils and parents. He also took account of 25 responses from parents to the online (Parent View) survey.
- Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body and three other governors, members of staff and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector reviewed a number of documents, including those relating to child protection and safety, the school's checks made on teaching and school improvement.
- The inspector listened to pupils read and checked the school's assessments of pupils' progress in reading. He also looked at the school's system that shows pupils' progress in mathematics and English.

Inspection team

Andrew Morley, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Fir Ends Primary School is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs who are supported through school action is average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well-below average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium, which in this school provides additional government funding for children who are looked after by the local authority and for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, is well below the national average. No pupils in the current Year 6 are known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school has a number of awards, including Healthy School status and the Active Mark.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- Staff share responsibilities for the various areas of the school's work, including subject leadership.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that it is at least good, particularly in Key Stage 2, by:
 - ensuring teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are consistently high
 - providing more-able pupils with the right amount of challenge
 - ensuring teachers spend less time giving instructions to the whole class and make sure pupils have sufficient time to complete their work
 - ensuring work is specifically planned and matched to the needs of all pupils so that they maximise their progress in lessons
 - providing opportunities for pupils to work on tasks independently and take more responsibility for their own learning and progress
 - ensuring that teachers provide more opportunities and time for pupils to respond to the marking provided by their teachers.
- Raise standards and accelerate pupils' progress in mathematics in Years 3 to 6 by :
 - increasing the number of pupils who achieve the higher levels in the end-of-year assessments
 - extending opportunities to provide the more able pupils with the right amount of challenge
 - providing opportunities for pupils to apply number skills to situations that are more challenging and require a combination of skills.
- Improve leadership and management, including governance, to raise further pupils' attainment and accelerate progress by:
 - strengthening the impact of the staff team and raising their awareness of their joint responsibilities as they coordinate improvements to the school's work
 - ensuring governors rigorously hold school leaders to account for the quality of teaching and the standards pupils reach.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- As pupils move up through the school, the progress they make varies. The majority of pupils make the progress expected of them but not enough make good progress. Progress in mathematics, in Key Stage 2 in particular, requires improvement because too few pupils are reaching the higher standards.
- More-able pupils, in particular, do not make good enough progress. This is because the targets they are set by staff lack sufficient challenge.
- In Years 3 to 6, the quality of teaching is variable and so, while pupils are developing their number skills they do not have enough opportunities to apply these in combination with other skills. This limits the progress that they make.
- In 2012, pupils' standards and the progress they made by the end of Year 2 were average in reading, writing and mathematics. The most recent end-of-year assessments show that pupils have made faster rates of progress in 2013.
- Pupils' skills in reading are increasingly above average and pupils certainly see the value of reading. They comment that the school does much to encourage them to read at home. In Key Stage 1, pupils make good use of phonics (the sounds that letters make) to help them read unfamiliar words. In Key Stage 2, pupils read with great expression and are very confident to talk about a wide range of literature. By the end of Year 6, most pupils make the progress expected of them in reading.
- Children's skills on entry to the Nursery class are generally in line with age-related expectations in all areas of learning. As a result of good teaching, focused support and a variety of activities to involve them in their learning, they make good progress in both Nursery and Reception classes and achieve well.
- Pupils enjoy their topic work. However, achievement in subjects other than English and mathematics is variable. There are some good examples where pupils have the opportunity to connect their learning across subjects. However, opportunities for pupils to develop and apply their key mathematical skills in a range of subjects are inconsistent.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs receive comprehensive support, individually and in small groups, from teachers and teaching assistants. This leads them to make expected and sometimes good progress.
- A small number of pupils who receive additional support through the pupil premium make the same rates of progress as other pupils from their individual starting points, both through additional support and opportunities to enhance their experiences. In 2012, they did equally as well as other pupils in English and mathematics in Key Stage 2. This reflects the school's careful promotion of equality of opportunity.
- There has been a rise in pupils' standards in reading and mathematics and this is reflected in the improved performance in 2013 tests at the end of Key Stage 2 with average standards in English and mathematics.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching is inconsistent in quality and there is an insufficient emphasis on the inextricable link between teaching and pupils' achievement.
- Where teaching is less effective, a key weakness is that the tasks that teachers set for pupils are not precisely matched to their ability and this limits the progress that they make.
- In lessons where progress is less than good, the pace of learning is often too slow. While teachers make sure that pupils get on with their work, they do not always encourage pupils to develop the ambition and drive to ensure they achieve the standards of which they are capable.
- Teachers do not provide pupils with enough opportunities to develop independence and

responsibility for their own progress. This is often because teachers plan lengthy introductions, which prevent pupils from getting on with their assignments quickly enough.

