

Oughton Primary and Nursery School

Mattocke Road, Hitchin, SG5 2NZ

Inspection dates 28–29 January 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
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.

- Pupils' progress through Years 3 to 6 has been inadequate in recent years.
- In 2013, attainment at the end of Year 6 was well below average in reading and mathematics and below average in writing.
- Teaching has been inadequate in recent years. It is improving and none is now inadequate, but not enough is good.
- Teachers do not always expect pupils to do their very best, or successfully provide lesson activities that stimulate and interest them so they make good progress.
- Tasks are sometimes too easy for pupils, especially the most able.
- Teachers' explanations, questions and discussions do not always ensure that pupils fully understand new work.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are not always positive enough to support good learning.
- Some leaders do not fulfil their role in checking the impact of action taken to improve pupils' achievement.
- The sharing of good practice to improve teaching is currently underused.
- Governors have not been fully informed about the school's performance and have not sufficiently challenged underachievement.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders have taken positive steps to strengthen teaching and raise achievement in Years 3 to 6 and pupils' progress is improving.
- Children in Nursery and Reception quickly develop good personal and social skills, and pupils make good progress in Years 1 and 2.
- The school uses good procedures to ensure that pupils are safe and secure.
- Pupils enjoy the good range of clubs and visits.
- Good partnerships have been formed with parents and carers, who are positive about the school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 16 lessons. Some of these were seen jointly with the headteacher.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, staff, a representative from the local authority, members of the governing body and pupils.
- The inspectors took account of the 47 responses to the online Parent View survey.
- Pupils were heard read reading, and inspectors held discussions with them about their reading.
- Questionnaires from 35 members of staff were analysed.
- The inspectors examined school policies, information about pupils' attainment and progress, teachers' plans, pupils' work, safeguarding procedures and the school's development planning.

Inspection team

Derek Watts, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jacqueline Bell-Cook

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

- This is an average-sized primary school.
- About two thirds of the pupil population are White British. Other pupils are from a wide range of ethnic heritages.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well above average.
- A well-above-average proportion of pupils are eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for pupils who are in local authority care, known to be eligible for free school meals or from service families.
- The school does not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to good by making sure that:
 - teachers show that their expectations of what pupils can achieve are high in all classes
 - the tasks set in lessons are stimulating and interesting, and demanding but achievable for pupils
 - explanations, questioning and discussion are used effectively to ensure that pupils fully understand new work.
- Accelerate progress and raise attainment by Year 6, especially in mathematics, by:
 - spreading the best practice in the teaching of mathematics
 - extending opportunities for practical problem solving in mathematics
 - encouraging pupils to write longer pieces of work in subjects such as history and geography
 - making sure that pupils practise their numeracy skills in different subjects.
- Strengthen leadership and management by ensuring that all leaders, including governors:
 - have the skills, information and time necessary to fulfil their roles
 - are fully involved in checking the impact of new initiatives and approaches on pupils' achievement.

