

Underhill Infant School and Children's Centre

Mays Lane, Barnet, Herts, EN5 2LZ

Inspection dates

8–9 October 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		Requires improvement	3
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:

- Pupils' achievement requires improvement because they do not make enough progress as they move through the school. This is because teaching overtime has not been consistently good. As a result, pupils' attainment at the end of Year 2 has fluctuated in the last three years although it remains broadly average.
- The quality of teaching requires improvement because too often teachers' expectations are not high enough which leads to them setting work that does not match pupils' abilities. This is especially true for the most able pupils. Information on pupils' performance is not used sufficiently to ensure teachers plan for their different abilities.
- In some lessons, teachers do not explain what pupils are expected to learn clearly enough. As a result, pupils' progress slows.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders, including members of the governing body, have not been rigorous in assessing the school's effectiveness. The governing body does not challenge the school enough to ensure pupils' achievement improves quickly.
- Pupils' progress information is not always checked well enough so that leaders know how well actions to accelerate learning are working.
- Leaders' assessment of teaching focuses more on what teachers are doing rather than what pupils are learning. Improvements in teaching have not been fast enough.
- Some pupils can become easily distracted and engage in off-task behaviour when teaching does not challenge them.
- Attendance remains below the national average.

The school has the following strengths:

- Children learn well in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Teachers and other staff provide a caring and supportive environment and develop good relationships with pupils.
- The school tackles discrimination well. Leaders have ensured that all pupils have equal access to all the school has to offer.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classes and undertook some joint observations with senior managers. They visited 12 part lessons.
- Inspectors held meetings with members of the senior leadership team, groups of pupils and staff. Telephone discussions took place with the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors discussed lessons they had seen with teaching staff and examined a range of documents including the school's improvement plan, self-evaluation, exclusions information, behaviour data and the school's records of lesson observations.
- Inspectors listened to groups of pupils reading. They looked at work in books and the school's information showing pupils' progress.
- Inspectors took account of 19 responses to Ofsted's online Parent View questionnaire, and the questionnaires completed by staff.

Inspection team

Samantha Morgan-Price, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Samuel Ofori-Kyereh

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Underhill is smaller than the average-sized infant school.
- Half of the pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is above average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who are supported through school action is below the national average. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs or at school action plus is above average.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils who are looked after by the local authority, those known to be eligible for free school meals and the children of service families) is above the national average. There are currently no pupils who are looked after by the local authority or children of service families.
- There is a children's centre attached to the school; it was not inspected. The centre was previously inspected in July 2011.
- As an infant school with no Key Stage 2 pupils, the government floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress, do not apply.
- The school increased its pupil intake to three Reception classes in September 2012.
- The school has recently experienced a number of staff changes.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, so it is at least good, to ensure pupils make rapid and sustained progress, by:
 - increasing expectations of what pupils are capable of, by teachers' using information about pupils' progress to set work that is more challenging and closely matched to the different needs of pupils, especially the most able
 - ensuring that teachers mark work to provide clear and specific feedback, and that time is allocated for pupils to respond to the guidance given.
- Improve the effectiveness of leaders and managers by:
 - making sure all leaders and managers are using information on pupils' achievement more robustly to monitor and evaluate all areas of their work, so that actions can be implemented quickly
 - ensuring that their checking of teaching focuses on what pupils are learning rather than what teachers are doing.
- An external review of governance should be undertaken to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.
- Ensure that the measures implemented by leaders enable attendance to reach at least the national average.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement is not yet good and requires improvement because too few pupils make rapid enough progress over time due to weaknesses in teaching.
- Pupils' progress from their starting points is uneven. They do not make consistently rapid progress, because teaching is too variable and as a result, attainment in English and mathematics at the end of Year 2 has fluctuated over recent years. However, attainment has remained broadly average overall.
- The targeted actions in the last two years have resulted in improved attainment for Year 2 pupils in mathematics. However, attainment in reading has fallen to slightly below average.
- The most able pupils are not stretched sufficiently or adequately challenged in their work. Lower-ability pupils, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are not always well supported in lessons. The extra sessions provided outside classrooms for small selected groups are more effective. These lessons support their development of basic skills well in English and mathematics.
- Overall, the progress of pupils from minority ethnic groups, including those who speak English as an additional language, requires improvement, as their progress is similar to that of other pupils.
- The attainment of pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding shows variability, and overall these pupils make the same progress as their peers. In 2012, the school was successful in reducing the gap in attainment for these pupils. However, this did not improve further in the recent 2013 national tests. Pupils remain two terms behind their classmates, which is similar to the national picture.
- Reading is encouraged throughout the school. Pupils are generally developing the skills to enable them to enjoy reading. However, the results of the phonics (letters and the sounds they make) screening check for 2013 were low. Just over a third of pupils answered questions correctly, in comparison to over a half nationally.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage join the school with skills and capabilities that are below the levels expected for their age. Their attainment is average by the time they leave the Reception class, because the progress they make is good in most areas. Nevertheless, progress is not as strong in mathematics and English.
- The school has clear plans on how the physical education (PE) premium is to be used. Sports and PE are well promoted as part of the main curriculum or as extra-curricular activities. Sports mentors visit the school to open school activities and there is additional sports enrichment once a week for most pupils. As a result, participation by pupils on extra-curricular activities is increasing as the school takes a long-term view.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching is not yet good and requires improvement because teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not always high enough. As a result, pupils are not set challenging enough tasks to do which promotes their interest and enthusiasm.
- Teachers do not always give pupils work that keeps them focused or enables them to work hard throughout the lesson. When this occurs, they become disinterested and their learning slows.
- Some good teaching was seen during the inspection, where teachers planned pupils' work well and assessed their progress quickly so that learning was moved on swiftly. However, this good practice is not consistently applied across the school.
- Teachers do not always plan to ensure that all teaching assistants are clear in how they will support learning. The contribution teaching assistants make in lessons is not consistently good. This also includes sessions in the Early Years Foundation Stage. At times, they spend too long

listening to the teacher instead of helping pupils who are stuck. Adults in Reception and Nursery do not always take the opportunities to assess what children are learning, especially in English and mathematics.

