

Palfrey Junior School

Dale Street, Walsall, West Midlands, WS1 4AH

Inspection dates 5–6 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures.

- The headteacher and senior leaders have not addressed the key issues from the previous inspection and so the school's effectiveness has declined.
- Achievement is inadequate. Pupils enter the school with attainment that is significantly above the national average but leave with attainment that is significantly below it.
- Teaching is inadequate over time, and pupils make very slow progress in reading, writing and mathematics across the school.
- Teachers do not assess accurately how quickly pupils learn, especially the more able.
- Teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve and pupils are not consistently stretched in lessons.
- The pace of pupils' learning is too slow. This is often because pupils are not settled quickly to work and teachers' introductions to lessons are frequently too lengthy.
- Behaviour and safety require improvement because pupils do not participate actively enough in lessons. They occasionally lose attention when they find lessons are not interesting.
- Leaders at different levels in the school do not rigorously check on the quality of teaching and the progress of pupils.
- Over time, the school has not had an accurate method of tracking pupils' progress that would help identify and tackle any underachievement.
- The governing body does not have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. It does not hold the headteacher and leaders to account well enough for the achievement of pupils.

The school has the following strengths

- The acting headteacher has brought a new drive to bringing about improvements, although the impact of this has yet to be seen.
- Pupils are generally polite and cooperate well with staff and each other. They report that they feel safe, enjoy school and are keen to do well.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 24 lessons, three of which were joint observations undertaken with senior leaders; twelve teachers were observed.
- Meetings were held with the acting headteacher and other senior leaders, members of the governing body, a representative from the local authority and a group of pupils.
- Inspectors examined a range of evidence including: the school's safeguarding procedures; school data tracking pupils' progress; the quality of work in pupils' books; and the school's own judgements about teaching and pupils' achievement.
- There were not enough responses from parents to the Parent View survey on the Ofsted website for inspectors to analyse. However, inspectors took into account the findings of the school's own parental survey.

Inspection team

James Henry, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Amanda Simpson

Additional Inspector

Steven Cartlidge

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Information about this school

- Palfrey Junior is larger than schools of this type.
- Almost all the pupils are from minority ethnic groups, with significant numbers from Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi backgrounds.
- Almost all the pupils transfer from one local infant school.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is above the national average, while the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium is above the national average. This is additional funding in this school for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and in local authority care.
- The school meets the current government's floor standard which sets the minimum requirements for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Key Stage 2.
- The headteacher has been absent from the school since July 2013 and was not present during the inspection. The deputy headteacher, who joined the school in April 2013, was appointed acting headteacher in September 2013. A deputy headteacher from another local school is seconded to the school for two days a week to support the acting headteacher.
- Inspectors were aware during this inspection that serious allegations of a child protection nature were being investigated by the appropriate authorities. Whilst Ofsted does not have the power to investigate incidents of this kind, actions taken by the setting in response to the incident were considered alongside the other evidence available at the time of the inspection to inform inspectors' judgements.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to be at least good by ensuring teachers:
 - assess accurately pupils' learning in order to plan and adapt lessons that match their abilities
 - have higher expectations of what pupils can achieve, particularly the more able
 - provide a brisker start to lessons and deploy teaching assistants more effectively to support pupils' learning
 - provide activities that better hold the interest and attention of pupils
 - correct pupils' mistakes in punctuation, spelling and basic grammar consistently.
- Raise achievement in mathematics and in writing by ensuring that:
 - pupils are fully challenged in the tasks they are given and are provided with suitable opportunities to investigate and learn for themselves, particularly the more able
 - pupils understand how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve
 - pupils are provided with ample opportunities to practise and develop their basic skills in grammar, punctuation, spelling and writing at length across a range of subjects
 - pupils are taught basic mathematical concepts so they can reason logically and solve mathematical problems
 - gaps in attainment are closed rapidly for pupils supported through pupil premium and for those with special educational needs when compared with other pupils in the school.

