

William Austin Junior School

Austin Road, Luton, LU3 1UA

Inspection dates 27–28 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		Requires improvement	3
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

- Standards in reading and mathematics are below average. Pupils do not make consistent progress in either subject.
- Checks on key reading skills are not rigorous enough. Pupils do not have sufficient access to a wide range of books and authors.
- Marking, mostly in mathematics, does not always show pupils how to improve their work.
- More-able pupils do not make enough progress. Few reach the highest levels of attainment because teachers do not plan activities that stretch them.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not consistently high. Teachers do not ask searching questions to check that pupils have fully understood their work.
- A few pupils display negative attitudes to learning, although most pupils behave well.
- Leaders' plans for improving pupils' skills and knowledge have not been fully implemented to ensure good progress in all year groups.
- Information about pupils' attainment and progress is not used well enough to hold subject and team leaders to account for standards in their area of responsibility.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils are now making much faster progress in reading and mathematics than in previous years.
- Pupils say they feel safe. They enjoy coming to school and attendance is much improved.
- Pupils have good opportunities to take part in a wide range of musical, sporting and cultural activities. Cultural diversity is valued and celebrated well.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the quality of teaching and learning and are improving both.
- Leaders and governors have accurately identified the most important priorities for improvement. The governing body now holds leaders much more to account for the school's performance.
- Staff know what needs to be done to improve and are keen and committed to make changes.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 23 lessons, some of which were observed jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors observed pupils in lessons, at play, at lunch and as they moved around school.
- Inspectors held meetings with two groups of pupils, listened to pupils read and checked reading progress records.
- Discussions were held with staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and other governors, and a representative of the local authority.
- A wide range of documentation was reviewed, including records of the quality of teaching and of pupils' attainment and progress, the school's view of its performance and the school development plan. In addition, records of the governing body meetings, safeguarding documentation and reports from the school improvement adviser were reviewed.
- During the inspection the inspectors took account of the 13 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View), and 62 responses to the staff questionnaire. Inspectors also spoke to parents at the beginning of the school day.

Inspection team

Susan Thomas-Pounce, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
David Wolfson	Additional Inspector
Philip Scull	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This junior school is much larger than average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium is average. This is additional government funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children looked after by the local authority and children with a parent in the armed services.
- The great majority of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds. The largest groups are from Bangladeshi and Pakistani heritages.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- A number of staff changes have taken place since the previous inspection. The school is currently led by an acting headteacher who is the substantive deputy headteacher. An acting deputy headteacher on secondment from another school is currently filling that role.
- In the last two years the local authority discussed proposals for the amalgamation of the William Austin Infant and Junior Schools. This amalgamation will not now take place.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that more is good and outstanding by making sure that:
 - teachers use information on pupils' achievement to set work at the right level for all pupils, especially the more-able pupils
 - teachers develop their questioning skills to check pupils' understanding in lessons.
- Accelerate progress in reading and mathematics by ensuring that:
 - teachers' expectations of what pupils can and should achieve are raised
 - teachers monitor weekly reading records more rigorously to ensure children are reading more challenging texts
 - pupils are provided with a wider range of books and authors to read
 - marking in mathematics clearly tells pupils how to improve their work, and pupils are given time to respond to this marking.
- Make sure that school leaders at all levels develop their use of information on pupils' performance and rigorously check the aspects for which they hold responsibility.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Most pupils start school in Year 3 with skills that are below average. Many have complex learning needs, as reflected in the high proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Progress is not consistently good enough for pupils to reach the levels of which they are capable. Work in pupils' books confirms this pattern of varying progress.
- By the time pupils leave Year 6, standards are below average in reading and mathematics. Most pupils make the expected progress and there is no significant difference between the achievements of pupils from different ethnic backgrounds. The school's assessments indicate improving standards and pupils in the current Year 6 are on track to reach close to average standards by the end of the year.
- The most-able pupils do not do as well as similar pupils nationally by the end of Year 6. They are not always challenged by the work set in lessons and spend too much time completing tasks they find easy.
- Pupils' reading skills are mixed. Although most pupils read with confidence, some are not developing a deep enough understanding of the books they read. Sometimes their reading books are too easy for them and the range of books and authors available to them is not a wide enough. This slows their progress.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are supported by teaching assistants in lessons. The progress they make is similar to that of other pupils.
- Pupils supported through the pupil premium make similar progress to that of other pupils in the school in all year groups. Extra funds from the pupil premium have been spent on one-to-one tuition, booster groups in English and mathematics and support for residential visits, clubs and activities. The attainment of these pupils is in line with that of other pupils nationally, but in 2013 they were around one term behind their classmates in reading, writing and mathematics in Year 6. Information from the school shows that this gap is closing in other year groups.
- Pupils have made much faster progress in reading, writing and mathematics in all year groups in the last year than was the case previously. This is a result of improvements to the quality of teaching made by school leaders.
- The standard of pupils' writing is broadly average and improving because the school's curriculum gives pupils a wide range of interesting topics and situations to write about.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Although the quality of teaching improved last year and much of the teaching is now good, the improvement has not been sufficiently fast or consistent to demonstrate secure progress.
- Teachers are assessing pupils' attainment more accurately and checks on pupils' progress are more rigorous. However, this assessment information is not always used effectively to make sure that the work set for pupils always matches their different abilities. Teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve, especially for the most-able pupils. Tasks given to pupils do not offer them enough challenge, particularly in reading.

