

Cecil Road Primary and Nursery School

Cecil Road, Gravesend, Kent, DA11 7BT

Inspection dates 12–13 December 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	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		Require improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Achievement in writing and mathematics is not good enough because pupils' progress is uneven across Key Stages 1 and 2.
- There are gaps between the attainment of pupils supported through pupil premium funding and their peers.
- Teaching is not consistently good. Teachers do not always provide well-matched work for some lower- and middle-attaining pupils.
- Weaknesses in the way some teachers plan their mathematics lessons prevent them building on what pupils have learnt earlier.
- Teachers do not consistently ensure pupils develop good spelling, punctuation and handwriting.
- Improvements to teaching and pupils' achievement have not been fast enough since the previous inspection.
- The school development plan does not focus sufficiently on improving reading, writing and mathematics.
- Subject leaders are not involved enough in checking and driving improvement in their subjects.
- Leadership requires improvement because it has not yet ensured that teaching is consistently good and that all groups of pupils make good progress.
- Governors are supportive but do not hold the school to account well enough. Some governors are new and have not had enough training.

The school has the following strengths

- Provision for children in the Nursery and Reception is good and this raises their attainment.
- Pupils make good progress in reading throughout the school.
- Pupils feel safe and behave well.
- The two deputy headteachers are having a positive impact on school improvement.
- Pupils enjoy opportunities to participate in a good range of sporting, musical and cultural activities.
- Staff work hard and are keen to improve.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 25 lessons; most were joint observations with senior leaders. They listened to a sample of pupils read from Years 1, 2 and 6.
- Inspectors held discussions with pupils, looked at a range of their work and examined the school's information on attainment and progress.
- Meetings were held with representatives of the governing body, senior leaders, teachers and a local authority representative.
- Inspectors considered the 25 responses to the online Parent View survey. They also spoke informally to parents and carers and took their views into account.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including plans for improvement, safeguarding arrangements, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and records of school leaders' observations of teaching.