- Improve the quality and impact of leadership and management, including governance, by ensuring that:
 - the governing body has a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, especially the achievement of different groups of pupils, and provides rigorous challenge that effectively holds senior leaders to account
 - the governing body reviews regularly all required statutory policies
 - leaders at all levels consistently check on the quality of teaching and provide feedback that is helps teachers to improve their lessons
 - leaders are more effective in sharing the good practice that exists in the school
 - senior leaders use accurate assessments to track the progress of different groups of pupils in order to identify and tackle any underachievement and hold teachers to account for the progress of the pupils in their classes.

An external review of governance should be undertaken, to include a specific focus on the school's use of the pupil premium, in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- Over time, all groups of pupils, including those from all minority ethnic backgrounds, have made inadequate progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the time that they leave the school. During this inspection, lesson observations, the work in pupils' books and hearing pupils read showed most current pupils are not doing any better.
- Pupils enter the school with attainment that is significantly above the national average and leave with attainment that is significantly below the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. They make very poor progress.
- Pupils supported through the pupil premium and disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make inadequate progress as the result of poor provision.
- The gap between those supported by the pupil premium and other groups in the school is not closing quickly enough. Consequently, in 2013, those Year 6 pupils supported by the pupil premium were at least two terms behind all pupils nationally in reading and writing and approximately a year behind in mathematics.
- The school does not promote equality of opportunity effectively. The school is failing to ensure that all groups of pupils receive an acceptable standard of education and so they do not achieve well.
- Results show that most more-able pupils are not achieving the higher levels of which they are capable in the national tests at the end of Year 6, particularly in writing.
- Pupils are making poor progress due to inadequate teaching. They are not provided with enough opportunities to undertake tasks that require them to think and research for themselves, particularly the more able. This means that their skills are underdeveloped. For example, pupils are not able to use their mathematical skills well enough to solve real-life problems.
- While pupils do have different levels and targets in their books, they are not helped to understand how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.
- Progress is better in reading than in writing and mathematics for all groups of pupils, including those from Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi backgrounds. This is partly because pupils are not given consistent opportunities to practise their basic skills in grammar, punctuation, spelling, writing at length and mathematics across a range of subjects. Pupils do not have a good understanding of basic mathematical concepts so they cannot reason logically and solve mathematical problems.

The quality of teaching

is inadequate

- Inadequate teaching means that pupils make slow progress over time. Pupils' work reveals teachers' assessments of pupils' abilities are inaccurate, particularly in writing and mathematics.
- Teachers have low expectations of what pupils can achieve, particularly the more able. Teachers do not adapt their planning and lessons to stretch pupils' thinking and understanding. Pupils are too often given work that is too easy and repetitive. They lose interest and are not moved on quickly enough in lessons.
- Teaching assistants are deployed appropriately to support disabled pupils or those with special educational needs. However, teachers do not always make best use of the skills of teaching assistants to support pupils' learning, particularly at the beginning of lessons.
- As a result of effective guidance from the acting headteacher, marking is beginning to improve. Teachers give pupils written advice on how to improve their work. Pupils sometimes respond to teachers' comments, but pupils are not given enough opportunities to respond to the guidance they are given.
- Mistakes in punctuation, spelling and grammar are not always corrected. Consequently, pupils, including the more able, repeat simple mistakes in their writing, such as forgetting capital letters

and full stops in sentences.

- No inadequate teaching was observed during the inspection. Some effective teaching was seen, particularly in Years 3 and 6. In these classes, teachers use question and answer sessions in lessons to help pupils understand what they are expected to learn.
- As a result, pupils' attention wanders and pupils do not settle down quickly to work, especially those who are capable of undertaking tasks where they could learn for themselves.
- Relationships in lessons are positive, with pupils cooperating well with each other and their teachers.

