

Ellison Primary School

Ellison Street, Wolstanton, Newcastle, ST5 0BL

Inspection dates 2–3 October 2013

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		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- The quality of teaching is not consistently good. Teachers do not always check pupils' work in lessons carefully enough, to identify when pupils are ready for further challenge, or require further support.
- Pupils do not make enough progress, over time, in mathematics in Key Stage 2 particularly those who are the most able. As a result, too few pupils achieve the higher levels at the end of Year 6.
- Pupils supported through the pupil premium are a long way behind other pupils in reading, writing and mathematics, because, over time, they have not achieved well enough.
- The school does not work as effectively with some parents and carers as it could do, to improve pupils' attendance.
- Although children make good progress in the Reception classes in developing reading, writing and mathematics skills, opportunities to develop curiosity, creativity and independent learning skills are sometimes missed.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils are making much better progress than they did at the time of the last full inspection because the quality of teaching is improving.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress from their starting points.
- Pupils behave well in school, and those who find it difficult to behave well make good progress in improving their behaviour.
- The quality of leadership and management has improved significantly since the last inspection. Leaders have much higher expectations of staff and have successfully improved the quality of teaching.
- The governing body is closely involved in checking the work of the school and provides a good level of challenge to school leaders.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in all classes, visiting 13 lessons or parts of lessons. Three of these were observed jointly with the headteacher. Inspectors dropped-in to other lessons for short periods of time to observe children learning. Inspectors also observed an assembly and shared lunch with pupils in the dining hall.
- Meetings were held with two different groups of pupils, which included listening to them read. Inspectors also looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, other senior leaders, and the Chair, and three other representatives, of the Governing Body. A telephone conversation was held with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the views of a number of parents and carers, during informal conversations on the playground, as they brought their children to school. Inspectors were unable to take responses from the online questionnaire Parent View into account, as too few parents and carers had responded.
- Inspectors looked at a number of documents including documents relating to safeguarding, the tracking and assessment of pupils' attainment and progress, records on attendance, and the monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning. They also looked at the effect of the school's use of pupil-premium funding.

Inspection team

Jeremy Spencer, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

David Edwards

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Information about this school

