

Harrow Gate Primary School

Piper Knowle Road, Stockton-on-Tees, County Durham, TS19 8DE

Inspection dates 19–20 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	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

- Over time, pupils' achievement and progress have varied across year groups, subjects and between different groups.
- Not all teachers are skilled in the teaching of mathematics in general and in calculation in particular. There are not enough opportunities for pupils to investigate and solve mathematical problems. Consequently, standards in mathematics are not rising as rapidly as in reading and writing.
- Information about pupils' prior learning is not always used to set work at the correct level. This means that pupils are not sufficiently challenged to achieve beyond what is expected for their age, particularly the most able.
- Marking is inconsistent. Pupils do not always know what they do well, what they need to do to improve or have time to respond to teachers' comments.
- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. This is because a few pupils, particularly some boys, do not concentrate fully on learning. As a result, their progress slows.
- Leadership and management require improvement. Checks on the performance of the school are not rigorous enough. This leads to leaders and managers failing to gain an accurate picture of pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching.
- Governors have, over a number of years, not been successful in providing sufficient drive and challenge to secure a trend of rapid school improvement.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher has ensured that the school provides a caring and welcoming environment where pupils feel safe.
- Actions taken by senior leaders have ensured that pupils have more opportunities to write at length across a range of subjects. As a result, standards in writing are improving.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage provides exciting learning opportunities and, as a result, children achieve well.
- Pupils' attendance has improved because of the hard work of the school. Attendance is now average and punctuality is good.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 20 lessons of parts of lessons. Three observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders. The inspectors also observed pupils being taught in small groups and listened to pupils from different year groups read.
- Discussions were held with pupils, the headteacher and deputy headteacher, senior leaders, middle leaders, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. A telephone discussion was also held with the chief adviser from the local authority. A discussion was held with the headteacher of Mill Lane Primary School about pupils who have dual registration.
- Inspectors observed the overall work of the school and looked at a number of documents, including the school's data about pupils' current progress. In addition, the inspectors reviewed documents relating to safeguarding, governance, behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors took account of the 61 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and 39 staff questionnaires.
- Inspectors looked at a range of other evidence, including displays, the school's website and evidence relating to the school's wider achievements beyond the classroom.

