

Victoria Road Primary School

Trelawney Avenue, Plymouth, PL5 1RH

Inspection dates 21–22 January 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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

- Achievement in English and mathematics is not good enough by the end of Key Stage 1.
- Pupils' writing skills are under developed in Reception and throughout Key Stage 1, often because pupils do not have enough opportunities to practise and improve their skills.
- Too little teaching in Reception and Key Stage 1 is of good quality. This is because teachers are not giving enough attention to what pupils need to learn next and this hampers their progress.
- Teaching assistants are not deployed or used well to support pupils' learning in Reception and Key Stage 1 classes.
- For some time, leaders and managers, including governors, have not done enough to raise expectations of what pupils can and should achieve in Reception and Key Stage 1 and ensure that teachers enable good learning to take place for all pupils.
- Continuing instability in staffing is a limiting factor in the school's drive to accelerate pupils' progress and raise achievement in Reception and Key Stage 1.

The school has the following strengths

- Good and often outstanding teaching in Key Stage 2, which also includes excellent support for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, ensures that pupils make rapid progress and achieve particularly well in mathematics and reading.
- The determined headteacher, aided by all staff, diligently ensures that pupils are kept safe.
- Staff promote warm, encouraging relationships with the pupils. As a result, pupils enjoy school and attend well.
- Pupils are well looked after and their behaviour is good, and often outstanding, especially when undertaking specific responsibilities such as monitors.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors visited 16 lessons and were accompanied by the headteacher and deputy headteacher during some of these observations.
- The inspectors observed morning playtime and lunch breaks and also visited the breakfast club.
- Meetings were held with members of the school parliament and many other pupils were spoken to during lessons and breaktimes. The inspectors also met with governors and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors held meetings with school staff, including senior leaders.
- The inspectors received 30 staff questionnaires. The inspectors also spoke informally with a number of parents as they brought their children to school.
- The inspectors took account of 27 parents' responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning and undertaking the inspection.
- The inspectors considered a letter from a parent and examined parents' responses evident in the school's own questionnaires.
- The inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a number of documents, including the school's own data on pupils' progress, planning and leaders' checks on the quality of teaching, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and safeguarding policy, procedures and practice.

