

Westgate Primary School

Summerhill Road, Dartford, Kent, DA1 2LP

Inspection dates

11–12 December 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.

- Standards in reading, writing and mathematics have been too low for too long.
- Achievement is inadequate. Too many pupils make progress which is too slow for them to catch up to the nationally expected levels.
- Teaching is inadequate because it has not enabled pupils to make enough progress.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can and should achieve are too low.
- In lessons, there is often not enough time for pupils to complete their work. Consequently, pupils' attention wanes and they become distracted.
- Work set in class is not challenging enough for all pupils because too often all are given the same tasks to do, rather than work linked to their varied abilities.
- Marking does not always tell pupils how to improve their work.
- Leaders and managers, including governors, have not shown that they are able to bring about the necessary improvements to pupils' achievement at a rapid rate.
- While the school has ambitious improvement targets, the plans to achieve them have not been rigorously implemented so that key deadlines have been missed.
- Areas for improvement, identified at the previous inspection, have still not been addressed; the school has therefore not shown the capacity to secure future improvements.
- The school's view of its own performance is inaccurate and leaders have been too generous in their assessment of how well it is doing.
- The governing body has not challenged the headteacher effectively enough to bring about the necessary improvements.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils are well taught in Reception, enabling them to make good progress in their learning.
- The school is a welcoming and friendly place, where pupils are mostly eager to learn. Pupils enjoy school, behave well in the playground, care for each other and feel safe.
- Pupils benefit from a wide range of educational visits and after-school activities.
- Attendance is above average and has improved since the previous inspection.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 14 lessons; five were joint observations with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and observed the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make). They also observed the teaching of small groups of pupils who need extra help with their work.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, subject and phase leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and one other governor, and with a representative of the local authority. An inspector met with a group of pupils and the team spoke informally with many pupils during the inspection.
- There were not enough responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, to be representative, but inspectors spoke to parents at the beginning of the school day to ascertain their view of the school. In addition, inspectors considered the results of the school's own recent survey of parents' opinions about pupils' behaviour and analysed 31 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors looked at the work in pupils' books and considered information about pupils' current progress.
- A number of documents were examined, including the school's evaluation of its own performance, school improvement plans, files relating to safeguarding, attendance and behaviour, records of visits from the local authority and the monitoring of teaching.

Inspection team

Richard Potts, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Teresa Davies

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.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers.

Information about this school

- Westgate Primary is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is broadly average, although the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and speaking English as an additional language is above average.
- An average proportion of pupils is supported by the pupil premium (the additional government funding given to schools for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, in local authority care or having a parent in the armed forces).
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to at least good by:
 - making better use of time in lessons to enable pupils to complete work that challenges them and increases their knowledge, understanding and skills
 - making sure that lessons and activities are sufficiently challenging and engaging for pupils of all abilities
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can and should achieve and the rate at which learning should proceed
 - improving marking so that teachers' comments make it clear to pupils how they can improve their work, and providing time for them to make improvements.
- Rapidly accelerate progress in reading, writing and mathematics, particularly for boys, by:
 - providing opportunities for pupils to write well and at length, and to apply and develop their mathematical skills in meaningful contexts in subjects other than English and mathematics
 - closing the gaps in achievement between pupils supported through the pupil premium and those who have special educational needs, and other pupils
 - ensuring that pupils in Key Stage 2 use phonics skills systematically to read difficult words.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, by:
 - using assessment information about pupils' progress more accurately and quickly to identify gaps in pupils' learning and to ensure that teachers address these
 - increasing the accuracy of monitoring and evaluation of progress in those areas where pupils underperform most significantly and hold subject and phase leaders more effectively to account for bringing about improvement
 - ensuring staff pay increases are linked to better performance
 - ensuring that governors hold the school robustly 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

