

# Molehill Copse Primary Academy

Hereford Road, Maidstone, ME15 7ND

**Inspection dates** 3–4 December 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	<b>Inadequate</b>	<b>4</b>
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
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 has serious weaknesses. It is not good because

- Too many pupils make inadequate progress over time, particularly more-able pupils, and progress is uneven across classes.
- Despite recent improvement, teaching over time has failed to ensure that pupils have made consistently rapid and sustained progress.
- Pupils' behaviour is improving rapidly, but some pupils are not always ready and willing to learn, and this aspect of behaviour requires improvement.
- Pupils' attendance is improving, but the poor attendance of a significant minority of pupils limits their learning and attendance overall is too low.
- Leadership and management require improvement because, despite some improvements, leaders, managers and governors have not been effective in raising pupils' attainment and improving teaching sufficiently.

### The school has the following strengths

- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well.
- The specialist hearing impaired unit provides well for pupils with hearing impairment.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 21 lessons, four jointly with the headteacher.
- Inspectors met with three different groups of pupils and listened to pupils read. They discussed the work of the school with members of the management board. They also held discussions with school staff, including senior and middle leaders. A telephone conversation was held with a representative of the Academies Enterprise Trust.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school's information on pupils' recent progress, planning documents, checks carried out by leaders on teaching, and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.
- The inspection team reviewed the responses to 27 staff questionnaires completed during the inspection.
- Inspectors took account of responses to the academy parent and pupil surveys. They also spoke to parents at the start of the school day. Only one parent responded to the Ofsted online questionnaire Parent View.

## Inspection team

Robert Ellis, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Gary Kirkley

Additional Inspector

Josephine Lewis

Additional Inspector

## Full report

*In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.*

### Information about this school

- The academy is part of the Academies Enterprise Trust and is a larger-than-average primary school.
- The academy includes a small specialist unit for 12 pupils with severe and profound hearing impairment.
- The Academies Enterprise Trust replaced the governing body with a smaller management board in October 2013.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is above the national average.
- Most pupils are White British and the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is well below average. Very few pupils are at the early stages of learning English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported by school action is above the national average. The proportion of pupils supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is high.
- In 2013 the academy did not meet the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The academy runs a breakfast club which was visited as part of the inspection.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the achievement of pupils and increase the proportion of teaching that is consistently good and outstanding by:
  - giving all pupils regular opportunities to correct and improve their work after it has been marked
  - promoting pupils' resilience so that they have high aspirations, and are able to play a full part in lessons and can judge their own progress accurately
  - use assessment information more effectively to plan work that is consistently matched to the needs and capabilities of the different groups of pupils and check regularly that pupils are making the progress that they should make
  - ensuring that all lessons are delivered at a brisk pace, motivating pupils to do well and encouraging them to have positive attitudes to learning.
- Build on improvements to attendance to ensure all pupils attend as regularly as they can.
- Strengthen further the capacity of leadership and management at all levels to sustain improvement by:
  - rapidly implementing the new management board's plans for asking challenging questions and holding academy staff to account for improvements in teaching and pupils' achievement
  - creating an effective and sustainable long-term structure for leadership, management and governance so that the academy is led and managed well at all levels.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### is inadequate

- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with knowledge, skills and abilities well below the levels typically seen for their ages. Most make expected progress up to the end of Key Stage 1, but rates of progress are inconsistent as pupils move through the school, so many pupils do not make up enough ground to achieve their full potential.
- Results in national tests in 2013 showed standards were low and too few pupils reached the higher Level 5. Key Stage 2 average point scores were more than four points below the national average. Too many pupils are currently working at levels which are well below the expectation for their ages and are not showing signs of making up lost ground rapidly.
- Standards in English and mathematics in Key Stage 2 are improving. School information and current work show that pupils' progress is accelerating in some classes so that, although attainment is below national averages, the gaps with national averages are closing.
- Most disabled pupils, including those pupils supported by the hearing impaired unit, and those pupils supported by school action or school action plus are making progress at similar rates to the others in school. Pupils who have a statement of special educational needs are supported well and make progress in line with their starting points and disabilities. Gaps in attainment between all the other different groups are small.
- Improvements to teaching the sounds that letters make (phonics) are helping younger pupils with their reading and writing. Pupils were observed applying their phonic skills to read unfamiliar words and to help with the accuracy of their writing.
- The achievement of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium varies between year groups. Most have made good progress because the extra funding is used effectively to provide good individual and small-group support to ensure that pupils catch up, particularly in mathematics. Other pupils in this group have made less progress because of the weaker teaching they experience in their ordinary classes. Overall, this group of pupils is working at similar levels to their peer groups in both English and mathematics and the small gaps that remain are closing.

