

Amesbury Archer Primary School

Shears Drive, Amesbury, Wiltshire, SP4 7XX

Inspection dates 26–27 February 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		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Since the previous inspection, the school has gone through a period of instability with many changes in staff, coupled with a growth in pupil numbers. This period saw a decline in standards.
- Until recently, the attainment of pupils, especially in Key Stage 1, has been significantly below that found nationally.
- Comparatively low numbers reaching the higher levels in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6 reflect the fact that the most able pupils have not been challenged sufficiently.
- Teachers did not use the information on the progress of pupils sufficiently well to ensure that individual needs were taken into account in planning lessons so all could do their best.
- Pupils have not had enough opportunities to use teachers' marking as a way of raising the quality of their work by using the comments to correct or add to their work and so improve it.
- The leaders of key subject areas have not had sufficient opportunities to take full responsibility for developing their subjects, so less experienced colleagues were not supported fully in developing their expertise.

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher, senior leadership team and a largely new governing body have brought about rapid improvement.
- New systems for tracking pupil progress now enable teachers to gain a very clear view of the progress being made by each of their pupils and so help each to do their very best.
- The school is providing effective education for disabled pupils and those with a range of sometimes complex learning needs.
- Behaviour is good and expectations are now very much higher. Pupils and parents believe that the school is a safe place.
- Systems are being introduced that give much stronger help and support to staff, especially those who are new to the school. Standards are now rising rapidly and there is a greater stability in staffing.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed a total of 15 lessons, three of them undertaken jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders and other staff who hold key responsibilities, the Chair of the Governing Body and other governors, and a representative of the local authority.
- The views of parents were gathered from the 64 responses to the on-line Parent View questionnaire and from a letter received from the parents of a pupil.
- The views of pupils were gathered from meetings with two groups and from discussions held throughout the inspection.
- A high proportion of staff completed their inspection questionnaire and inspectors held conversations with members of staff throughout the inspection in order to gain their views.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' books during lesson observations and carried out a detailed scrutiny of a sample of books from each class. They also listened to some pupils read.
- A range of written evidence was looked at, including evidence on the progress being made by pupils, teachers' planning and assessment, the school's improvement planning and a range of policies and procedures, including those for safeguarding.