Inspection team

Alex Baxter, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Fiona Allen

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is a slightly-below-average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils attending the school are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is above the national average. The proportion supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also above average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (which provides additional funding for children in local authority care, children from service families and those known to be eligible for free school meals) is well above that found nationally.
- The children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are accommodated in a designated Reception class.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The school has experienced a significant amount of staff absence due to illness and maternity leave over the past year. This continues, and, at the time of the inspection, a large proportion of the teaching staff in Reception and Key Stage 1 classes were fulfilling either temporary or supply contracts.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 by ensuring that:
 - teachers make fully effective use of the checks on pupils' developing skills to ensure that both teaching and the tasks set focus on what pupils need to learn next to progress well
 - the use of teaching assistants is linked closely to specifically supporting pupils' learning, especially to advance pupils' speaking, listening, writing and other basic skills
 - teachers always provide work that stimulates pupils' successful learning and helps pupils reach the levels of which they are capable.
- Raise pupils' achievement in writing, especially by the end of Key Stage 1 by:
 - providing more opportunities for children in Reception to develop their early writing skills and continuing this into Key Stage 1 for those pupils who find writing difficult
 - ensuring that pupils respond more quickly to the guidance given when teachers mark their work, making sure, for example, that letters are formed accurately and that joined handwriting is taught and developed as pupils write creatively and at length to develop their skills
 - raising pupils' confidence in, and enthusiasm, for writing; for example, by making better use of displays on classroom and other walls to celebrate pupils' efforts in writing and using the best quality writing to help pupils aim high.
- Strengthen leadership, management and governance, particularly of Reception and Key Stage 1, by:
 - ensuring that the monitoring of pupils' progress is rigorous and that action is taken swiftly to stem any underachievement
 - sharing the highly effective practice seen in Key Stage 2 to make sure that all teaching standards are raised to the level of the best.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because inconsistent teaching in Reception and Key Stage 1 has not enabled pupils to make the good progress over time of which they are capable.
- The impact of this inconsistent teaching is evident in the continued well-below-average levels of attainment seen in national tests at the end of Year 2. In addition, the school's own assessments of pupils' attainment, pupils' responses in lessons and the quality of their recorded work show that progress is not good enough.
- Children enter the Reception class with skills that are well below the levels expected for their age, especially in self-confidence and aspects of communication, language, literacy and numeracy.
- Children settle well when they join the school and grow in confidence but, by the time they enter Year 1, the skills of too many are still substantially below the levels expected for their age. This is because they have not made good enough progress, especially in developing their speaking and writing skills.
- Despite some improvement in recent terms, for example in the pupils' slightly above average performance in the 2013 Year 1 phonics (letter sounds) screening test, pupils' variable responses in lessons throughout Key Stage 1 show that the rate of progress is not quick enough to bridge gaps in their previous learning.
- All groups of pupils make at least good and often better progress throughout Key Stage 2. This is a result of consistently strong teaching, which also enthuses pupils to collaborate with each other very effectively and extend their learning.
- As a result, pupils' attainment is above average in reading and broadly average in mathematics by the end of Year 6, reflecting at least good achievement from their starting points.
- Although attainment in writing is still below average overall by the end of Year 6, higher than average scores in English grammar, punctuation and spelling show that standards are improving, including for more-able pupils, and that pupils achieve well over time in this key stage.
- In Key Stage 2, consistently good provision for pupils eligible for the pupil premium has closed the achievement gap with other pupils. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are also well supported and enabled to make equally good progress as other pupils in this key stage.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching requires improvement. This is particularly evident in English and mathematics lessons because, over time and currently, it does not sustain pupils' good achievement throughout Reception and Key Stage 1 classes. Although many children enter school with a low level of skills, staff expectations of what they can and should achieve are not always high enough.
- Pupils are not making good progress because teaching in these classes is not always focused well enough on making sure that pupils develop the skills, knowledge and understanding needed to help them to learn well.
- For example, during phonics sessions, the repeated mistakes of some pupils in pronouncing letter sounds are not always picked up quickly enough or rectified by additional adult support. Similarly, in other lessons in Reception and Years 1 and 2 classes, pupils' mistakes and lack of understanding are not always revisited quickly or effectively enough to secure good learning.
- Additionally, especially in Reception, not enough emphasis is given to developing children's early writing and speaking skills during their practical learning activities. For example, writing materials are not readily at hand and adults do not always question the children closely enough or encourage them to talk with sufficient meaning about their work, and this constrains their progress.

- Work in books and folders of pupils currently in Reception and the Years 1 and 2 classes, and work completed by some pupils previously in Year 2, shows that pupils are too often repeating the same handwriting, spelling and grammatical mistakes. This continues after teachers have marked and corrected the pupils' work, which means that staff are not always checking to make sure that pupils make the intended improvement and progress.
- Over time, these inconsistencies lead to some pupils lacking confidence in writing. This is an aspect not fully addressed by teachers in Reception and Key Stage 1 where, for example, displays too often lack enough good quality examples of pupils' own writing. This is a missed opportunity to celebrate and encourage pupils to aim high. As a result, too many pupils are not developing their skills well enough and are not ready to apply them successfully to new work when they move into Key Stage 2.
- Even so, in recent years, senior leaders have worked successfully to secure and support consistently good management of pupils' behaviour across the school. As a result, lessons start promptly, pupils settle quickly and try to give of their best and this aids their learning.
- Teaching and the work of teaching assistants are invariably of a higher quality across Key Stage 2, which promotes pupils' good, and often outstanding, progress. This is because high expectations of what pupils can achieve, together with stimulating and challenging learning activities and highly skilful questioning by staff, consistently promote pupils' excellent contributions to learning.
- For example, in a very successful Year 4 mathematics lesson, the teacher used very carefully focused questions to probe pupils' knowledge and get the pupils to think hard about how to partition numbers. This stimulating approach engaged everyone in moving on quickly and typifies the strong teaching evident across the key stage, which greatly accelerates pupils' progress and bridges any gaps in previous learning.
- Across the school, pastoral support for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is a strength. However, better teaching and adult assistance in Key Stage 2 classes ensure that these pupils and those supported by the pupil premium work more effectively alongside their peers and achieve better than similar pupils in other key stages.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils enjoy school and behave well in lessons and at other times. Behaviour is sometimes outstanding, for example when pupils rise to the lively challenges presented to them during lessons in Key Stage 2.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are good and are enriched by their involvement in several awards, for example, the Natural Environment and Healthy Child Quality Mark.
- Pupils are enthusiastic and show their confidence in the warm relationships promoted by adults by willingly offering and sharing their ideas. Across the school, and especially in Key Stage 2, when learning French for example, pupils are eager to respond to the teacher's questioning and this enhances their learning.
- At times, even when teaching is not stimulating enough, pupils behave well and show an interest in learning activities.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe is outstanding. There is particularly diligent liaison with outside agencies and parents for pupils whose circumstances out of school may put them at risk of harm. As a result, even though some pupils need and receive effective adult support for their emotional needs, pupils say they enjoy school and feel safe.
- When interviewed, pupils who are members of the School Parliament readily gave the 'thumbs up' sign to show that they have lots of friends and really enjoy the good range of sports activities at the school. 'We enjoy good meals and each other's company at lunch times', is a view expressed by many pupils.
- Pupils know about the different forms of bullying, for example verbal abuse, and understand how to stay safe when using computers. School records show a reduction in the number of misbehaviour incidents and that those that do occur have been resolved well by staff.