### The quality of teaching

### is inadequate

- Teaching is inadequate because, despite recent improvements, the impact of teaching over time has not enabled pupils to make rapid and sustained progress.
- Pupils do not always have enough time to practise and develop the skills they need for the next steps in their learning in lessons, because some teachers do not realise that they are ready to do this.
- Marking is improving across the school and books are marked regularly. However, pupils are not always given sufficient planned opportunities to respond to the teachers' comments. This means improvements are not made consistently.
- The majority of teachers have appropriate expectations of what pupils can achieve and provide stimulating and engaging lessons where tasks and activities are pitched at the right level for the different groups of pupils in the class. In these lessons, pupils respond positively and make good or better progress.
- In the less successful lessons the pace is too slow and pupils are not challenged sufficiently, particularly the most able pupils. In these lessons, teachers do not check pupils' progress often enough, so difficulties and misconceptions are not identified quickly enough and further time is lost.
- Teaching assistants mostly provide good support, particularly for the pupils who may otherwise underachieve. Most use questions and prompts well to support pupils' learning. However, in a few cases, they intervene too quickly and do not allow pupils to develop independence.
- The hearing impaired unit provides high quality support for pupils with hearing impairment.

Activities are planned so that they meet the pupils' diverse needs particularly well. Pupils' personal development is promoted strongly. Pupils join mainstream classes when their speech and language capabilities permit and other pupils attend the unit to join in with lessons there. Pupils who attend the hearing impaired unit said they enjoyed school and there was very little they would want to change.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** requires improvement

- Behaviour requires improvement because too many pupils take a relaxed view about working independently. Some lack resilience and will stop working at the first challenge and, too often, pupils who do not understand what they are expected to do will not seek help but wait for an adult to notice them. Others waste time with unnecessary talking and do not concentrate on the task they have been set. Too many pupils do not listen well and, consequently, are then unable to follow the instructions given by the teacher.
- Staff management of pupils' behaviour is consistent and usually very effective. Most pupils are polite and welcoming and pupils told inspectors that the calm and orderly atmosphere observed during the inspection was not unusual.
- Attendance has improved but, despite the academy's best efforts, some parents do not ensure that their children attend regularly so attendance remains below average. Attendance is monitored closely and good attendance is celebrated and rewarded. The academy has had some success in improving the attendance of boys and pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in the academy. They understand that some situations are potentially unsafe and have effective strategies to keep themselves safe. For example, younger pupils were aware of how to keep safe when crossing the road and the importance of washing your hands before eating to avoid infection.
- Pupils are trained as playground mediators. Pupils planned and organised fundraising activities for a school in Zambia. Some pupils who spoke to inspectors felt they would like to be more involved in making decisions about changes to the academy.
- A more consistent approach to managing behaviour has resulted in pupils being aware of the higher expectations regarding their behaviour and the consequences of misbehaving. This has led to a significant reduction in behaviour incidents and exclusions.

### **The leadership and management** requires improvement

- Leadership is not yet good because leaders and managers at all levels have not had sufficient impact on pupils' achievement and on the quality of teaching, both of which require significant improvement.
- Teachers who are not teaching consistently well are challenged strongly and supported to improve. The school can show examples of where coaching and support have enabled teachers to improve their practice and become more effective in the classroom. However, there remains too much variability in the quality of teaching.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher share responsibility for managing provision for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. The list of pupils who are identified as needing support has been reviewed and the proportion of pupils needing additional support has been reduced. A new special educational needs coordinator has been appointed to join the school in January 2014. The hearing impaired unit is led and managed well.
- The academy has begun to review all aspects of its work more robustly and has appropriate systems to track and monitor pupils' progress. Leaders have an accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas for improvement and they are now acting to address any weaknesses. Senior leaders recognise that more consistently good or better teaching is needed and the small residue of inadequate teaching must be eradicated.
- Pupils are taught a broad range of subjects and topics, supported by a good range of extra-curricular clubs and activities. Pupils told inspectors how much they enjoyed visits to local places

of interest, including Leeds Castle, and residential trips. There are good opportunities for pupils to explore different faiths and cultures and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well through a variety of classroom and other activities.

- Additional funding for sports is being used to promote swimming and sports coaches have been employed to work alongside classroom teachers to improve provision for physical education.
- The views of parents and pupils are sought and the most recent questionnaires show pupils and parents have generally positive views of the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The previous governing body was challenging the academy to improve, but it was decided that a sharper focus on improvement and more robust governance were needed in order for the academy to achieve its targets. Governors have ensured that pupil premium funding has been spent for the purposes for which it is intended. Gaps in attainment between the different groups of pupils have closed rapidly. Governors have ensured that safeguarding meets requirements. The academy has implemented appropriate systems for the management of teachers' performance and salary progression and rewards are linked directly to teachers' impact on pupils' progress.
  - The new management board has already begun to look closely at pupils' progress and the quality of teaching, and plans to review the academy's progress every six weeks. An improvement adviser from the Academies Enterprise Trust supports the board's efforts in monitoring and evaluating the academy's work. Steps have been taken to strengthen leadership and management further and new interim leadership arrangements are planned for January 2014. Parents have been invited to meet with members of the management board and the school council has been invited to make a presentation to parents regarding its hopes and ambitions for the pupils and the academy.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	138195
<b>Local authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	408825

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>School category</b>	Non-maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	286
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Eric Watts
<b>Headteacher</b>	Lee Round
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01622 751129
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