Inspection team

Martyn Groucutt, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Julie Fox	Additional Inspector
Ian McAllister	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school opened in 2006 to serve a new development of 1200 houses on the edge of the small town of Amesbury. Since then, a further 800 new homes have been built and the process is continuing. The school has grown by a third since the time of the previous inspection and is now larger than the average primary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is far higher than average. This is additional funding provided for pupils, in this school, who are known to be eligible for free school meals or have a parent in the armed services. Around a third of the pupils have a parent in the armed services.
- A large majority of the pupils are from a White British background.
- The proportion of pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs supported through school action is much higher than average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which represent the minimum expectation for pupils' progress and attainment in English and mathematics.
- The headteacher was appointed to the school in January 2013. The deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher and the special educational needs coordinator joined the school in September 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good by:
 - ensuring that teachers allow time for pupils to correct or improve their work after it has been marked
 - making sure that all teachers are making the most of the data they have on the progress and achievement of every pupil in their class so that work is always hard enough.
- Enabling the most able pupils to make the most of their academic ability by:
 - raising the level of challenge they face in problem solving, writing at length and developing their creative thinking skills.
 - ensuring that all teachers are confident in identifying and working with the most able pupils.
- Address weaker teaching by allowing the leaders of the key subject areas to use their skills to:
 - support their colleagues through undertaking observations in their classes
 - model and demonstrate best practice
 - promote opportunities for peer observations between classrooms
 - leading professional development sessions in their subject area.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- In recent years, there has been a story of underachievement in the school and pupils have not made enough progress from their starting points. Standards had declined since the previous inspection.
- Children enter the Reception class with levels of skills below those usually found in children of that age. Skilled and effective teaching enables them to make rapid progress so they enter Year 1 with standards broadly in line with those expected, but this has not been sustained as they move through Key Stage 1.
- Until recently, the progress made in Key Stage 1 has been too slow and attainment has been below average by the end of Year 2, with very few reaching higher levels. This was especially true of the numbers reaching higher levels.
- While attainment has been better at the end of Key Stage 2, over time there have still been too many who have failed to reach expected levels. Again this has been especially true of the most able, who are not given work that is hard enough or opportunities to maximise their academic talents.
- However, since the arrival of the new headteacher, these weaknesses have been addressed rigorously so that standards have risen and virtually all pupils are currently making the progress expected, or better, although the most able to do not always do as well as they could.
- While the school has prided itself in the provision it has made for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, which are sometimes complex in nature, it has not always been effective in being able to show the progress being made by these pupils.
- Under the current special educational needs coordinator, the quality of this provision has improved. It is the much more effective use of data that underpins this, and the progress of every pupil receiving additional support is now tracked carefully. It is clear that interventions are now being implemented well, usually by effective teaching assistants, and are helping pupils to narrow the gap in their learning compared with the rest.
- Teachers now upload progress data on their pupils on five occasions during the year and meet with senior leaders to plan additional support for those who are not making expected progress, although not all are yet equally confident in using the data. This leads to extra help to support those who might be struggling or falling behind and is helping pupils to make better progress.
- The process of gathering data on individual progress also supports the setting of challenging targets and in lessons it is clear that pupils know what they have to do in order to reach their targets. Pupils themselves can talk about how they are now able to learn much better, and standards in reading, writing and mathematics are rising throughout the school.
- The large numbers of pupils who qualify for extra support through the pupil premium are tracked carefully and are making good progress. By the time they get to the end of Year 6, they have now caught up with other pupils in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2013, there was no difference in the attainment of these pupils and others in all three areas. This demonstrates the school's increasingly effective drive to provide equality of opportunity for all its pupils.
- This is because the funding has been used effectively, particularly where it is used to fund the costs of key members of staff such as the family support worker and the pastoral leader. This has particularly helped those pupils who have wider social and emotional needs that add to learning difficulties.
- Reading has been a major focus in raising standards and, from the start in Reception, there is very effective use of phonics (understanding letters and the sounds they make). In the Year 1 national screening check for phonics, the pupils have exceeded the national expectation for both years since its introduction.
- The additional funding provided for sport and physical education has had a positive impact on outcomes for pupils. The teachers have benefited from additional support and training, while pupils have been able to participate in a range of sport festivals and competitions for the first

time. Pupils say this has added considerably to their enjoyment of learning and school.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because over time, teachers have not enabled pupils to make the most of their talents and abilities. During a period of considerable staffing instability, it was difficult to fully support the high proportion of teachers new to the profession.
- The lack of stability has had a major impact on the school's ability to improve the quality of provision quickly enough in the past. There is now greater stability that is supporting progress.
- Teachers were not making the best use of assessment information or focused on identifying the needs of individual pupils. Sometimes this has been a key factor in the lack of challenge for the most able, coupled with the fact that since such pupils have not been a prominent focus, some teachers lack confidence in working with them.
- The new senior leadership has made improving the quality of teaching a key priority. Staff identified as needing support have had opportunities to attend professional development. Throughout the school, the quality of teaching is rising with no inadequate teaching observed. Standards are rising, including those in English and mathematics and, for those receiving additional help or benefiting from the pupil premium, this is supporting their good progress.
- Some teaching is now of a very high quality, observed in the work in developing early reading and writing skills in the Reception class, and the creative writing being undertaken by a Year 6 group, for example.
- Where teaching is of the highest quality, learning is well planned, marked by high expectations, strong teamwork between teacher and teaching assistants, and effective questioning.
- The marking of work is of a good standard, often including advice on how work could be improved. However, there are few opportunities for pupils to actually put this advice into practice in correcting or adding to their work to make it better.
- Pupils say that they are making more use of computers and other information technology, such as hand-held tablet computers. This, together with the good use of interactive whiteboards, reflects a positive use of technology that engages pupils in effective learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. A new behaviour policy has been introduced that has included the establishment of school houses, and a range of rewards for positive behaviour. Pupils have engaged very positively with these developments and, as a result, very little time is now lost to learning. On those very few occasions when there is a low level of chatter, it is because pupils are bored.
- The new headteacher has taken decisive action to raise the standard of behaviour, including the use of fixed term exclusions, which for a time were well above average. The message about what constitutes acceptable behaviour has now got through, so this is no longer the case.
- Pupils are well prepared for lessons and enjoy their learning; often there is a buzz of learning and pupils are enthusiastic. They get along very well with each other and with the adults around the school, and there is a clear mutual respect. This underpins the recent rise in the standards of teaching and learning.
- The work of the family support worker and of the pastoral leader has had an exceptional impact on supporting the behaviour of a significant number who entered the school with very challenging behaviour. They support pupils and also their wider families to help them learn.
- The school fosters good relationships well and parents and pupils have few concerns about behaviour, which is positive in a range of contexts, such as the play seen in the playground, or in conversation during lunchtime. The school is a very attractive place, with colourful displays, of which pupils are increasingly proud.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils and their parents are confident

