

Holne Chase Primary School

Buckingham Road, Bletchley, Milton Keynes, MK35HP

Inspection dates 12–13 December 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		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Too few pupils have made consistently good progress over time at Key Stage 2. Consequently, by the time pupils leave at the end of Year 6, their attainment is below national averages, especially in writing and in mathematics.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs do not always achieve as well their peers in school. There is also some minor variability in how well pupils in different year groups achieve.
- In the past, the assessments made of how well pupils were achieving were not consistently accurate or precise enough.
- Teaching is not yet consistently good. Work is not always set at the right level as planning focuses too much on what is to be taught rather than what pupils should learn. As a result, there is not always enough challenge for different groups of pupils.
- Leaders and managers have not secured all of the necessary improvements from the previous inspection quickly enough.
- The governing body does not have enough detailed knowledge about how well pupils achieve compared with all schools nationally or a clear grasp of what the main priorities for further improvement are. Consequently, governors have not held the school to account with sufficient rigour.

The school has the following strengths:

- Leaders are becoming increasingly effective in promoting and sharing good practice and intervening when pupils are underperforming.
- Rates of progress and the quality of teaching have both begun to accelerate in the recent past.
- There is a strengthening partnership with parents and carers and the wider community.
- Pupils' behaviour both in lessons and around the school site is consistently good. Pupils increasingly enjoy coming to school, feel safe and are typically positive about their learning.
- Achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1 is at least in line with national expectations and improving.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was initially designated as the fifth monitoring visit since the school was made subject to special measures. It was subsequently converted into a section 8 deemed section 5 inspection.
- During the inspection, 12 part-lessons were observed, most of which were conducted jointly with school leaders. Meetings were held with: senior leaders, including the headteacher; members of the governing body, including the Chair of the Governing Body; two groups of pupils; and a senior officer from the local authority. Inspectors also listened to pupils read.
- Inspectors looked at: planning and quality assurance documentation; documents relating to performance management arrangements; governing body minutes; assessment information and examples of pupils' work; and a range of policy documents.
- There were 12 responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire. The team also took into account the results of the school's own survey of parents' and carers' views.
- As this inspection began as a monitoring inspection, questionnaires were not circulated to staff and so their views of the school were collected during conversations held during the course of the inspection.

Inspection team

Ken Bush, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Sheila-Ann Boyle

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

- Holne Chase is similar in size to most primary schools.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium (additional funding for specific groups, including those known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority) represents about one fifth of pupils in the school. This is just below the proportion found nationally but is rising. However, in Year 6 in the last full academic year, the numbers were very small.
- Just over three-quarters of pupils are of White British heritage. There are small proportions from a range of other ethnic groups.
- In 2012/13, the school met the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. In the most recent full academic year (for which the results are yet to be validated) floor standards were not met.
- There have been numerous changes to teaching and leadership posts over the past 18 months. The composition and leadership of the governing body have also undergone extensive change.
- The school was made subject to special measures in March 2012. In the four monitoring visits which took place up until July 2013, progress in securing the necessary improvements was judged to be 'satisfactory' on each occasion. The current headteacher took up post in April 2012.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is typically at least good by ensuring that:
 - lessons have sufficient challenge for all groups of pupils, especially, but not exclusively, in mathematics
 - planning focuses on what pupils need to learn rather than what is to be taught
 - pupils can readily understand the purpose of their lessons
 - all teaching assistants have the necessary skills and expertise to provide effective support and challenge to pupils, especially those who are disabled or who have special educational needs.
- Raise achievement so that it is typically at least good by:
 - reducing minor variations in rates of progress of different groups, especially with regard to disabled pupils and those with special educational needs
 - providing all pupils with more opportunities to develop, practise and apply their writing and mathematical skills in a wide range of subjects
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills in information and communications technology (ICT).
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management so that necessary improvements are made more rapidly by ensuring that:
 - all staff are able consistently to make accurate assessments of how well pupils achieve

- school improvement planning states with greater precision the specific actions which are needed to secure improvement
- the governing body gains a fuller understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses in order to better hold leaders to account.

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

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because rates of progress at Key Stage 2 over time have been too variable and, as a result, the majority of pupils have not made good progress.
- In both 2012 and 2013, the attainment of Year 6 pupils was below national averages in writing and in mathematics. This is because these pupils experienced most of their teaching at the time prior to the school going into special measures. This legacy of weak teaching severely restricted pupils' potential to achieve well and, consequently, they were unable to progress quickly, despite some improvements in teaching when they were in their final year at the school.
- Pupils' writing and mathematical skills, in particular, have not been developed securely enough, although inspection evidence indicates clearly that this is now beginning to change.
- Different groups of pupils, including those of ethnic minority groups, progress at a broadly similar rate to that of their peers. However, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are not improving at quite so strong a rate as others are now starting to do.
- Pupils who are supported through the pupil premium are making better progress than in recent years as any underperformance is now being identified more quickly and suitable intervention programmes put in place. As a result, gaps with other pupils are beginning to narrow in most year groups.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage get off to a solid start and make clear gains in their learning from their average to below average starting points. The majority are well prepared when they enter Key Stage 1, including with their early reading and number work.
- Pupils in Key Stage 1 reach at least average levels of attainment by the end of Year 2, including in reading. The positive outcomes of the screening check in Year 1 in 2012 and 2013 indicate that the teaching of phonics (the sounds letters make) is much improved since the previous inspection.
- The additional funding for physical education and sport is beginning to make a contribution to greater pupil participation and their well-being.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because over time, pupils have not made consistently good progress in a range of subjects, especially at Key Stage 2.
- Despite some recent improvements, tasks are not always set at the right level for pupils different abilities, especially in mathematics. Too much planning is still focused on what is to be taught rather than what is to be learned. Most lessons do begin with a reference to 'learning intentions' but these are sometimes too complex for all pupils to understand readily. Moreover, in some lessons seen during the inspection, these were referred to only indirectly or not at all.
- The teaching of mathematics has not been consistently effective over time as not all staff have ensured in their planning and delivery of lessons that pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills are firmly in place.
- However, in a successful Year 6 mathematics lesson on factors seen during the inspection, pupils

responded well to the opportunity of choosing their own level of challenge. Most made significant gains in their understanding of number and appreciated the chance to work with partners. This also developed their speaking and listening and personal skills well.

