

Lower Meadow Primary School

Batemoor Road, Sheffield, South Yorkshire, S8 8EE

Inspection dates

28–29 January 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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.

- The school's overall effectiveness has declined markedly since the last inspection and is now inadequate. There is too little sign of improvement and the capacity to improve quickly is weak.
- In Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils' achievement in reading and writing is inadequate and in mathematics requires improvement. By the end of Year 2 and Year 6 standards are too low, especially in reading. This means that pupils are not prepared adequately for the next stage of their education.
- The quality of teaching has deteriorated since the last inspection and is now inadequate. Too little teaching is good enough to raise standards or achievement quickly. Teachers fail to plan work that meets pupils' varying needs and abilities.
- Pupils make too little progress in developing their basic literacy and numeracy skills. They are given too few opportunities to practise these skills in work in other subjects.
- Marking does not tell pupils clearly or regularly enough what they have achieved, or inform them how to improve. Any advice given is not often acted upon.
- Too much teaching fails to motivate or fully engage pupils. As a result, some pupils' attitudes to their work and behaviour require improvement.
- Teachers' expectations of the quality, quantity and presentation of pupils' work are too low. Expectations of pupils' behaviour are not high enough.
- Leaders have been slow to tackle weaknesses in teaching because arrangements for checking and evaluating it are weak. Senior leaders and subject leaders do not have a clear enough understanding of why pupils' achievement is inadequate.
- Governors are ineffective in holding the school to account. They do not have a full or accurate picture of the school's performance, especially of the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.

The school has the following strengths

- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and those in the Hearing Impaired Unit achieve well as a result of good teaching.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils are well cared for, feel safe and trust the staff.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 21 lessons, of which four were observed jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher. The inspectors also listened to pupils read, watched pupils at break and lunchtimes, and attended an assembly.
- The inspectors held meetings with senior and subject leaders, a group of pupils, members of the governing body, and two representatives from the local authority. One inspector talked with parents to find out their opinions of the school.
- The inspectors looked at the school's work, including its information about the achievement of groups of pupils in each year and behaviour and attendance records. They checked the school's reporting of the quality of teaching, looked at the school improvement plan, considered samples of pupils' work, and checked several policies relating to the safeguarding of pupils.

Inspection team

Lynne Blakelock, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Doreen Davenport	Additional Inspector
Tracy Fulthorpe	Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 44 of the Education Act 2005 (as amended), 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.

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average primary school and the number on roll is growing.
- The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage and speak English as their first language although a growing proportion speaks English as an additional language.
- A higher proportion of pupils than nationally joins or leaves the school at other than the expected times.
- The proportion of pupils entitled to support through the pupil premium (additional government funding for looked-after pupils, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those from service families) is well above the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported by school action is well above average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also well above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- It offers a specially resourced provision on behalf of the local authority for 17 pupils with hearing impairments.
- The school works in partnership with a local academy and also as part of a family of primary schools with the intention to share ideas and to strengthen teaching and leadership.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, particularly between Years 1 and 6 so that it is at least consistently good, in order to quicken progress and raise standards in reading, writing and mathematics, by making sure that:
 - inadequate teaching is eradicated
 - activities and tasks are carefully planned to enable pupils of all abilities to build on what they already know and can do, especially for the most able, so that all achieve highly
 - pupils have plenty of time to practise what they have learnt
 - teachers' expectations of the quality, quantity and presentation of pupils' work are always high
 - pupils have regular opportunities to practise their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects
 - marking tells pupils what they know well, what they need to do next and teachers ensure that pupils act on the advice given.
- Raise standards and accelerate pupils' progress in reading by ensuring that:
 - pupils' knowledge and understanding of phonics (the sounds that letters and groups of letters represent) is reinforced throughout the day, as well as in phonics lessons
 - there is a clear purpose to guided reading sessions so that all pupils can add to their reading and comprehension skills
 - pupils supported through the pupil premium funding, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, receive specific support relevant to their particular needs.

- Improve pupils' behaviour in lessons so that is good or better by making sure that:
 - teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning from the start to the end of lessons
 - teaching is interesting and makes pupils want to learn.
- Make sure that leaders and managers at all levels, including governors, quickly acquire the skills to rapidly drive forward improvements in achievement and teaching, so that:
 - all leaders can check the quality of teaching much more rigorously in order to be clear how well pupils are learning
 - all leaders are clear about what actions are necessary to improve learning and to make sure teaching builds well on what pupils already know and can do
 - the governing body has a much better understanding of the school's work, particularly pupils' achievement and teaching, so that they can challenge senior and middle leaders about its performance.