The behaviour and safety of pupils requires improvement

- Pupils are not given enough opportunities to show they can manage their own behaviour. Pupils occasionally lose attention when lessons are too dull and activities do not hold their interests.
- Pupils are keen to do well in school. During the inspection, pupils were seen to generally behave well in lessons and around the school, with no disruption to learning observed.
- Until recently, up-to-date records of instances of poor behaviour and how this was dealt with were not routinely kept. The acting headteacher has begun to change this by introducing a new approach to managing behaviour that pupils fully appreciate and understand. This includes rewarding good behaviour and recording measured sanctions for any inappropriate behaviour. However, this is a very recent initiative and does not give a clear picture of behaviour over time.
- Pupils say they feel safe and enjoy school. They say that there has been some bullying in the past but this has now stopped. They have confidence in the acting headteacher and staff to deal with any of their concerns. The school helps pupils to keep themselves safe through activities such as e-safety and road safety lessons.
- Most of the parents who completed the school's questionnaire for parents felt that their child was safe at school and that the school ensured pupils behaved well.
- Pupils are polite and welcoming. Relationships are good throughout the school, with pupils from different ethnic backgrounds mixing and playing well together.
- Attendance is broadly in line with the national average.

The leadership and management are inadequate

- Leaders have not addressed the key issues from the previous inspection. They do not rigorously check on the quality of teaching and the achievement of pupils. Weak governance and the track record of decline indicate that the school's leaders have not demonstrated the capacity to improve further.
- This has resulted in pupils making inadequate progress over a sustained period of time.
- The governing body shares the responsibility for this because it has not held the headteacher and senior leaders to account for the declining standards.
- Over time, the headteacher and senior leaders have not tracked accurately the progress of different groups of pupils in order to identify and tackle any underachievement and hold teachers to account for the progress of the pupils in their classes.
- Leaders with different levels of responsibility do not consistently check on the quality of teaching in order to provide feedback that is effective in helping teachers to improve their lessons. The good practice that exists in the school is not effectively shared.
- The acting headteacher, supported by the seconded deputy headteacher, has given senior and middle leaders clearer roles and responsibilities. The acting headteacher has brought a new drive to raise expectations of what pupils can and should achieve. She has a clear understanding of the difficulties facing the school. She is now rigorously checking on teaching in lessons, but this has not had a full impact on improving teaching. A new tracking procedure, based on accurate assessments of pupils' abilities, has been recently introduced, but is not yet used by all teachers.

- The curriculum is inadequate in meeting pupils' needs, especially in English and mathematics. However, it promotes suitably pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, pupils visit different places of worship and sites of interest, such as Lichfield Cathedral when studying different periods of history.
- There are links with a local Roman Catholic school which allows pupils from different religious backgrounds to share different customs. This is also an example of how the school fosters good relationships within the wider community.
- The school uses the additional sports funding to employ sports coaches to run extra activities that are increasing pupils' participation in sport. Pupils are involved in a variety of sporting competitions, such as a city-wide football league. However, the school has no evidence of the difference this is making to the health and well-being of pupils.
- Staff are trained in child protection procedures, with adults appropriately vetted before being allowed to work in the school.
- The local authority and the local high school academy supporting the school are rightly concerned about declining standards. Both organisations have been pro-active in attempting to provide support. For example, the local authority made arrangements for the secondment of the deputy headteacher. English and mathematics consultants are being provided to help improve the quality of teaching. These initiatives have been more effective since the appointment of the acting headteacher but have not had an impact on improving pupils' achievement.
- Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - A new governing body has been established this term. However, over time, the governing body has not focused on checking the attainment and progress of pupils, including those supported by the pupil premium funding. The governors do not know if this funding is being spent effectively in raising standards for this group of pupils. Governors have neither sufficient understanding of achievement information nor the quality of teaching; they have not held the headteacher to account through effective performance management procedures. Performance management systems are not robust enough to ensure any salary increases for staff are fully justified. Training is not regularly undertaken to help governors fulfil their roles. Not all statutory policies are regularly reviewed and approved, for example the admission arrangements for pupils. The policies and procedures for safeguarding pupils are fully up to date.

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	104160
Local authority	Walsall
Inspection number	426949

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	360
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mohammed Afzal
Headteacher	Gary Thornton
Date of previous school inspection	12 January 2012
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