Accompanied by innovative systems, such as the 'Budos' certificates to reward good behaviour, the school's approaches have led to the improved and now good behaviour seen across the school.

- Parents appreciate the very caring support provided by all adults working in the school that ensures pupils' are kept safe. Most express the view that pupils behave well.
- In response to the strong work of the headteacher, supported well by the local authority education welfare officer and family support adviser, attendance has improved and is now above the national average.

The leadership and management

require improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because, until recently, there has been insufficient focus on raising standards in English and mathematics in Key Stage 1 and in sustaining good provision and progress for children in Reception.
- Whilst instability in staffing in Reception and Key Stage 1 continues to frustrate efforts to bring improvement, senior leaders, including the headteacher and governors, have not brought enough rigour to securing consistently good teaching and raising expectations of pupils' learning in these parts of the school.
- Senior leaders, including governors, contribute appropriately to school development. Although managing temporary and supply staffing continues to be a priority, senior staff manage the staff's professional development and progression along pay scales effectively to aid school improvement. For example, the work of the deputy headteacher and the newly designated assistant headteacher is increasingly mobilising expertise from Key Stage 2 to address issues and promote the best teaching practice across the whole school.
- Positive developments, for example, include much improved pupils' attendance and behaviour and more supportive partnerships with parents. Alongside sustained strengths in teaching and learning across Key Stage 2, these are now underpinning pupils' helpful attitudes to learning and increasing enjoyment of school in all key stages.
- Additional funds, such as the pupil premium and funds to support disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, are used more effectively to advance learning in Key Stage 2 classes than in other parts of the school.
- The school's carefully considered pastoral support, including for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, typifies its zero tolerance to any form of discrimination.
- The school has completed a full audit of the school's wide range of physical education and sporting activities. In addition, the carefully planned use of new sports funding to support, for example, specialist sports coaching of tag rugby, extends teachers' skills and sustains pupils' health and well-being effectively.
- A stimulating range of learning activities, including 'an evacuation of Year 6 pupils on the train to Buckfastleigh', widens their experiences and by exploring feelings and thinking about the Second World War promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively.
- Senior leaders, especially the headteacher, ensure that well-considered procedures and strong links with outside agencies are used very effectively to keep pupils safe.
- The local authority are helping to improve the work of the governing body and assist in providing good support for pupils with complex needs, but the 'light touch support' provided since the previous inspection has not sufficiently strengthened the work of the school in Reception and Key Stage 1.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has undergone a period of change in recent terms. It is now led effectively by an experienced Chair who also fulfils this role in another school. Governors undertake training, for example, to ensure that the school meets its safeguarding and other statutory requirements. The governing body makes careful financial decisions checking how additional funding, for example, the pupil premium is used to make a beneficial difference to this group of pupils. As with other leaders, governors have not always checked the quality of

teaching sufficiently to embed good or better practice across the whole school. Positive steps have now been taken to formalise governors' visits to the school and to improve the efficiency of the governing body in gathering the information needed to hold the school to account. Governors consult appropriately with the headteacher to make proper use of teachers' performance management to help make decisions about progression and salaries.

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	113289
Local authority	Plymouth
Inspection number	440467

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	212
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Geoff Nelder
Headteacher	Kevin Duggan
Date of previous school inspection	16–17 March 2011
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