that school is a very safe place. Pupils have a good understanding of the different types of bullying, including cyber bullying, and the risks of the misuse of the internet, which they say is covered well in lessons. They say that because people get on well together, bullying is not an issue in school but when there is an incident of some kind, it is dealt with effectively. Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated in the school.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and senior leaders, who have joined the school over the last year, have brought a clear and focused vision for improving and creating a school that aims to be outstanding. As a result, the school is improving rapidly.
- A parent wrote: 'The school is led by a headteacher who is motivational, committed and who...instils in the pupils the view that they can reach their full potential.' In a short time, leaders have had a transformational effect on the school, particularly in starting to raise standards.
- The role of key subject and specialist leaders has also contributed to this improvement. The Reception leader, for example, is a 'good practice' teacher, supporting other schools. However, as the quality of teaching improves, these 'middle leaders' are not yet playing a full part in raising standards in their particular areas. For example, opportunities to model good practice, lead professional development and observe teaching and learning are currently limited.
- There is far greater stability in staffing and the new leadership is enthusing and bringing staff along. One wrote: 'This is a great school to work in with a real team spirit and hard-working, supportive staff.'
- There are very effective processes for checking the quality of what is happening in classrooms and teachers' planning and marking. Such developments underpin the improvements now being seen in teaching and learning. However, there are insufficient opportunities for teachers to observe one another in order to develop their skills.
- The improvements in teaching are also supported by the effective system that has been introduced for measuring the effectiveness of teachers and the setting of annual targets to develop their professional skills while meeting the identified priorities of the school. It has made clear the links between teachers' performance and their pay. Those teachers who are on the higher pay scale willingly accept additional responsibilities.
- The headteacher has introduced a more rigorous style of self-evaluation. This is enabling the school to be more effective in drawing up priorities for improvement and setting effective targets that are checked with rigour. Systems now in place support the continued improvement of provision in the school.
- The curriculum is effective and has been supported by the introduction of consistent planning across the school. It is now much wider, with greater opportunities to participate in music and sport, for example. Wider learning is well supported through a range of trips and visits, including residential opportunities, and by a good range of clubs.
- Opportunities to promote spiritual, social, moral and cultural development are used effectively. Particularly impressive is the growing sense of community reflected throughout the school. This is also having a positive impact in fostering good relations and tackling discrimination.
- The school works well with parents, the family support worker being particularly effective in supporting parents. Similarly, there are positive links with a range of external professionals to support pupils, and often their wider families, in a coordinated way.
- The local authority has given effective support and responded positively to the request for help made by the headteacher after his initial appointment. It has, for example, used its expertise in the area of safeguarding to ensure that affective systems are in place. It has also been proactive in supporting the training of governors to enable them to be very effective.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is effective and governors bring a range of professional expertise and a commitment to making the school successful. In the last year or so, there have been big

changes to the composition of the governing body that underpins this effectiveness and the desire for improvement. All legal responsibilities are carried out effectively, including those for safeguarding. Governors undertake effective financial monitoring, including the use of the pupil premium and sport funding and the impact it has had on raising standards. Training received in understanding the data on pupils' attainment has been effective in giving a clear understanding of the school's increasing effectiveness. Governors have a good understanding of the quality of teaching by being partnered with curriculum leaders, discussing the nature of teaching and learning, and observing for themselves. Challenging targets are set for the headteacher and there is a good overview of the arrangements for managing the performance of teachers. There is an understanding that pay should not be increased unless it is justified through good performance. Governors also understand the arrangements for dealing with any inadequate teaching. They have a good understanding of how their school compares with others that includes an awareness of the difficulties the school was facing until recently. They have acted decisively in appointing the new senior leaders that are proving effective in raising standards throughout the school.

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	133775
Local authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	441088

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.

School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	324
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Louise Holm
Headteacher	Neil Mawdsley
Date of previous school inspection	15–16 February 2011
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