Inspection team

Eileen Chadwick, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Liz Kissane	Additional inspector
Howard Dodd	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger-than-average-sized primary school with a nursery. The number on roll has risen since the last inspection. The early years department consists of a 90-place nursery and two Reception classes. It has two classes in all other years.
- The majority of pupils, just over a half, come from minority ethnic backgrounds, and the proportion with English as an additional language is well above the national average. The largest groups are White British and Indian, although there are many others.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of pupils in receipt of pupil premium funding (additional funding provided for looked-after children, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those with parents in the armed forces) is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Several new governors have recently been appointed, including the two new co-Chairs of the Governing Body.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better by:
 - strengthening the teaching of literacy by teachers, enabling pupils to consistently apply their phonics (knowledge of letters and their sounds) skills when writing
 - ensuring teachers fully match work in mathematics to the needs of middle- and lower-attaining pupils and address any gaps in pupils' skills and knowledge.
- Raise achievement and quicken pupils' progress by:
 - raising the proportions reaching average and higher levels in writing and mathematics
 - raising the attainment in writing and mathematics of pupils in receipt of the pupil premium
 - improving pupils' spelling, grammar, punctuation and handwriting
 - ensuring pupils spend enough time on writing and increase the amount of written work in pupils' books.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - making sure that subject leaders take more direct responsibility for their subject areas, particularly for improving the quality of teaching and for holding teams to account for the progress of the pupils in their subjects
 - making the school development plan more explicit about how achievement in English and mathematics will be improved
 - ensuring that governors receive training to help them to understand how well the school is performing and to hold the school to account.
- 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 pupils do not make consistently good progress in all subjects. After a good start in Nursery and Reception classes, progress is uneven in Key Stages 1 and 2.
- Most children start in the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are well below the levels typically found for their age. Good progress lifts their attainment so that the majority enter Year 1 with average levels of attainment. Pupils' attainment at the end of Years 2 and 6 is broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils write for a range of purposes in different subjects but, on occasions, weaker spelling, punctuation, grammar and untidy handwriting impair the quality of their work. Although the school has recently started to give pupils more opportunities for writing at length, there is too little written work in some pupils' books.
- Inspection shows that progress in mathematics is beginning to accelerate for higher attainers. However, progress slows for lower- and middle-attaining pupils when calculation tasks are too hard or pupils repeat too much of their earlier learning. Mathematical activities do not consistently build pupils' skills well enough in individual lessons and over time.
- Pupils eligible for pupil premium do not achieve well enough, especially in mathematics. In the latest Year 6 national tests, pupils' standards were average in writing. However, their standards were below average in reading and mathematics and these pupils were one year behind their peers. Inspection shows these pupils' attainment is now similar to their peers' in reading and writing, but remains below average in mathematics because progress is slow for a few lower- and middle-attaining pupils.
- Pupils of different ethnic groups, including those with English as an additional language, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, make progress similar to their peers. Small-group teaching speeds up the progress of these groups, but progress is uneven across the school.
- Scrutiny of pupils' work, lesson observations, hearing pupils read and the school's own data show that pupils are making good progress in reading throughout the school. Early indications show that pupils' attainment in the current Year 6 is above average. The systematic teaching of phonics (knowledge of letters and their sounds) in ability groups, regular opportunities to read in school and improved reading resources are all having a positive impact on raising reading standards.
- Throughout the school, pupils develop their communication and language skills particularly well. In Nursery and Reception, the stimulating array of activities and adults' very good knowledge of children's needs enable adults to provide worthwhile practical experiences finely tuned to individual needs in communication and language, physical, personal and mathematical development. Children's progress in writing and applying phonics to writing is particularly good.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because, although it is improving, it has not consistently been good across all subjects and so not all groups of pupils make the progress of which they are capable. While there is some stronger teaching, this is more consistent in the Early Years Foundation Stage than in Key Stages 1 and 2.
- Teaching is not always matched to pupils' needs. In mathematics, teachers do not consistently build pupils' skills in lessons. At times, pupils are expected to use skills which have not been taught, for example when tackling mathematical problems.
- While the grouping of pupils by their abilities in mathematics enables teachers to plan more readily for the ability range, on occasions, in mathematics sets, lower- and middle-attainers are all given the same level of tasks. Consequently, work is too hard for some and easy for others.

The lack of a structured scheme of work for teaching the steps in skills and knowledge in mathematical calculation limits teachers' ability to provide well-matched work.

- In literacy, the pace of learning sometimes slows when practical activities take up too much learning time and are insufficiently related to developing pupils' writing skills. Expectations of how much work pupils can produce in a set time are too low. On some occasions, teachers do not ensure pupils apply phonics before writing new words by helping them to pronounce words accurately and sounding them out.
- In phonics lessons, a strong consistency in teachers' methods leads to more good teaching. Good subject knowledge and robust planning enable teachers to build pupils' skills well. For example, most phonics lessons observed for different ability sets were good and tasks ensured new learning built well on pupils' previous skills.
- Higher-attaining pupils in a Year 2 literacy lesson made good progress in choosing phonics after correctly saying the sounds in new words in order to write sentences. Marking is developing well; although, at times, teachers do not remind pupils how to apply their phonics skills when spelling.
- In Nursery and Reception, inside and outside spaces are used well to promote good learning and there is a good balance between children's independent learning and adult-led tasks. In Reception, adult-led learning in small groups involves practical activities which broaden children's language and experience before the children investigate for themselves.
- In an excellent group session, children made rapid progress in recognising two- and three-dimensional shapes and spotting different properties such as the number of sides. 'Plan, do and review' enables children to develop their independent learning skills well through purposeful play.
- Teachers' use of teaching assistants is inconsistent. Some are deployed well, for example those supporting pupils in phonics. Those helping pupils with complex learning difficulties often provide good individualised support, but teaching assistants are sometimes restricted by the type of activities that teachers provide.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' good behaviour is an important reason this school is such a harmonious community. Relationships between pupils and teachers and between pupils are excellent and pupils from widely diverse backgrounds get on extremely well together. This is because the school places a strong emphasis on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils' behaviour is well managed and staff and pupils consistently apply the school's rules.
- Pupils enjoy school and have very positive attitudes to learning. This reflects the strong emphasis on ensuring, from the earliest days in the Nursery, they are very well cared for and there are interesting things to do.
- A few pupils with individual needs find it difficult to behave well for sustained periods. However, they are well supported by staff, and inspectors found strong evidence to show the effectiveness of the school's work over time with these pupils. Poor behaviour very rarely causes interruptions to the learning of others.
- Pupils are very courteous and learn to take great care of their school environment. They are usually very attentive in lessons, although their attention occasionally wanders when the pace of lessons slows or they become confused when they do not fully understand their learning purpose.
- Pupils feel safe and secure at school. They learn about forms of bullying and what to do to stay safe. They said that there is very little bullying and that any incidents that occur are dealt with quickly and effectively. Most parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire agree with this and say that behaviour is good.
- Attendance is average. The majority of pupils attend regularly and the school's stringent procedures for promoting good attendance and close working with families have ensured the amount of persistence absence is reducing.

