

Richard Whittington Primary School

Thornbera Gardens, Bishop's Stortford, CM23 3NP

Inspection dates 19–20 November 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

- For the past two years pupils have not made good enough progress at Key Stage 2, particularly in mathematics, because performance in each year group has been variable.
- Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 have fluctuated and declined over time from above to broadly average.
- Teaching requires improvement as it is not consistently good. Pupils are not always given challenging enough activities which actively involved in their learning.
- Teachers do not systematically check pupils' understanding in lessons so that they can change activities if necessary.
- Not all lessons are planned using recent information on how well pupils are doing.
- Leadership and management require improvement because information on pupils' progress is not collected regularly enough, or in enough detail to tackle underachievement quickly and set demanding targets for improvement.
- Leaders and managers have not improved teaching in both key stages consistently. Observations of lessons do not focus on the learning and progress of groups of pupils.
- Feedback to teachers is not clear on how to improve and governors are not clear on what needs to be done to improve teaching.

The school has the following strengths

- Progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and at Key Stage 1 is good overall.
- Standards have been above the national average at Key Stage 1 for the last three years.
- Writing has improved, although it is not yet consistently good across all year groups.
- Pupils behave well and are keen to learn. Relationships between staff and pupils are extremely respectful.
- The acting headteacher is clear about the strengths and weaknesses of the school, and has the support of the staff and parents to move things forward.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 22 lessons or part lessons. Five lessons were observed jointly with the acting headteacher.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, governors, staff, and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a range of evidence, including self-evaluation and safeguarding. They observed the school's work, looked at pupils' books and the tracking system used to monitor pupils' progress.
- Inspectors considered the 93 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire, and 37 questionnaires received from staff.

Inspection team

Miranda Perry, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Patrick Finegan

Additional Inspector

Pauline MacMillan

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Richard Whittington Primary is an above average-sized primary school.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who are supported through school action is below average. The proportion of those at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is also below average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those from service families, is below average. In this school, the pupil premium only provides funding for children known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.
- Classes are made up of mixed year groups.
- The acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher took up post in April 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching so that pupils make at least good progress, particularly at Key Stage 2 in mathematics, by:
 - planning lessons based on up-to-date information about pupils' progress
 - consistently providing activities that interest pupils and engage them actively
 - ensuring all teachers check pupils' understanding in lessons, and amend tasks according to the progress pupils have made.
- Strengthen leadership and management by improving the quality and regularity of information gathered about pupils' progress, particularly about disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, and/or who are the most able, and using it to:
 - set challenging targets and take action which brings about rapid improvement
 - inform observations of teaching so that they are more focused on the learning of groups of pupils in lessons
 - give teachers clear guidance on how to improve
 - inform governors about the effectiveness of teaching so they can properly challenge leaders and managers to improve performance.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because although pupils make good progress in Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1.
- At Key Stage 2, pupils' performance in different year groups has fluctuated. Attainment at the end of Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics dipped in 2012 and, although improved in 2013, has not risen to previously higher levels.
- In mathematics, the proportion of pupils making expected or better progress at Key Stage 2 was below average in 2012 and 2013. In the absence of up-to-date information about how well pupils are doing, staff have not adjusted their planning of lessons sufficiently to meet pupils' needs.
- In English, the proportion of pupils making better than expected progress at Key Stage 2 in 2013 was below average, although pupils' achievement in writing was better than in reading and has improved since 2012. Pupils enjoy the increased opportunities they have been given to write at length.
- The achievement of disabled pupils and those who have special needs is average. The school does not measure their progress, particularly as they move up the school, in a way that ensures support can be effectively targeted.
- The most able pupils do not always make good progress. At Key Stage 2 in particular they are sometimes given work which does not sufficiently match their interests or capacity to work independently.
- The level of skills with which the children join the school varies from year-to-year but is usually below that typical for their age. Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. In Nursery and Reception, the performance of children is measured more specifically and regularly than in the rest of the school, so children begin to make progress as soon as they arrive.
- Pupils attain well and make good progress at Key Stage 1. The emphasis paid to developing social skills in the Early Years Foundation Stage means that pupils have very positive attitudes to learning by the time they arrive in Year 1. For example, in a mixed Year 1 and 2 mathematics lesson pupils made good progress because they organised their own next activity, once they had finished the one the teacher had set them.
- Pupils who are known to be eligible for support from the pupil premium receive extra help in class and in small group sessions. In the national tests in 2013, these pupils were one term ahead of other pupils in both English and mathematics. Over the last year, progress improved for these pupils so it is better than that of other pupils in the school.
- As a result of primary school sport funding, pupils celebrate healthy life styles. Pupils go swimming regularly and the broad range of after school activities now link well with what the pupils do in physical education lessons. As a result, their physical wellbeing is developing well.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because at Key Stage 2, and particularly in mathematics, not enough is consistently good to ensure that all pupils progress well in all classes.
- Some teachers are starting to provide materials for pupils in mathematics at Key Stage 2 that mean they can learn actively. However, the materials chosen are not always the right ones to bring about the best progress.
- Pupils try their hardest, even when given work that is not at the right level for them. The teachers do not always accurately gauge the pupils' levels of understanding during lessons and change activities if necessary.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Children enjoy learning in well-resourced inside and outside spaces, and benefit from a balance between learning independently and with support from the adults.
- Children are taught phonics (letters and sounds) well. They become confident readers in Key Stage 1 and can read a range of different texts. In Key Stage 2, some pupils find what they are given to read less stimulating than when they were in Key Stage 1.
- In the best teaching, pupils learn well because they have positive relationships with teachers, and support each other to improve, working effectively in partners and groups. In an art class of Year 3 and 4 pupils, one girl said to her partner, 'I think we should take it in turns to describe how to make the best elephant picture, and really listen to each other.'
- Some good teaching has brought about improvements in writing. For example, in a Year 1 and 2 class pupils made good progress writing a persuasive letter because they all concentrated intensely on reviewing and improving their work.
- The school's revision of its marking policy has been instrumental in improving writing. Pupils are clear about what they have achieved and what they have to do next.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' behaviour is good because they love learning and are delighted when they make progress with their work. One boy said in a geography class of Year 3 and 4 pupils: 'Watch us. Once we get it, nothing stops us.'
- Pupils behave equally well regardless of the group they are in, or the teacher they are taught by. A group of pupils explained to an inspector that they were used to being mixed up in year groups and this had taught them that they had to behave well when learning, which ever classmates they were with.
- All staff consistently model respectful and courteous behaviour which is mirrored by pupils. Discrimination is not tolerated in any form, and some of the pupils' best learning relies on positive relations.
- Pupils are very clear that everyone at the school has an equal right to reach their potential. In class, pupils stay on task and very rarely get distracted or distract others.