An external review of governance should be undertaken, to include a specific focus on the impact of pupil premium funding, in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance can be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- In Key Stages 1 and 2, with the exception of those pupils with hearing impairments, pupils, including the most able, disabled pupils, those with other special educational needs and those supported by the pupil premium, underachieve in reading and writing. Achievement in mathematics requires improvement. Standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 have been significantly below average for several years. The gap with national average shows little sign of closing and reflects inadequate progress from pupils' previous starting points.
- Results in Year 6 in 2013 showed a slight improvement in standards in mathematics, although still below average. Standards in reading and writing however were very low. School data and inspection evidence show that the standards being attained by pupils currently in the school remain low in most subjects. Pupils' books show that the quality and presentation of work is often poor and too little work is completed during lessons and over time.
- Achievement in reading is particularly poor. Pupils start to fall behind as early as Year 1 where far too few pupils reach the expected standard in the national check of their skills in linking letters with sounds. Some younger pupils are not able to read words that are used regularly and which they should know. Others struggle to accurately pronounce two letters that represent one sound.
- In 2013, almost half of the pupils in Year 6 failed to reach the nationally expected Level 4 in reading. Pupils' low reading skills hold back their achievement in other subjects and, as a result, they are not prepared well enough with the skills for their future learning.
- In writing, pupils underachieve. Pupils do not write often enough or at length or practise their grammar, punctuation and spelling skills and so their skills are weak. They take too little care over their writing, particularly in subjects other than English.
- Progress in mathematics has recently improved throughout Key Stage 2. The proportion of pupils in Year 6 in 2013 making the expected rate of progress or doing better than this, for example, was similar to that seen nationally. Even so, standards are still below average and require improvement. Pupils' numeracy skills do not develop at a good rate because pupils are not given enough opportunities to use and apply them in their work, including when completing work in other subjects.
- The most-able pupils underachieve, especially in Key Stage 1 and in writing in Key Stage 2. Teaching fails to challenge or encourage them to think really hard and apply what they know to unfamiliar tasks. They find work too easy. By the end of Year 2, the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels of attainment is significantly below average. Good support resulted in an above average proportion of Year 6 pupils reaching Level 5 and for some, this represented good progress, particularly in mathematics. Also a greater proportion of average ability and the most able pupils achieved above average levels in the English grammar, punctuation and spelling tests last year.
- Pupils who speak English as a second language and those pupils who join the school at other than the usual time receive support to settle in quickly and well but over time they also make inadequate progress because the quality of teaching that they receive is too variable.
- Pupils supported by pupil premium funding underachieve. The gaps in attainment between those known to be eligible for free school meals and others are extremely wide. In Year 6 in 2013, pupils supported by the funding were two years behind their class mates in reading, four terms in mathematics and two terms in writing. The school's data show a small narrowing of the gap in some year groups but, overall, gaps are not closing quickly enough. The school's promotion of equality of opportunity is, therefore, inadequate.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, from their well below typical levels of knowledge and skills when they join, children make good progress. They make a good start in developing their speaking, listening, reading and writing skills because opportunities for them to practise them are threaded across the day. Although their skills improve at a good rate, only a minority achieve

the expected level of development when they start Year 1.

- Pupils with hearing impairments make good progress and achieve well. In one of the lessons observed by inspectors, the activities, such as measuring different surfaces using a range of objects, interested them and was effectively planned to meet their needs well. Although hearing impaired pupils achieve well, other groups of pupils do not make the progress that they should throughout Key Stage 1 and 2.

The quality of teaching

is inadequate

- Teaching is inadequate overall because the pupils' progress, particularly in reading and writing is too slow. Currently, teaching is not good enough or improving quickly enough to raise standards. Too much requires improvement and a small amount observed was inadequate.
- Work is not planned carefully enough to ensure that pupils of all abilities do as well as they can. For some, particularly the most able, work is too easy; others struggle to understand and keep up. Too often work fails to motivate or fully engage pupils. As a result, some pupils become restless and do not always show good attitudes to learning.
- Expectations of the quality and quantity of pupils' work are often too low. Pupils' presentation of work is too variable. They often write neatly in literacy tasks, taking care over their work. However, when the same pupils write in other subjects, their work is often untidy because they do not take enough care in presenting it.
- The teaching of reading is inadequate. Too many opportunities to reinforce pupils' understanding of letters and the sounds they represent are missed throughout the day, including as part of phonics sessions. Although teachers ensure that pupils read regularly, opportunities to read are not planned carefully enough to ensure that pupils' skills build well on what they already know or need to learn next. Group reading sessions for example, fail to have a clear enough purpose.
- In writing, teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to practise grammar, punctuation and spelling skills and they do not spend sufficient time tackling those aspects where pupils' skills need most improvement. In mathematics, there are signs of better teaching in some classes and this is starting to help pupils make better progress and more pupils are reaching the higher levels of attainment at the end of Year 6 as a result. Even so, too much teaching of mathematics still requires improvement so all pupils do not achieve as well as they should.
- The quality of marking is too variable. Some marking is very helpful, telling pupils what they have achieved and what to do next to improve their work. However, work is not always marked regularly enough and pupils rarely act on any advice given.
- Some teaching is good. In these cases, pupils are very clear about what they should know and be able to do by the end of the lesson. In a Year 5 mathematics lesson, the teacher made good use of everyday situations to make learning interesting and relevant. Frequent, specific questioning ensured that learning was checked carefully throughout the lesson. As a result, pupils made good progress in understanding the properties of different shapes.
- Pupils with hearing impairments are integrated well into activities and work well with staff. These pupils make good progress because staff have a thorough understanding of their particular needs.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children are taught well. Teachers provide so many interesting things to see, touch and to discover. Teachers plan learning carefully, ensuring that children regularly practise their communication, creative, expressive, physical and number skills.
- Teaching assistants provide helpful support, especially to disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. This develops pupils' confidence as well as helping to improve their basic skills. Even so, variations in the quality of teaching and support over time have resulted in inadequate progress for this group of pupils.

