

Puller Memorial CofE Voluntary Aided Primary School

High Cross, Ware, Herts SG11 1AZ

Inspection dates 4–5 March 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

- Pupils have made inconsistent progress as a result of the variable quality of teaching in recent years, particularly in Years 1, 2 and 3.
- Although standards at the end of Year 2 are now recovering and pupils are making faster progress, this follows a three-year decline.
- Achievement in writing has been especially low and remains a relative weakness.
- Teachers' marking is not always effective in helping pupils to improve their work.
- Teachers do not help to raise standards by insisting that pupils' written work is well presented.
- Pupils do not get enough practice in writing at length in subjects other than English.

The school has the following strengths

- Most pupils make good progress in Years 4, 5 and 6.
- With better teaching, children are making increasingly good progress in the Nursery and Reception class.
- Almost all pupils display positive attitudes to learning, and they feel safe. Behaviour is good and has improved considerably over the last year.
- The headteacher and senior leaders have taken decisive action to improve pupils' education. They manage teachers' performance well, and this is improving the quality of teaching.
- Governance has improved significantly. Governors now provide good challenge to leaders and play a full part in improving the school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed eight lessons, all of which were seen together with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with a group of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and three other governors, the school's senior and subject leaders, and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector took account of the 10 responses to the staff questionnaire and the 29 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View).
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a range of school documents, including records of the school's checks on the quality of teaching, the school improvement plan and records relating to behaviour, attendance, safeguarding and the tracking of pupils' progress. He also looked closely at pupils' written work from the current school year, and listened to pupils reading.

Inspection team

George Logan, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Puller Memorial Primary School is much smaller than the average-sized primary school, although the number of pupils has increased recently.
- Pupils are taught in three classes. The Early Years Foundation Stage includes Nursery and Reception children. The other classes include pupils from Years 1, 2 and 3 and from Years 4, 5 and 6.
- Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. There are a few pupils of Traveller heritage.
- 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 above average.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium (additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those looked after by the local authority and those with a parent in the armed services) is slightly below average.
- An above-average proportion of pupils enter or leave partway through their primary school education, particularly in Year 3 or later.
- The school offers a breakfast club, which is managed by the governing body and was included in the inspection.
- There were too few pupils in Year 6 in 2013 for the government's floor standards to be applicable.
- The headteacher joined the school in January 2011 and works on a part-time basis.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that pupils' progress is consistently good, by ensuring that:
 - teachers across the school show consistently high expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - teachers insist that the presentation of written work is high in all classes and subjects
 - marking is more effective in rapidly improving pupils' performance.
- Improve pupils' achievement, particularly in Years 3 and 4, by:
 - consolidating and extending their skills through high-quality written work
 - giving pupils more opportunities to practise their skills in writing through work in subjects other than English.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement varies across the school. Those in Years 5 and 6 tend to make the best progress. Until recently, the progress of younger pupils has been more erratic. Thanks to improvements in Years 1 and 2 and additional support in Years 3 and 4, it is now more consistent and rapid across the school. These improvements are not yet, however, sufficiently well established to close gaps in learning so that overall achievement is good.
- Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 2 fell over a three-year period up to 2013, and is still below average. Writing was a particular weakness in 2013. The action taken by the school has reversed the decline, and school data and the work seen in lessons indicate that progress is accelerating and standards are now rising rapidly. However, there remains a legacy of below-average standards for the pupils now in Years 3 and 4, particularly in writing. Additional support has been provided to enable pupils to make up the deficits through the 'Achievement for All' programme.
- Attainment at the end of Year 6 varies widely with such small numbers of pupils, but pupils have typically made good progress in Key Stage 2. Standards are improving strongly this year and some pupils are working at the challenging Level 6.
- The number of children joining the Nursery has increased, although not all children continue to Reception. Recently, children have started in Reception with skills at least in line with those expected for their age. With better teaching and improved provision, they now make good progress by the time they join Year 1, and standards are rising. Staff assessments of children's knowledge and skills are thorough.
- There were no pupils supported by pupil premium funding in Year 6 in either 2012 or 2013. Across the school, however, funded pupils benefit from specifically targeted support and now make progress mostly in line with the others.
- Pupils who join partway through Key Stages 1 and 2 progress in line with other groups. Those from a Traveller background, for example, attend frequently and have made good progress from low starting points, so their skills are largely in line with those expected.
- The proportion of Year 1 pupils attaining the expected standard in the screening check declined in 2013. Better teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) in Years 1, 2 and 3 this year is contributing to an improvement in pupils' knowledge. Progress in reading across the school is now generally good.
- This is a welcoming school. Disabled pupils and those who have diverse and sometimes complex special educational needs, who often join the school in Year 3 or later, are supported well and make progress close to what is expected nationally. More-able pupils are now being challenged more.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Weaker teaching in the past has affected learning and progress for the younger pupils. Leaders have acted firmly to eradicate inadequate teaching and ensure that teaching in general is more effective. As a result, teaching is now generally good. Current staff in Years 1, 2 and 3 are accelerating pupils' progress, although their efforts have not yet had a full impact on standards.