- Although challenge for pupils is generally realistic, occasionally it is not high enough for more-able pupils, and this is particularly the case in mathematics. This impedes pupils' learning because teachers do not always insist that they aim for the highest standards.
- In a number of lessons, teachers give pupils the opportunity to practise basic mathematical skills but these planned activities provide little opportunity to apply number skills in problem-solving activities and in different subjects.
- Teachers' marking provides encouragement for pupils but does not consistently provide guidance to show how pupils can improve their work. Even when teachers give clear points for improvement, they do not make sure pupils have the time and the opportunity to respond.
- The quality of teaching is good in the Early Years Foundation Stage. There is a good balance between adult-directed activities and those chosen by children. As a result, children explore and find things out independently and they learn well.
- In other classes where teaching is good, teachers have good subject knowledge, the pace of learning is rapid and pupils are challenged to think for themselves. Pupils of all abilities are fully involved in everything the sessions offer.
- In Years 1/2, pupils learnt about seahorses. The teacher enabled pupils to develop some good scientific knowledge and supported the development of their writing skills at the same time. The teacher inspired pupils to produce consistently good standards of writing, of which they were very proud.
- The good subject knowledge of teachers and teaching assistants supports well the teaching of reading and the development of strategies to help pupils to improve their spelling, particularly those pupils with special educational needs. Some sharply-focused phonics sessions resulted in pupils' good progress.
- When teachers give pupils the opportunity to develop their own ideas and take a lead on their own learning, they can produce work of a high quality. For example, in a Year 6 lesson, pupils developed and produced their own plays using the latest information technology. They were very proud of this work and keen to share it with others.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils behave very well. They are extremely courteous, welcoming to visitors and each other, are proud of their school and would highly recommend it to their friends.
- Pupils are keen to get on with their work and maintain their positive behaviour, even when the quality of teaching dips.
- Pupils take on a number of roles and responsibilities around school, including as school councillors. They learn about the democratic process and enjoy a voice in how the school develops. They are proud to help the less fortunate and raise money for local and global causes.
- At lunchtimes, pupils are well mannered and most chat sensibly at the dining tables or help to clear away. As playground leaders, older pupils look after younger ones. They are quick to respond when someone is upset.
- Pupils are unanimous in their rejection of bullying in any form. They say that the school teaches them about what forms bullying can take and the dangers of each. Pupils appreciate the emphasis the school places on their safety and happiness and make particular mention of the support they receive from adults when they have worries.
- Pupils feel very safe in school and agree that if they had concerns then any member of staff would listen and help them.
- Parents are supportive of the school. Parents who responded to Parent View were unanimous that the school makes sure children are well behaved and deals with any bullying effectively.
- Pupils are happy, confident and secure in school and this is reflected in their high attendance.
- Behaviour is not yet outstanding because pupils, particularly the older ones, do not always take

full responsibility for their own progress to ensure that they achieve their potential.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Information gathered is not used systematically or rigorously enough to fully inform action planning for more rapid, on-going improvement and more consistently good teaching.
- The staff team do not fulfil their shared responsibilities effectively enough with regard to the coordination of improving the school's work and performance. Checks on the quality of teaching and the progress pupils make in lessons are not used effectively to improve practice and ensure consistently good teaching. Good practice is not shared well enough among the staff.
- The systems to check teachers' performance in the classroom and the emphasis senior leaders place on improving teaching are inconsistent. Staff are positive about the opportunities they have for professional development. However, the targets set for pupils' performance are not ambitious enough. The links between the performance of teachers and their salary progression are not strong enough.
- Although leaders have developed an improved system to check the progress of pupils, teachers are not using this information to ensure that the work they plan is precisely matched to ensure individual pupils maximise their progress.
- School leaders recognise the need to improve further pupils' achievement. They strive to ensure equality of opportunity for all pupils.
- The school's leaders foster good relations between pupils of all abilities and from all cultures. There is zero tolerance of any form of discrimination. Safeguarding and child protection arrangements are fully in place, regularly reviewed and meet statutory requirements.
- The curriculum provides significant enrichment to pupils' learning. Pupils enthused about the residential visit to Barcaple, and Tullie House that supported their learning about the Victorians. They also appreciate the visits to galleries and the frequent visitors to school.
- Pupils are rightly proud of their charity work to support the Eden Valley Hospice, the Great North West Air Ambulance and the Burundi Bear project and fundraising to support cancer research. Pupils are developing their spiritual and cultural awareness well.
- The school has good links with a range of partners and is part of the Brampton Consortium, a joint learning collaborative. The school is very much at the heart of the community.
- The local authority provides light touch support for the school and is confident that the current leadership team can achieve the improvements required.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are supportive of, and committed to, the school. For example, one governor supports the gardening club which the pupils greatly enjoy, producing wonderful flower beds. Governors ensure that checks on the performance of teachers take place and that targets are linked to salary progression. However, these are not sharp enough. Governors make sure that funding, including the pupil premium, is used well to benefit the small number of pupils who are eligible. They ensure that safeguarding requirements are met. They take part in any additional training that will help them carry out their duties. However, they are less well informed about the quality of teaching and the progress that all groups of pupils are making. They do not hold leaders sufficiently to account for the academic performance of the school.

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	112420
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	411917

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	124
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr S Smith
Headteacher	Mrs S J Hatt
Date of previous school inspection	8 July 2010
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