Inspection team

Margaret Armstrong, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
John Pattinson	Additional Inspector
Colin Scott	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for support through the pupil premium is well above average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The remaining pupils are from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds. The number of pupils who speak English as an additional language is average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is above average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- A very small number of pupils have dual registration. At the time of the inspection these pupils were receiving all of their education at Mill Lane Primary School.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school has a breakfast club managed by the governing body.
- There has been a high turnover of staff in recent years. Four members of staff were on maternity leave at the time of the inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching across the school so that it is consistently good by:
 - making sure teachers use the information about pupils' previous learning to set work at the right level for pupils of different abilities, especially for the most able pupils
 - developing a more consistent approach to the marking of pupils' work so that they know how well they are doing, what they need to improve, have time to make improvements and use their improvements in subsequent lessons.
- Raise standards in mathematics, by:
 - ensuring that the school's policy on the teaching of calculation is fully implemented by all staff
 - offering more chances for pupils to apply their skills in real-life, problem-solving activities
 - insisting that pupils present their mathematical work to a consistently high standard
 - providing high-quality training to extend the skills of teachers in the teaching of mathematics.
- Further improve the behaviour of a small number of pupils, particularly boys, who find it difficult to concentrate on their work, by consistently applying the school's strategies for managing behaviour.
- Improve leadership and management, including governance, by:
 - ensuring that the school's procedures for judging outcomes are rigorous and accurate
 - making sure the school's tracking system to check on the progress pupils are making is used well by all staff, so they can be held accountable for the performance of pupils in their class
 - ensuring that the governing body has a full and accurate understanding of the school's performance and that governors use this information to hold senior leaders fully to account for their work.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspects of leadership and governance may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement requires improvement because not enough is done to build upon the good start that children make in the Nursery and Reception classes.
- Pupils do not make consistently good progress in Key Stages 1 and 2. Learning is not always planned to ensure that pupils acquire and apply their skills at a fast rate, especially the most able. As a result, too few pupils reach the higher levels across the school.
- While standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 are lower than those expected nationally, they improved in 2013. However, not all pupils make equal progress across the key stage because teaching is not consistently good.
- Achievement in Key Stage 2 has been significantly below national expectations for a number of years. Recently pupils' progress has begun to accelerate, particularly in Years 5 and 6, due to better quality teaching. A good example of this was seen in Year 5 where pupils worked conscientiously to accurately measure the perimeters of irregular shapes. In this lesson, pupils rose to the challenge of using their skills to design a garden.
- Achievement in mathematics requires improvement. The new policy on calculations is not used consistently by all staff. For example, in some lessons pupils spend too long practising their mathematical skills rather than applying them to problem-solving activities. In some classes, pupils' presentation of their mathematical work is careless and this leads to avoidable errors.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make similar progress to that of their classmates. Their achievement in reading and writing is stronger than it is in mathematics. A small number of pupils with more complex needs make good progress because of the carefully tailored support they are given in lessons, small groups and individually.
- In both the Nursery and Reception, children display an eagerness to learn and good levels of concentration. In Reception, for example, children were engrossed in the story of the *Scaredy Cat*. They listened intently and confidently talked about their views about the main characters in the story. An interesting and thought-provoking range of activities ensures that children make good progress working towards the goals expected for their age.
- A new phonics programme (learning about letters and the sounds they make) for younger pupils is effective and is helping pupils become confident, fluent readers. As a result, standards in the national screening check for Year 1 were broadly average in 2013.
- Progress in reading is speeding up because teaching ensures that reading is a priority across subjects and all year groups. Pupils speak enthusiastically about the books and authors they enjoy when reading at home and at school. In the words of one Year 6 pupil, 'I love reading. It's my favourite thing.' The well-organised library is used well by pupils to research information and read for pleasure. Pupils say they find their reading record booklets very useful and because of them, they are reading more frequently at home.
- Standards in writing are rising steadily across the school. This is because senior leaders have carefully checked to see that pupils are given sufficient opportunities to practise their grammar, punctuation and spelling skills when writing at length across a range of subjects. Display is used well as a means to celebrate and model good writing.
- The pupil premium is used effectively throughout the school and this reflects the school's commitment to ensuring that every child has equality of opportunity. The additional support provided by teaching assistants is helping eligible pupils to catch up with other pupils. In 2013 eligible pupils made good progress in writing. As a result, their performance was above average and in line with that of their classmates; in mathematics it was two terms behind that of their peers.
- Pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language achieve well because the school provides ample opportunities for them to develop their speaking and listening skills as soon as they start school.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching is not good enough over time to ensure that all pupils achieve well. Pupils, particularly the most able, are not always challenged enough to make the best possible progress.
- The information available about pupils' prior learning is not always used to plan activities at the right level for pupils of differing abilities. Work is sometimes too easy or too hard and as a result, pupils do not achieve as well as they should.
- Questioning is often used well to help pupils make links with things they have learnt before. For example, in Year 3 sharp questioning about pupils' knowledge of food chains helped them develop a good understanding of why some animals live in different habitats. However, learning in mathematics does not move pupils' skills forward quickly enough. Pupils have too little time to practise what they have been taught.
- Pupils' work is marked regularly but the comments provided are not consistent in identifying how pupils can improve their work and pupils are not given enough time to work on points for improvement.
- Expectations are not always high enough. This is particularly the case in mathematics where pupils do not always take sufficient care when setting out their calculations. Pupils are not always expected to present work neatly and this leads to them making careless errors.
- Where learning is good, pupils are challenged in discussions and share tasks. In a Year 6 English lesson, pupils were encouraged to carefully check their writing with a partner before simply accepting it as correct. Where teaching assistants are deployed effectively, they make a valuable contribution to pupils' progress.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, adults provide high-quality care and support. This helps children to confidently explore, investigate and pursue their curiosity. As a result, children settle quickly to become self-assured, finding things out for themselves.
- Since the last inspection, pupils have been provided with far more opportunities to practise their skills in reading and writing skills across a range of subject areas. Displays around the school provide many first-class examples of pupils' written work, including research around themes such as Ancient Egyptian burial sites and The Great Fire of London. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about their enjoyment of topic work which they feel helps them learn 'lots of new things'.