- Teacher's marking is too variable across the school. Some good examples of marking were seen, especially in English, where teachers carefully identified the skills that pupils needed to develop next. Nevertheless, pupils do not always use the comments and advice to improve their work. However, much of the marking seen did not provide appropriate guidance for pupils to know what they needed to do next.
- Relationships between adults and pupils are positive. When pupils are given opportunities to talk to their partners or work together in pairs their social skills are developed well.

The behaviour and safety of pupils require improvement

- Behaviour requires improvement and is not yet good because many pupils are not provided with sufficient opportunities to develop the necessary skills to take responsibility for their own learning, and are over reliant on adults for guidance.
- Pupils do not always get on with work as quickly as they should as tasks do not always motivate them to learn well. As a consequence, their concentration declines and their attitude to learning becomes less positive.
- Sometimes pupils need to be reminded how to behave when moving around the school.
- Pupils from different backgrounds get on well together. Parents and carers who completed the questionnaire feel that their children are safe in the school. Pupils also support this view and say they are well supported at school. They are confident that incidents of bullying are rare and where there are concerns, they are dealt with effectively. They appreciate the pupils in the 'friendship patrol' who help them at play and lunchtimes when they are unhappy.
- The school has introduced effective measures that have led to a sharp fall in fixed-term exclusions. Pupils are well supported when they are finding it difficult to manage their behaviour.
- Increased measures have finally started to be successful in increasing the levels of attendance. Attendance has been slowly improving over the last two years, but remains below average. This is linked to the consistent use of strategies to work closely with families whose children do not regularly attend.

The leadership and management require improvement

- Leaders and managers have not secured constant improvements since the previous inspection and therefore leadership and management require improvement. For example, where school leaders have focused their attention on improving pupils' attainment in mathematics, they have made a positive difference in this subject. However, attainment has fallen in reading. The outdoor learning environment in the Early Years Foundation Stage has been well developed to improve the quality of learning, resulting in children making good progress in this stage. This demonstrates leaders' capacity to secure further improvement.
- The school adequately promotes equality and tackles discrimination. The lack of precise checking by leaders has meant that actions to improve the performance of more-able pupils have been slow.
- The school's safeguarding procedures meet statutory requirements.
- The school's self-evaluation is over-generous as pupils' long-term progress is not checked carefully enough. As a result, the strengths in children's learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage are not built upon. Pupils' progress information is not evaluated rigorously to identify actions needed to make further improvements. For example, plans do not give clear timescales and some success criteria are not measurable.
- The monitoring of teaching lacks rigour because it does not always check the impact on pupils'

learning. The emphasis has been on what teachers do. This has slowed the improvements in teaching because leaders do not have unequivocal information on the strengths and weaknesses of teaching to identify the improvements needed. Performance management procedures are not used well enough to ensure that teachers' performance is closely linked to pupils' progress.

- The curriculum is soundly planned to develop pupils' reading, writing and mathematics skills. There are opportunities within topic work for pupils to practise their extended writing skills. However, the curriculum has not been fully successful in improving pupils' skills in these subjects, as opportunities to develop these skills in other subjects have not been fully exploited.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural skills are adequately developed. The school has focused on improving pupils' listening skills, behaviour and social interaction with each other. The school council has been successful in promoting council members' leadership skills. Pupils' moral development is sufficiently supported by the school's 'Golden Rules', and the attention paid to rules in sports. Assemblies are used effectively to promote the school's expectations of how pupils treat each other.
- In the past, the local authority has given the school a light touch review, which has mainly been confined to checking on the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. The local authority has not reviewed the action plans of the school, and its support for the school has been limited. However, the level of support is set to rise.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Members of the governing body are supportive of school leaders and work closely with the senior team. However, they share school leaders' over-generous evaluation of pupils' achievement. There is also a limited understanding of how the school is performing compared to other schools locally or nationally. There is too much reliance on school leaders providing them with information, particularly on the quality of teaching and the impact of leaders' actions. They have not kept up to date with relevant professional training to support them in their roles and to inform them of the developments in education. As a result, they are not confident that they know how well the school is performing or where they should be challenging the school to improve. Governors understand how the pupil premium and sports premium are being allocated, but they do not check sufficiently how well pupils are doing throughout the year, or whether it has directly contributed to improvements in achievement for this group.
 - Governors are aware of teachers' salaries, and procedures to manage the performance of the headteacher are in place. However, information on how performance management is used to improve the quality of teaching across the school is not routinely shared with all governors. Governors do not have sufficient understanding about teachers' pay awards or how underperformance is tackled.
 - The governing body has ensured that the school fulfils its statutory responsibilities in safeguarding and for pupils' well-being.

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	101301
Local authority	Barnet
Inspection number	427375

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	200
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lynn Cornelius
Headteacher	Elizabeth Moore
Date of previous school inspection	7–8 October 2009
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