- Ellison Primary School is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium is slightly above average. (The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those that are looked after by the local authority.)
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, and pupils who speak English as an additional language, are below average.
- The school was placed in special measures at the time of its last full inspection, in March 2012. At the time of the last inspection, the school did not meet the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. The school received four monitoring inspections during its time in special measures. The school now meets the government's current floor standards.
- The school received support from a Local Leader of Education (LLE) during the period of time it was in special measures.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and accelerate pupils' progress, particularly in Key Stage 2, by making sure that:
 - teaching activities are always sufficiently challenging for the most able pupils, especially in mathematics, to enable more pupils to reach the higher levels at the end of Year 6
 - teachers check pupils' learning in lessons more closely, and become more confident in adapting their plans, in order to better meet pupils' needs
 - staff continue to secure strategies to enable those pupils supported through the pupil premium to close the gaps in learning between themselves and other pupils.
- Ensure that children are given more frequent opportunities to develop their creativity and independent learning skills in the Early Years Foundation Stage, by improving the quality of indoor and outdoor learning areas.
- Work together with parents and carers more closely to improve attendance to above average.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Children begin the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that vary considerably from year to year, although their skills in communication, language and literacy are below those expected. Pupils' standards in reading, writing and mathematics are now broadly average at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. However, fewer pupils than average reach the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2. This is because the quality of teaching has not met pupils' needs well enough, and pupils do not yet make good progress over time.
- The school's own data about pupils' progress, inspectors' scrutiny of work in pupils' books, and unconfirmed results for pupils leaving Year 6 in 2013, indicate that pupils are making better progress, particularly in reading and writing. This follows several years of significant underperformance. The school needs to prove that the level of performance demonstrated in 2013 can be sustained, to enable pupils to make good progress over time from their starting points.
- More-able pupils are not challenged well enough in mathematics in Key Stage 2 and do not make as much progress as other groups of pupils. For example, of the children leaving Year 6 in July 2013, only 57% of them who attained the highest level in mathematics at the end of Year 2, went on to attain a higher than average level at the end of Year 6. They made strong progress in Year 6, but not enough to catch up for their previous underachievement in Years 3, 4 and 5. In contrast to this, of the pupils who attained lower than average results in mathematics at the end of Year 2, all of them made at least the expected progress by the end of Year 6.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children make good progress from their starting points in developing communication, reading, writing and mathematics skills. However, children sometimes miss out on activities to promote their curiosity about the natural environment, to develop creativity and to learn independently. This is because indoor and outdoor learning areas are not always organised as well as they could be.
- Individuals and different groups of pupils make good progress from their starting points in Years 1 and 2. During the inspection, pupils in Year 1 were observed making good progress in developing reading skills during a phonics (the sounds that letters make) lesson.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress from their starting points. This is because staff understand their needs well and provide effective support, particularly through teaching assistants. Teachers and leaders also track their learning carefully to make sure that they make the progress they are capable of.
- Pupils supported through the pupil premium are now making good progress. This is because the school's leaders are using pupil premium funding effectively, for example, to employ additional teaching assistants to provide targeted support for these pupils. Although these pupils are now closing the gaps between themselves and other pupils in reading, writing and mathematics, they remain a long way behind. For example, at the end of Year 6 in 2013, they were one and a half terms behind in reading, two terms behind in writing and three terms behind in mathematics.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is not yet consistently good in the school, particularly in Key Stage 2, and there is not enough outstanding teaching. As a result, pupils do not make good progress over time from their starting points. However, the proportion of good teaching in the school increased significantly during the period of time the school was in special measures. This is because the quality of leadership improved significantly, and leaders now spend more time helping teachers to improve the quality of their work.
- Teaching does not always challenge more-able pupils well enough, and teachers do not always recognise in lessons when more-able pupils are completing work that they can already do. This means that they sometimes engage in activities that add little value to their learning, when they

would be better served by attempting something that would make them think harder.

- Where teaching is good, teachers ask skilful and timely questions to check pupils' understanding throughout the lesson and then adapt their teaching to fill any gaps in learning, but this is not the case in all lessons.
- Teachers consistently make it clear to pupils what they are learning to do. They do this by recapping with pupils what has been learned already, and then identifying what the next steps of learning are to be, by identifying clear learning intentions. Pupils respond well to this, and as a result, they demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. On several occasions, pupils were observed taking notes to help them to learn more effectively. They did this without prompting from staff, for example, in a mathematics lesson in Key Stage 2, where pupils were learning about different types of triangles.
- Teachers mark pupils' work effectively, and identify how pupils can improve. Pupils respond to teachers' comments and this is helping them to begin to make better progress in their learning.
- Teaching assistants operate skilfully and effectively both within lessons and when working with small groups. They are particularly effective when supporting disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, and when supporting pupils to learn phonics. On a number of occasions, teaching assistants were observed adapting learning activities to meet the needs of pupils who would otherwise have fallen behind. However, teaching assistants were rarely observed providing the same level of support to more-able pupils.
- During the school's time in special measures, parents and carers commented that the quality of teaching was consistently improving. During this inspection, all parents and carers who spoke with inspectors said that the improved quality of teaching, and appropriate homework, was helping their children to make better progress than previously.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' behaviour has improved well since the previous inspection. This is because pupils' thoughts and energies are more focused on learning, and because staff manage pupils' behaviour with greater consistency. Some pupils find it difficult to behave and, over time, staff support these pupils well to ensure that their behaviour improves and that they do not fall behind with their learning. They do this by identifying clear boundaries, and through establishing positive and caring relationships with them.
- Pupils are keen to learn in class and show positive attitudes to learning. They welcome visitors and are keen to talk about their progress and the progress of the school.
- Pupils behave well in different areas of the school, including on the playground. Pupils were observed playing on the playground during their lunch break by inspectors. Some played with balls and hoops, others chatted and played games with each other. A group of pupils also enjoyed using junk materials to make their own models. Pupils said that these activities were almost always available to them. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and staff were positive.
- Pupils understand the importance of playing safely. Pupils say they feel safe in school and demonstrate an age appropriate understanding of the risks they may encounter, including when using the internet. Pupils have a clear understanding of different forms of bullying, such as name-calling or discrimination against pupils from a different background.
- Pupils' attendance is broadly average, although it dipped slightly in the last academic year. This was largely caused by the outbreak of a virus in Year 1 in the Autumn term 2012. Most pupils attend school frequently. However, leaders understand that they need to work more closely with a small proportion of parents and carers to ensure that their children attend school more regularly, to improve the school's attendance to above average.