- The teaching of reading is a growing strength. The daily guided reading sessions experienced by all classes have raised the profile of reading for a range of different purposes. Most pupils are able to discuss their reading preferences with confidence and discrimination.
- The teaching of writing is improving but at a slower rate than reading. Basic knowledge and skills are developing well as seen in the above national average results in the 'grammar, punctuation and spelling' test taken by Year 6 in 2013. However, as with mathematics, pupils do not routinely have enough opportunities to develop, practise and apply their skills in a wide range of subjects.
- Teaching assistants provide useful support to classes in most cases. However, not all have the necessary skills and expertise to be fully effective when leading group sessions, especially for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. During the inspection, some intervention sessions for these pupils and others of low ability lacked challenge and rigour.
- Several aspects of teaching have improved notably since the previous inspection. Teachers are becoming more adept in their use of questioning to promote deeper levels of understanding and the use of plenary sessions to gauge how well pupils have understood their work has become more purposeful. The quality of marking and more effective use of pupil targets are enabling pupils to be much clearer about what they need to do to improve their work in order to move to the next level.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Over the course of the five visits to the school when the school was in special measures, pupils' behaviour in lessons has been seen to be typically good. Attitudes to learning are consistently strong and pupils remain keen and willing to participate enthusiastically, even in lessons where teaching is not entirely successful. Where pupils are periodically less than fully engaged, this manifests itself in minor inattentiveness, rather than disruption.
- Conduct at lunchtime in the dining room and around the site generally is of a high standard. Pupils are courteous to staff, visitors and to one another which contributes well to a positive learning environment around the school. Pupils affirmed that the behaviour seen on this and previous visits is typical of what normally occurs. Exclusions are extremely rare and only one has occurred since the school went into special measures.
- Pupils spoken to during the inspection were unanimous in their view that they feel safe and that bullying is very rare. They have a high level of confidence in the ability of staff to manage classroom behaviour well. Pupils are knowledgeable about how to keep safe beyond the school, including regarding text messaging and internet safety.
- Pupils enjoy school life as reflected in their above average levels of attendance. Parents, carers and staff confirm that good behaviour is a strength of the school.

The leadership and management require improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because the necessary improvements identified from the previous inspection have not all been secured quickly enough. Consequently, neither achievement nor the quality of teaching are yet good.
- Self-evaluation is broadly accurate and the overall quality and rigour of the school improvement planning process have moved on significantly since the school went into special measures. However, the plan does not always identify precisely enough the specific next steps needed to secure improvement once interim evaluations have been made. This has been a contributory

factor in governors' lack of clarity about what the current improvement priorities are.

- Until relatively recently, assessments of how well pupils are achieving were not sufficiently robust or reliable. For example, the Year 6 pupils who left in July 2013 were expected to achieve much better results than actually proved to be the case. The school is aware of this deficiency and has already taken steps to address it.
 - Since her appointment, the headteacher has provided the school with a clear vision based on long-term sustainable improvement with consistently good teaching as the platform. Her efforts to achieve this quickly have, in part, been restricted by high staff turnover and frequent changes in leadership roles. However, with more settled staffing this term and a new leadership team mostly in place since April, the pace of improvement has begun to accelerate. This is evident in better teaching and curriculum planning and greater capacity to promote and share good practice, especially by phase/subject leaders.
 - Staff morale is high and teachers are responding positively to the higher expectations being made of them, including robust arrangements for performance management. Only those teachers who meet the required high standards, and whose pupils achieve their goals, as judged by the headteacher, are able to move up the salary scale.
 - The curriculum is much improved. There a wide range of cross-curricular topics in place which make pupils' learning experience more coherent than in the past. This is well supported by trips and visits. On the day before the inspection, pupils in Years 5 and 6 visited the Houses of Parliament as part of a citizenship project on 'rights and responsibilities'. This is an example of how pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well promoted. Pupils' skills in ICT are not well developed since, as with mathematics and writing, they have too few opportunities to acquire and make use of them in different subjects.
 - The school has a strengthening partnership with parents, carers and the local community.
 - The local authority has provided useful guidance and support for the school since special measures were imposed, notably in helping to broker additional subject-specific expertise and assisting in securing new appointments.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has begun to increase its effectiveness from a very low base since the school went into special measures. Frequent changes in membership and leadership roles have restricted the rate of progress, to some extent, although the pace of improvement is accelerating under the current Chair of the Governing Body who is relatively new in post. Nevertheless, the governing body as a whole still lacks detailed knowledge about how well the school is performing compared with all schools nationally and about the impact being made by pupil premium and sports funding. There is also not enough understanding of precisely what the school needs to do in order to improve, including regarding the quality of teaching.
 - The governing body has ensured that arrangements for the performance management of staff are securely in place. Governors are also aware that teachers should be financially rewarded only when there is secure evidence that pupils are achieving well in their classes.
 - Governors discharge their statutory duties well. They ensure that the school is committed to providing equal opportunities for all pupils and is free from discrimination. Safeguarding arrangements meet all current legal requirements.
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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	110290
Local authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	423892

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	275
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Skingley
Headteacher	Jo Klimek
Date of previous school inspection	1–2 March 2012
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