- Parents, staff and pupils are extremely positive about behaviour at the school. Parents commented that the school prepares their children well for the more mature behaviours expected of them at secondary school.
- Pupils feel safe, have a thorough understanding of how to keep safe and are well versed in issues regarding e-safety.
- Bullying is rare, and pupils are confident that if it happens, it is dealt with effectively. Pupils believe that the school helps them to reflect on their behaviour and encourages them to always look to improve.
- Pupils' attendance is above the national average, has been for three years and is still improving. Pupils say they attend well because they are rewarded for it and they do not want to let the school down.
- At times, pupils are given activities which do not involve them as much as they would like. Pupils have a real desire to learn and commented that they would rise to the challenge.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because progress at Key Stage 2 has not been good enough over a period of time. The acting headteacher and deputy headteacher now have an accurate understanding of what the school needs to do to improve, but due to their relatively recent arrival in post there has not been time to measure the impact of the changes they are beginning to make.
- Senior leaders have identified as a priority the need to measure the progress of all pupils, particularly those who have special educational needs and those who are the most able, more regularly and in more detail. In the absence of this information, leaders and managers are unable to take swift, effective action to bring about rapid improvements and set targets for pupils that are appropriately demanding. Therefore, although the management of staff performance is linked to pupils' progress, the targets are not challenging enough.
- Leaders and managers regularly observe teaching. However, the lesson observations focus too much on what the teachers are doing, without linking this enough to what progress the pupils have already made and what they are learning. This means that teachers do not get clear feedback on how to bring about improvement in pupil performance as a result of better teaching.
- Subject leaders have been instrumental in improving teaching in Key Stage 1 and pupils' writing by working with staff to mark more consistently and effectively.
- The school provides pupils with an adequate range of learning experiences. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well promoted. Pupils love their singing assemblies, and like being given opportunities to discuss topical issues and consider the world from other people's perspective. For example, in a class of Year 5 and 6 pupils, pupils relished the chance to imagine how things looked through Oliver Twist's eyes. 'If I were Oliver,' one boy said, 'I would be cross with the world.'
- Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good. Staff have developed professionally because senior leaders have supported them in their research into the

best ways for children to learn in Nursery and Reception.

- The local authority has carried out a number of visits, and supported the acting headteacher to identify what needs to be done to improve mathematics.
 - The school has allocated primary sports funding, and planned for the evaluation of its impact.
 - Parents and staff feel that they are communicated with well by leaders and managers and this is one reason why they are supportive of the changes the new senior leaders are making.
 - Leaders and managers make sure that statutory requirements with regard to safeguarding are met.
- **The governance of the school:**
- Because lesson observations have been focused on teaching rather than pupils' learning, governors are not clear enough about how teaching can bring about at least good progress. In the absence of good quality, regular information about pupils' progress, they have not been clear about the extent of the underperformance at Key Stage 2. The governors have been involved in developing the school's system for managing staff performance, in which remuneration is used to tackle underperformance and reward the best teachers. They have monitored the funding for, and progress of, the small number of pupils eligible for support from the pupil premium.

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	117346
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	425377

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	342
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cliff O'Reilly
Headteacher	Geoff Holmes (acting headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	9 January 2012
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