The behaviour and safety of pupils requires improvement

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Although the majority are eager to learn, a few pupils, particularly boys, quickly lose concentration when tasks do not fully interest them. They then become inattentive and talkative and may disrupt the learning of others.
- Pupils say that behaviour in lessons is generally good, but that at times it is 'a bit iffy'. They spoke positively of the rewards for good behaviour including 'Team Points' and 'Pupil of the Week' and they feel these encourage them to behave well. However, they are fully aware that some pupils do not always behave as well as they should.
- The perceptions parents have about behaviour in school are mixed. A few raised some concerns about the way the school manages behaviour. Parents spoken to felt that behavioural incidents are effectively dealt with by staff, but accept that at times children do not behave well. The school is already taking steps to provide parents with updated information on the school's policy for promoting positive behaviour for learning.
- Pupils' behaviour around the school is good and, on occasions, exemplary. Most are polite and friendly, know how to look after each other and listen respectfully to each other and take turns. They behave well at lunchtimes in the dining hall and support each other well whilst playing outside during break times. The good behaviour seen in an assembly on the theme of 'Kindness', contributed well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Older pupils willingly take on responsibilities. They enjoy their roles as 'Harrow Gate Heroes', playground buddies, fund-raisers and in helping younger pupils with their reading.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils feel safe and say there is very

little bullying. They know about the different types of bullying, such as cyber-bullying and prejudice-based bullying. They feel well supported at school and are confident that problems get sorted out quickly. One pupil commented, 'If you are upset or worried the teachers help you sort it out'. The school works well with external agencies to support individual pupils.

- The school support pupils with low attendance through a range of strategies including support from a skilled parent support adviser. Consequently, attendance is average and improving, punctuality is good and persistent absence has reduced noticeably since the last inspection.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because the leaders' actions have not led to sufficient improvement in pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching.
- The headteacher and senior leaders are clear about what needs to be done to drive improvement, but are overly optimistic about what has been achieved. They do not always check carefully enough on the impact of actions taken and whether these are leading to improvements in teaching and learning.
- The senior leadership team has been strengthened by the very recent appointment of a new leader for mathematics who has identified new approaches to teaching mathematics, but these have not had time to have had a full impact on improving achievement and the quality of teaching.
- Middle leaders are at differing stages in their roles. The most effective manage their roles successfully. They show how past actions have improved pupils' progress and have a clear idea of the next goals towards further improvement.
- There are suitable procedures for checking on the progress of individuals and groups of pupils. As a result, senior leaders are beginning to use information about pupils' progress to test out the impact of new initiatives. However, some teachers do not use this information well enough to plan work at the right level for all pupils, especially for the most able and in mathematics.
- The headteacher has been successful in bringing together staff in the drive to improve the school. Consequently, all staff share the headteacher's commitment to secure high achievement for all pupils. The school provides a caring and nurturing environment. However, this has not ensured that all pupils behave as well as they could or always try to produce their best work.
- The curriculum provides too few opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical skills. However, it is increasingly varied and rich, using themes such as 'Dungeons and Dragons' in Year 2 to link subjects together in more interesting ways. This is helping to increase pupils' interest in learning and their awareness of the world around them. Leaders successfully ensure that pupils have ample opportunities to practise their writing skills across subjects. As a result, achievement in writing has improved since the last inspection. The Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum meets the needs of children well.
- The systems to manage teachers' performance are well-established, objectives are linked to the Teachers' Standards and there is a definite link between appraisal and any increases in salary.
- Funding to support pupils eligible for the pupil premium has been used successfully to develop their basic skills in reading and writing and to broaden their experiences of cultural activities.
- The additional sports funding has been spent suitably in widening opportunities for pupils' participation in team sports and for more sport after school. In Year 2, for example, all pupils joined in excitedly with skilfully designed activities to help them develop their throwing and catching skills. These are contributing well to pupils' physical development and well-being.
- The local authority works effectively with the school. It has provided tailored support and training which has contributed, for example, to improvements in teaching.
- Safeguarding policies and procedures fully meet requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors bring a range of skills which they have updated through attending further training. Whilst they offer support to senior leaders in a variety of ways, too many lack a clear understanding of achievement information or the quality of teaching so have been unable to

offer sufficient challenge to the senior leadership team. This has contributed to a continued decline in standards which has only recently been halted. In partnership with senior leaders, governors have now developed an effective system for checking the performance of all staff which rewards good teaching and addresses any underperformance. They have a clear understanding of the school's finances, including pupil premium funding and the primary school sport funding. Governors sometimes rely too much on information provided by the school, but have more recently used the reports issued by the local authority and other external consultants to check and clarify information.

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	111643
Local authority	Stockton-on-Tees
Inspection number	430936

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	454
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Lister
Headteacher	Jackie Warburton
Date of previous school inspection	27 June 2012
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