is inadequate

- After a brisk start in Reception, the pace of pupils' progress slows, such that by the end of Year 6, attainment is well below expectations and achievement is poor.
- Since the previous inspection, progress in reading, writing and mathematics has been inconsistent in Key Stage 1. Attainment is low by the end of Year 2, especially in mathematics, and standards in 2013 were significantly below the national average. In mathematics, this was equivalent to pupils being two terms behind where they should have been.
- Pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stage 2 has declined sharply over a three-year period and is significantly below the national averages, particularly in mathematics. In 2013, pupils left Year 6 with attainment around two terms behind the national average. Not enough pupils, including those from ethnic minority backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language, make the progress they should in all subjects, but especially in writing and mathematics. While the school expects an improvement in results in this year's national tests, the trend is inconsistent and standards are predicted to decline again the following year.
- By the end of Key Stage 2, in 2013, boys attained significantly lower levels in writing and mathematics than girls. The school is aware of this issue and has taken action to try to address it, but there is too little evidence to show that this has been successful.
- In 2013, pupils supported by the pupil premium were over three terms behind their classmates in reading, writing and mathematics. This was wider than the gap in 2012 and considerably greater than that found nationally.
- The progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs matches the slow progress made by other groups of pupils in both reading and writing. These pupils make better progress when supported in small groups, led by skilled specialist staff, but less progress when back in the classrooms, because the tasks they are given are not always well matched to their learning needs.
- Across the school, presentation of work in books is too often careless and untidy. Pupils do not practise writing at length in subjects other than English. In mathematics, pupils are rarely challenged to solve more complex problems or encouraged to apply their mathematical skills and knowledge in other subjects. Consequently, their ability to apply their skills to real-life or problem-solving tasks is underdeveloped.
- Children start the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and knowledge below those typically expected for their age. They make rapid progress in developing skills, particularly their social skills, and join Year 1 with attainment that is broadly average.
- Reflecting the generally good start pupils make in the early stages of their learning, pupils scored well in the 2012 and 2013 phonics screening check of their understanding of letters and the sounds that they make. This good progress is not maintained throughout the school and too many pupils, notably the lower attainers, make limited progress because they do not systematically apply their phonics skills to help them read and spell difficult words.
- Recent changes to the way writing is taught throughout the school have resulted in early indications that progress is beginning to accelerate. A careful analysis of what pupils know, understand and can do has led to more appropriate and challenging work. Pupils are benefiting from a better understanding of how they can improve their own work in order to achieve the next steps in their learning.

The quality of teaching

is inadequate

- Teaching is inadequate because too many pupils do not make the progress they should. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve and the rate at which learning should progress are too low. Weaknesses have persisted since the time of the previous inspection and, as a result, pupils currently in the school are still making inadequate progress. This is confirmed by the work in pupils' books, although the school's most recent data do suggest that rates of progress are beginning to accelerate, particularly among the younger pupils.
- Over the course of the inspection, most teaching required improvement and some was inadequate, although there were also pockets of good teaching, notably in Reception. No teaching was outstanding.
- Rates of progress are low because, too often, teachers do not use information about pupils' learning well enough to provide work that matches their abilities. Planning does not take enough account of the gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding to ensure that tasks embed learning while providing challenge. As a result, work is frequently too easy for some pupils or too difficult for others. These shortcomings in teaching contribute to the inadequate progress for both more-able pupils and those with special educational needs.
- Teachers mark pupils' work frequently, but, in general, comments do not clearly explain to pupils how to make their work better. There is no evidence that pupils use the comments to improve their work or that lesson time is set aside for pupils to respond to marking. The exception to this is in the way a new writing curriculum is being introduced. Evidence in pupils' books indicates that learning is more clearly structured and marking provides useful guidance. Teachers' comments point out how work can be improved and pupils are given helpful advice about the next steps in their learning and how to achieve them. As a result of this initiative, there are early signs that progress in writing is beginning to accelerate.
- Work in pupils' books shows they are not given enough opportunities to apply their mathematical skills to a wide range of subjects, and tasks are often based on completing undemanding worksheets. There is insufficient attention to teaching for understanding and so concepts are not securely grasped by pupils. The school has recognised this weakness and has commissioned, very recently, an outside consultancy to work alongside teachers to increase their own confidence within the subject and to improve the quality of the mathematics curriculum.
- In Reception, assessment information is carefully collected and accurately analysed so that lessons build systematically on children's prior knowledge and understanding. Many of the activities are well matched to the needs of the children so they make good progress.
- The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are promoted appropriately. Pupils benefit from a wide range of extra activities, both within and after normal lessons, with a particular favourite being the African drumming. The school is a friendly and welcoming place where pupils are taught to be tolerant, helpful, kind and understanding.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