The leadership and management are good

- The quality of leadership and management has improved significantly since the last inspection. Leaders have communicated higher expectations and have worked with determination, and increased rigour. For example, through introducing focused weekly plans to check standards across the school. This has enabled them to manage teachers' performance successfully, check and improve the quality of teaching, and raise pupils' achievement. Leaders' ability to accelerate the school out of special measures indicates that the school is well placed to continue to improve.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher have successfully developed the skills of staff responsible for leading different subjects of the curriculum. This has enabled staff to focus more closely on the school's performance and take greater responsibility for the decisions made to improve the school. Subject leaders have drawn up detailed action plans, which include deadlines, to ensure that regular checks are made to help keep improvements on track.
- School leaders were well supported and challenged by the local authority and also by their LLE partner during the time they were in special measures. Regular review meetings were organised by the local authority, to monitor the school's progress and ensure that the LLE partner provided appropriate support. As the school has improved, the level of support has been greatly reduced because leaders have proved that they no longer have to rely on others to guide them.
- Leaders responsible for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, and the Early Years Foundation Stage, make good use of data about pupils' progress to inform their decisions and make priorities. As a result, these groups of pupils have secured good outcomes.
- Leaders have ensured that pupils study a curriculum that meets their needs well, promotes equality, and helps them to develop a positive attitude to learning. Pupils spend a higher proportion of time developing basic grammar, spelling and mental calculation skills than they would in many other schools. This is to make up for their previous underachievement in developing these skills. Pupils also enjoy learning about a balanced range of other subjects and topics. Older pupils told inspectors how much they were looking forward to their residential trip.
- Pupils' good moral and social development is demonstrated through their good and improving behaviour in school. School leaders have correctly identified that they now need to focus on promoting pupils' good spiritual development and on their deeper understanding of different cultures.
- Pupils enjoy participating in a good range of sports in the school, particularly netball and football in Key Stage 2, where there have been a number of successes in local competitions. School leaders have drawn up appropriate plans to make use of primary school sport funding, to work with partners, to further increase the level of pupils' participation in sporting activities.

■ The governance of the school:

- The governing body checks the work of the school in detail and has effective mechanisms in place to hold leaders to account. For example, governors have an accurate understanding of data about pupils' performance and use this information to challenge school leaders about any underachievement. Governors are aware that more-able pupils in the school need to make better progress in mathematics in Key Stage 2, and have asked school leaders about this. Governors have ensured that appropriate systems are in place to keep pupils safe. The governing body has an appropriate understanding of the quality of teaching in the school, and has ensured that suitable systems are in place to manage the performance of the headteacher and other staff. There are appropriate links between teachers' pay progression and their performance. Any underperformance is tackled effectively. The governing body conducts frequent reviews of the impact it makes on improving the school. This helps to ensure that a sharp focus is maintained on the school's key priorities.

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	124188
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	423999

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	321
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Roger Machin
Headteacher	Nichola Gibson
Date of previous school inspection	13-14 March 2012
Telephone number	01782 297680
Email address	office@ellison.staffs.sch.uk

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