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

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement because, in lessons, some pupils' attitudes to learning are not always as good as they should be. When work is too hard or too easy, or they do not have time to practise what they have learnt, they become inattentive and restless. Some complete too little work as a result.
- Staff effectively manage the behaviour of those pupils who sometimes find it hard to manage their own behaviour. As a result, learning for other pupils is not disrupted.
- Many pupils are a credit to their school and always behave well. Behaviour in the corridors and on the playground is good and pupils are supervised well during these times.
- Pupils of all ages, abilities and backgrounds get on well with each other. They enjoy playing and learning together and sharing their ideas. They are keen to take on roles and responsibilities such as lunchtime and reading 'buddies'. Through the school council, pupils proudly express their views, such as, deciding the system to be used for rewarding pupils' efforts and achievements.
- All pupils wear their uniforms smartly. They keep their classrooms tidy, even the youngest children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The dining area however is not always kept tidy.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils feel very safe in school and trust the staff; parents agree with their children's views. Bullying is rare and is not tolerated. Pupils know how to keep safe. They are aware of potential dangers, such as when using the Internet and know how to avoid cyber-bullying. At a young age, children know how to cross the road safely and that they should not talk to strangers. Pupils know that it is important to treat others fairly and know about a range of prejudices, including those associated with race and gender.
- Leaders successfully promote good attendance with pupils and parents. As a result, attendance is improving and is now close to average. A minority of pupils still do not attend regularly enough, including taking holidays in term time.

The leadership and management **are inadequate**

- Despite the determination of the headteacher and senior team, leaders, managers and governors I have not been able to improve the school quickly enough to ensure good achievement for all pupils. Standards remain too low because leaders' actions to improve the school are ineffective. Too many pupils are underachieving as a result.
- The leadership of teaching is inadequate. Leaders have been slow to tackle weaknesses in teaching because arrangements for checking and evaluating it are weak. Teaching quality is too variable. Leaders' judgements of teaching seen during the inspection with inspectors were accurate and well-justified. However, records of their own observations of teaching show that teaching is very often judged by leaders to be good. This view is overgenerous. Leaders fail to identify precisely what makes teaching good or what is needed to improve it. They do not take the skills and knowledge that pupils have gained during the lesson sufficiently into account.
- These weaknesses in the checking of teaching undermine leaders' efforts to manage the performance of staff. This means that although teachers are given a target for improving their teaching, the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement are not improving quickly enough.
- Newly qualified teachers should not be appointed.
- Plans to improve the school are too weak. Leaders are unclear why standards remain low and why pupils' progress is not happening more quickly.
- Subject leaders are starting to develop their roles. Although they take their responsibilities seriously, they are not yet focusing their efforts on the most pressing priorities.
- Until recently, the local authority has been unaware of the school's weaknesses and so has not received the support it needs. However, plans are now in place to review the school's effectiveness and to organise support through partnerships with other schools.
- Although the curriculum enables pupils to spend a lot of time learning how to read, write and

develop their number skills, too often these tasks are not matched well enough to meet the needs of pupils of varying abilities. Teachers work hard to make topics interesting, such as through topics such as the Vikings, but opportunities to develop pupils' basic literacy and numeracy skills through such work are overlooked.

- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is promoted appropriately. Pupils' social skills and their understanding and appreciation of other cultures and lifestyles are good.
- The new primary school physical education and sport funding has been planned appropriately to help ensure that over a period of two years the staff will have acquired the necessary skills to teach sports skills effectively. All pupils receive at least two hours of physical education each week. They now participate in a range of competitive sports, which not only is improving their health and well-being but also their confidence and interpersonal skills.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Although the governing body shows great commitment, it does not know enough about the school's performance, including how well the school is doing compared to others nationally. It has an overgenerous view of the quality of teaching. The governors know too little about the achievement of different groups of pupils. For example, they do not know the very limited impact the pupil premium fund is having on the achievement of those pupils for whom it is intended. Their efforts to find out about the school rely too heavily on what they are told by staff and senior leaders. They do not yet find out enough for themselves to ensure that they are holding the school to account with the degree of rigour that is needed. Governors have yet to take full advantage of the training available to improve their knowledge, understanding and effectiveness. Consequently, their ineffectiveness in carrying out their responsibilities is limiting the school's progress.
 - The governing body ensures that arrangements to safeguard pupils meet the statutory requirements.

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	133484
Local authority	Sheffield
Inspection number	440889

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	312
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Richard Law
Headteacher	Jan O'Connor
Date of previous school inspection	10 July 2012
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