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

- Pupils' progress through Years 3 to 6 for the two years up to July 2013 was inadequate, particularly in reading and mathematics, and pupils did not attain the standards of which they were capable.
- At the end of Year 6 in 2013, attainment was well below average in reading and mathematics and below average in writing. Considerable weaknesses in teaching in Years 3 to 6 contributed to this inadequate progress and low attainment.
- Few pupils attained levels higher than those expected nationally, showing that the most able were not sufficiently challenged and extended. Other groups, including disabled pupils and those who had special educational needs and those supported by the pupil premium, made inadequate progress through Years 3 to 6 because teaching and support were not good enough.
- In 2013, the Year 6 pupils supported by the pupil premium attained lower standards than their classmates in reading and writing. They were 11 months behind in reading and six months behind in writing.
- The underachievement in Years 3 to 6 has been arrested this year. Assessment data, the work in books and the lessons seen show that pupils are now making more rapid progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Current pupils are making at least expected progress overall. This is the result of decisive and positive action taken to raise achievement in Years 3 to 6. However, attainment in mathematics in Year 6 is lagging behind reading and writing, particularly in terms of problem-solving skills, because of slow progress in the past. Teachers have not yet enabled pupils to make up this lost ground.
- Children start in the Nursery with knowledge, understanding and skills below or well below those expected for their age. They make good progress, particularly in their personal and social development, in knowledge and understanding of the world and in expressive arts.
- Pupils in Years 1 and 2 make good progress and by the end of Year 2, attainment is usually broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics. A good example was seen in Year 2 where pupils wrote their own version of the Scandinavian story *The Three Wishes*. They used adjectives and adverbs well in their writing. The most able included speech marks and adventurous vocabulary. With effective adult support, they worked hard to improve their story.
- The results of the phonics (letters and the sounds they make) reading check for Year 1 in 2012 and in 2013 were above average. Pupils benefit from regular teaching of phonics. Pupils' achievement in reading is improving in Years 3 to 6 and those in Years 4 and 6 are now making good progress.
- Pupils' progress in writing in Years 3 to 6 is improving. For example, Year 6 pupils wrote well-reasoned arguments on the question, 'Should we build flood defences?' Pupils write extended pieces in English and this is helping to improve their grammar, punctuation and spelling. However, they do not apply their writing skills enough in other subjects, such as when working in history or geography.
- There have been recent improvements in pupils' progress in mathematics in Years 3 to 6, including in problem solving, an identified area of weakness. There are some good examples of

pupils applying their numeracy skills in other subjects, but this is not consistent.

- Pupils are developing healthy lifestyles and physical fitness through physical education lessons and the additional sporting activities provided such as dance, football and netball.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- In the past, teaching in Years 3 to 6 has been inadequate and this has led to underachievement and well- below-average attainment by the end of Year 6. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve have not been high enough, and work in lessons has not been sufficiently challenging or stimulating to promote good progress.
- Positive steps have been taken by the headteacher and key leaders to improve teaching, and inadequate teaching has now been eradicated. However, weaknesses remain and there is not yet enough good teaching. There are still lessons where teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough, and some of the tasks set are too easy, particularly for the most able pupils.
- In some lessons, teachers do not use explanations, discussions and questioning well enough to clarify key learning points and ensure that pupils fully understand their work. For example, in a mathematics lesson, pupils raised interesting questions but the teacher did not offer a clear explanation or explore pupils' views. In another lesson where pupils had to think hard about a challenging task, they had little opportunity to try out their ideas and so reach a clear definition, with the teacher, of the concept.
- There are examples of good teaching, such as in a Year 4 mathematics lesson where pupils made good progress in doubling and halving two- and three-digit numbers. They responded well to the teacher's high expectations and interesting tasks challenged all pupils, including the most able. Pupils benefited from the teacher's clear explanations and instructions and they used a range of strategies to solve problems. The teacher provided clear feedback on how well pupils were doing. Effective questioning checked their understanding.
- The teaching of reading is given good attention. Children in Early Years Foundation Stage and pupils in Years 1 and 2 have regular sessions to consolidate and extend their knowledge and understanding of phonics. The teaching of reading skills has improved in Years 3 to 6 and as a result, pupils are making at least nationally expected progress.
- The teaching of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is improving but is not yet good in most classes. In the better lessons, the skills of teaching assistants are used well and make an effective contribution to pupils' learning.
- Pupils have clear personalised targets to guide their learning, particularly in writing and mathematics. They know what they need to do to improve. Pupils find teachers' marking constructive and helpful. As they said, 'Teachers write the next steps to our learning.'

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. In some classes, pupils are not fully focused on their learning. In particular, where the teaching is not sufficiently stimulating and challenging, some pupils lose concentration and interest and so make only slow progress.