The leadership and management require improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because the leadership of teaching has not been good enough and governors do not provide enough challenge to senior leaders. Governors are supportive but do not have a clear enough understanding of how well the school is doing. This limits their ability to challenge senior leaders.
- Subject leaders and middle leaders are at early stages of developing their roles in driving improvement in teaching and learning. Consequently, they are not having enough impact on improving standards and teaching.
- Subject leaders are knowledgeable but have not yet observed colleagues' lessons across the whole school, for example by checking the impact of phonics initiatives for improving writing. The systems for leaders and managers at all levels to work together to spread best practice are underdeveloped.
- The headteacher, well supported by the two deputy headteachers, has successfully identified key strengths and most areas for development.
- The deputy headteachers provide good leadership. Their impact can be seen in the increase in reading and phonics standards and children's good achievement in Nursery and Reception. The implementation of a robust assessment tracking system has led to the senior team's accurate view of the school's performance. This shows the school has the capacity to improve.
- The quality of teaching is regularly reviewed and the results are used to secure appropriate training to promote teachers' professional development. Teachers' pay is now being linked to their performance. However, the school development plan does not give sufficient attention to identifying specific actions for improving the teaching of literacy and numeracy.
- The school ensures there is no discrimination and successfully promotes the key values of inclusion, respect and tolerance. The curriculum is broad and balanced and helps to enhance pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The curriculum appeals to pupils' interests and provides strong opportunities for sport and music and for pupils to develop their understanding of cultures other than their own. However, not enough has been done to ensure there is robust progression in the development of pupils' calculation skills.
- The primary sports funding is being used to strengthen teachers' skills, provide more specialist teaching and promote greater participation in after-school sports. There are clear plans to evaluate the impact of this work on improving pupils' skills, health and well-being.
- The support from the local authority has been light. It has been strengthened from this term, so its impact on school improvement has yet to be seen. The school has employed private consultants for the last few years.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are currently reorganising under the two new Chairs of the Governing Body, but are not yet in a position to fully support and challenge the school. The governing body does not have a precise understanding of how the school's performance compares with that of other schools. Governors are monitoring the impact of funding on the achievement of those eligible for pupil premium. However, this is limited because some governors are new and not enough have had training in understanding information about pupils' attainment and progress. Governors also recognise that some of them are unclear about how performance management, salary progression and underperformance are being tackled in the school. Safeguarding policies and practices are robust and the governing body ensures that they meet statutory requirements.

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	118258
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	426456

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	464
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chairs	Anna Jordan and Michael Northern
Headteacher	Andrew Sparks
Date of previous school inspection	14 September 2011
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