require improvement

- Pupils' attitudes to learning are determined by the quality of teaching. As a result, while pupils behave well in the playground and around school, some become distracted in lessons when they are not challenged sufficiently with their work. Concentration is lost, noise levels increase and learning is restricted by low-level disruption. Behaviour, therefore, requires improvement.
- Since the previous inspection, attendance has improved and is now above average. This is because the school has improved its administrative procedures and applied a range of initiatives to reward regular attendance. The school works well with outside agencies to reduce the absence rate.
- Pupils feel safe in school and are confident that there are always adults to help. They are taught how to keep safe in a variety of situations, such as when going to and from school or when using the internet.
- Pupils have a well-developed awareness of the dangers of different forms of bullying. There are very few instances of bullying and most parents believe that the school deals with these effectively.

- The behaviour of children in the Reception class is good because they have interesting things to do and learn about. They are happy and confident learners who enjoy school.

The leadership and management are inadequate

- Leaders and managers have not addressed several important issues for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Although attendance has improved significantly, achievement and standards have been too low for too long. Weaknesses in the quality of teaching have not been successfully tackled by leaders and managers. Consequently, the school has declined and is inadequate. The school does not demonstrate the capacity to improve.
- Leaders' view of the school's performance is too generous and therefore inaccurate. This has not helped them to concentrate on the urgent actions needed to improve pupils' achievement. Actions to strengthen the leadership team, an improvement issue in the previous inspection report, have only recently been put in place. While the headteacher is now well supported by a skilled deputy headteacher, the creation of phase leader posts with responsibility for implementing improvement initiatives and holding teachers to account for raising standards is a very recent initiative. Because of this, the impact of this action is yet to become evident.
- The school has adopted challenging targets intended to improve the quality of teaching and drive up the rate of pupils' progress. Some targets are unrealistic, others are too general to be useful as a guide to improvement and in the past performance targets and deadlines have often not been achieved.
- Teachers' performance is not managed effectively. While senior leaders have observed lessons and set improvement targets, these have not exerted sufficient influence over practice, so that weaknesses persist.
- Leaders collect assessment information about pupil performance and the information generated by this is analysed to shape improvement plans, but implementation of the plans is too slow and uncertain so that initiatives do not result in rapid improvement.
- The school does not ensure equality of opportunity as there is too much variation in the performance of different groups of pupils, for example between boys and girls.
- At the time of the inspection, all safeguarding requirements were met and staff training in safeguarding and child protection was up to date.
- The local authority has previously recognised Westgate Primary as a school of concern. Strategies to improve performance have been implemented but have failed to arrest the decline in standards. More recently, the local authority has increased the level of its intervention, notably through the commissioning of external consultants to raise standards in mathematics. It is too early to judge whether this action is having an impact.
- The school has positive relationships with parents, which underpin the marked improvement in attendance. Parents are generally satisfied by the education provided by the school.
- The school provides an interesting range of subjects that cover the required areas. Although curriculum planning is detailed, teachers do not plan specific opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in writing or mathematics while working in other subjects.
- The school is using its new primary school sport funds to develop closer links with neighbouring schools, to share and develop staff expertise, and to create a legacy for the future. Pupils are keen to participate in a developing range of sporting opportunities and, although still at an early stage, this is increasing the take up of activities designed to enhance their physical well-being.
- Working with her neighbouring colleagues, the headteacher is supporting growing levels of cooperation within the local cluster of schools, whereby expertise and good practice are developed and shared to the advantage of the wider pupil community.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is now aware of the school's weaknesses in relation to pupils' attainment, but has not successfully challenged the headteacher to lead the raising of achievement. The governors have not ensured that teachers' pay and promotion are linked to performance. Following a change of personnel and a re-structuring of their committees, governors are only

now acting on accurate performance information that enables them to monitor how well particular groups of pupils are doing and that keeps them well informed about the ongoing quality of teaching. Governors are aware that pupil premium funding is intended to accelerate the progress of eligible pupils and recognise that it has not yet brought about any narrowing of the performance gaps. They have not effectively held leaders to account for this.

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	118252
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	426455

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	204
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jackie Warren
Headteacher	Beverley Curtis
Date of previous school inspection	10–11 October 2011
Telephone number	01322 223382
Fax number	01322 274225
Email address	office@westgate.kent.sch.uk

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