- Children in Nursery and Reception settle well into the school because of the good relationships established with adults. They enjoy their learning and make good progress in their personal and social development.
- Most pupils in the school are well behaved in lessons and around the school. They are courteous, friendly and generally considerate of others. Older pupils are keen to take on additional responsibilities, such as being monitors or by serving on the school council.
- Pupils show a good understanding of different cultures and faiths and show respect for others. They have gained a clear knowledge of different customs and religious festivals through their studies.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. As a result, pupils feel safe and well cared for. All the parents who responded to the survey agreed that their children felt safe at school. Almost all believe that their child is well looked after.
- Discussions with pupils reveal that they have a clear understanding of bullying and its different forms, including persistent name-calling and cyber-bullying. They commented that 'bullying is unkind' and can 'hurt people's feelings'. They know what action to take should bullying occur. Pupils report that bullying in the school is rare and they are confident that it would be quickly dealt with if reported to an adult. The school's records also show that serious incidents and poor behaviour are rare.
- Attendance levels dipped in 2013. The school has tightened procedures for checking and promoting attendance. Attendance levels are improving and are now closer to average.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The headteacher and key leaders are taking decisive and positive action to improve the quality of teaching and to eliminate underachievement, particularly in Years 3 to 6. For example, two leaders are promoting improvement in mathematics and as a result pupils' acquisition and application of numeracy skills have been extended. Although there is further to go, focused training has improved teaching and is raising standards in reading and writing.
- Senior leaders have reached a clear view of the school's performance and what is needed to improve it. The leaders of English and mathematics are fully engaged in monitoring performance and checking the impact of actions and new initiatives on pupils' achievement. However, not all leaders are given sufficient non-teaching time to do this.
- Improving teaching is a key priority for leaders. The quality of teaching is now carefully checked by the headteacher and a newly appointed improvement adviser, and this has provided an accurate overview of strengths and weaknesses. Leaders of English and mathematics are carefully checking the impact of teaching on pupils' progress. Teaching is improving because of the feedback and support provided. Training is also contributing to improvements. However, the sharing of best practice within Oughton and with other schools is currently an underused strategy.
- The school uses appropriate procedures for managing the performance of teachers. Training and improvement targets are linked well to pupils' progress and school improvement priorities.
- The curriculum provides an appropriate range of subjects and topics. Pupils enjoy the many additional activities, such as clubs and educational visits. The primary school sport funding has

been used effectively to train staff and increase their expertise and skills. Productive partnerships have been formed with local football clubs to enrich pupils' experiences. Leaders have not yet formally evaluated the impact of this funding.

- The school has a positive and welcoming atmosphere. There are no signs of discrimination and all pupils are valued and have full access to the activities provided.
- The pupil premium funding is used appropriately to provide eligible pupils with additional support. Improved teaching, one-to-one tuition, booster groups and small-group teaching are having a positive impact on the progress of those eligible for the funding.
- Local authority improvement advisers have supported the school in checking and improving teaching. However, advisers have not been direct enough about the underachievement in Years 3 to 6. As a result, the school and members of the governing body have believed that the school's overall effectiveness is better than it is.
- The headteacher and staff have worked hard to build positive and productive partnerships with parents and carers. In particular, clear guidance and workshops in literacy and numeracy have helped parents to support their children's learning at home.
- There was a good response from parents and carers to the online survey, Parent View. The results show that parents are pleased with the care and education provided for their children.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The members of the governing body are supportive of the headteacher and the school. However, they have not been fully informed about the school's performance and have therefore not challenged underachievement well enough. Governors are now aware of pupils' low attainment, weak progress and the pressing need to raise achievement in Years 3 to 6. They are checking the action being taken to improve the school. The governors are kept informed about improvements to the quality of teaching. They have a clear understanding of performance management procedures and ensure that teachers' promotion and pay awards are based on the progress that their pupils make. They know how the pupil premium funding is spent and are checking the impact of the funding on pupils' progress. The governors have attended a range of useful courses to help them in their role. They make sure that safeguarding procedures meet current national 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	133323
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	431917

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	236
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jane Mainwaring
Headteacher	Lisa Clayton
Date of previous school inspection	29 March 2011
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