- Teachers do not consistently use sharp and focused questions in lessons to challenge pupils' thinking and get them to justify their responses. This means that teachers are not checking accurately whether pupils are developing the intended skills or that their understanding is being deepened.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly. However, in mathematics, comments are too short and do not give pupils clear advice on how to improve their work. Additionally, teachers do not always give time for pupils to respond to their advice and this means pupils have not got into the habit of improving their work.
- Teaching assistants give effective support to ensure the inclusion of children with more specific needs. This enables these pupils to make good progress against their individual targets.
- Pupils supported through pupil premium funding receive additional small-group and one-to-one support for reading, writing and mathematics. This extra support is ensuring that the attainment of these pupils is now similar to their peers.
- Inspectors saw a number of lessons in which teaching was good. In these lessons pupils are engaged in their learning and lessons move along at a good pace. Pupils in a lesson in Year 6 were clear about what they were learning, the activity was pitched at just the right level and the teacher knew precisely what pupils needed to do to achieve well.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement because, in some lessons, not all pupils display the same positive attitudes to their learning as the majority. This is particularly evident when lessons are not pitched at the right level or planned well enough to interest pupils. On such occasions pupils' attention wanders, limiting the progress they make.
- Behaviour is good in the playground and around the school. Pupils are welcoming and happy to talk to visitors about their learning. Support staff are effective at helping those pupils who find managing their emotions difficult. School records show that the number of incidents of poor behaviour has reduced.
- Pupils are well informed about the different types of bullying that they may come across. Pupils say that, although some bullying and name-calling occasionally occurs, they are confident that adults are quick to respond to their concerns.
- The school's work to keep children safe and secure is good. Pupils who spoke to inspectors talked sensibly about keeping themselves safe. They believe adults take good care of them and they have good understanding of how to keep safe when using new technologies.
- The school has worked very effectively in recent years to improve pupils' attendance, which is now consistently in line with the national average.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Other than in writing, the school's leaders have not sustained improvements in the quality of teaching at a fast enough rate. This has led to pupils' achievement rising only gradually over a period of time and standards remaining below average.

- Senior leaders and the governing body have now identified strengths and weaknesses in the quality of teaching and set about improving its overall quality. Professional training, individual coaching and support from the local authority have begun to improve teaching but inconsistencies remain. Subject and team leaders now play a greater part in checking and improving the quality of teaching in their subjects and year groups. However, this is at an early stage of development.
- A detailed cycle of monitoring helps leaders to check pupils' attainment and progress carefully. They use this information with teachers to identify pupils who may be falling behind. Regular meetings are held to identify strategies to help pupils catch up quickly.
- Staff are motivated and have a shared sense of responsibility and commitment to improve the school further. There are clear procedures for checking the performance of staff. Training and targets are linked well to the school's priorities for improvement. Salary increases are now linked to pupils' progress and staff responsibilities.
- Pupils enjoy physical education and understand how to keep healthy. There is a high uptake of after-school clubs and the school has received local and national awards. The primary school sport funding is used creatively to employ sports coaches to broaden pupils' understanding of physical education, health and well-being and to develop staff expertise.
- The school's curriculum provides pupils with interesting and enjoyable topics and lessons in which they can practise their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills. A range of visits, clubs, activities, responsibilities and special events contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school is committed to equality of opportunity and to making sure that discrimination is not tolerated.
- The school has received useful support from the local authority, particularly in helping to improve the quality of teaching.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are increasingly well informed about what the school is doing well and what needs to be improved. They now visit the school more regularly to gain first-hand experience of the work of the school. They know about the quality of teaching, how the school's performance management systems help to improve the quality of teaching and how any underperformance is tackled. Pay increases are only agreed where teachers' performance is good. Governors have a good understanding of the school's finances, understand how the pupil premium money is being spent and know that pupils' achievement is not yet good enough and requires more rigorous checking. They are keen to improve their skills, and many have undertaken further training. They ensure that safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. Governors are ambitious to improve the school, and show a growing capacity to hold leaders to account for the performance of 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	109560
Local authority	Luton
Inspection number	433250

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	600
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Stan Boelman
Headteacher	Joanne Adams
Date of previous school inspection	14 March 2011
Telephone number	01582 572100
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