- A remaining weakness is that teachers do not pay enough attention to the quality and presentation of pupils' written work, so pupils present work that is messy and sometimes incomplete.
- The checking of and resulting support for pupils' progress have improved. There is some good practice in the marking of pupils' work, with occasional identification of the next steps that pupils need to take to move their learning on, and some setting of individual targets. However, effective marking is not seen in all subjects and some work remains unmarked.
- The teaching of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved considerably and is now typically good. The classroom environment is bright and stimulating, and the small numbers of children benefit from a high level of individual engagement with adults.
- Pupils supported by pupil premium funding benefit from well-targeted adult support linked to careful tracking of their progress.
- When teaching is most effective, pupils learn well. In a numeracy session in the oldest class, where pupils were revising addition and subtraction strategies and improving their confidence in using these, pupils of all ages were provided for well. As a result, they made good progress.
- Effective teaching of reading skills means that pupils make mostly good progress in reading.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Their attitudes to learning are now very positive, contributing strongly to better progress. Pupils demonstrate a love of learning, particularly in Years 4 to 6.
- Inappropriate behaviour is now rare. This is a significant improvement over the last school year. The headteacher tackled this issue head-on and ensured that all staff took a consistent approach to effective behaviour management. There have been few recent exclusions. Few parents who offered their views had any concerns about behaviour.
- Pupils eagerly undertake responsibilities, for example, as reading partners. Pupils from all year groups work together happily.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Consequently, pupils feel safe and are confident that adults will resolve any difficulties. The school's safeguarding arrangements meet national requirements.
- Pupils have a good appreciation of a range of risks. For example, Year 6 pupils are well aware of the risks of using social networking websites and understand how to keep themselves safe. They are thus well prepared for secondary school.
- Bullying is rare. Pupils know that bullying may take many forms, but feel confident that the school will protect them.
- The breakfast club is nurturing and calm. It provides a good start for pupils who arrive at school early.
- Attendance is broadly average. Levels of persistent absence have been reduced. Pupils arrive at school punctually.

The leadership and management are good

- Robust and effective action has been taken over a lengthy period to tackle weaker teaching and associated issues of poor behaviour, and the results are now showing. Weaknesses in governance have been tackled with rigour. Achievement is improving, indicating that the school has the capacity for sustained improvement.
- The school's view of its own strengths and weaknesses is broadly accurate. All initiatives are rigorously evaluated for their impact. Senior leaders have correctly identified the key areas for improvement and these issues are rightly at the heart of the school improvement plan.
- Staff benefit from good training opportunities. All have targets for improving their effectiveness. There is a close link between teachers' performance and any pay rises and promotion.
- School leaders closely monitor the impact of pupil premium funding and adjust the support provided to ensure maximum impact on pupils' achievement. This funding is contributing effectively to better gains in learning for qualifying pupils.
- The current curriculum engages pupils well. It focuses primarily on the development of skills in literacy and numeracy. However, writing skills are not promoted widely in different subjects. The school promotes sporting and physical education opportunities well and pupils take part in many competitions. Pupils experience a good range of visits, visitors and events.
- Planning for the use of the primary sports funding is effective. Alongside ongoing staff training to ensure the sustainability of this initiative, the school has introduced new activities for pupils who would be not otherwise feel committed to sport or taking exercise.
- Support from the local authority has been limited, in line with what is normally provided for schools previously judged to be good.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong in most respects. Community links and partnerships with other schools are good. Links with the parish church are not as active as in the past. Pupils have, however, had more opportunities to engage with representatives of other faiths. Links with parents and carers are good.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is good. There have been significant changes in the governing body in the last year. The current governors bring considerable skills and expertise to the role. They are knowledgeable and ensure that the school has a clear strategic direction. They undertake training. They are fully involved in evaluating the school's strengths and weaknesses, and in development planning. They have a good understanding of school and national data and compare the school's performance with that of others. They are increasingly effective in holding school leaders to account and are determined to tackle weaker aspects quickly. Governors have a good understanding of the quality of teaching and how teachers are rewarded for their effectiveness. They are committed to ensuring equality of opportunity, tackling discrimination and promoting good relationships. For example, they carefully evaluate the impact of decisions about the use of pupil premium funding to close gaps in pupils' achievement.

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

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| Unique reference number | 117453 |
| Local authority | Hertfordshire |
| Inspection number | 431255 |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary aided |
| Age range of pupils | 3–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 62 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Marcus Cooper |
| Headteacher | Tracy Keddie |
| Date of previous school inspection | 9 February 2009 |
| Telephone number | 01920 463178 |
| Fax number | 01920 860930 |
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