

Billingshurst Primary School

Upper Station Road, Billingshurst, West Sussex, RH14 9RE

Inspection dates 20–21 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	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		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that has serious weaknesses.

- The progress pupils make by the end of Year 6 is inadequate.
- Standards in mathematics are well below national expectations. Too few pupils attain the higher Level 3 in reading, writing or mathematics at the end of Year 2.
- The attainment and progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are below that of similar pupils nationally.
- Teachers often do not have high enough expectations of the quality of pupils' written work. Their assessments of pupils' knowledge and skills are not accurate enough.
- Too much teaching fails to create positive attitudes to learning amongst pupils.
- The effectiveness and impact of teaching assistants are too variable.
- The school has faced considerable challenges as a result of the long periods of absence of some senior leaders. This has slowed the pace of improvements in teaching and achievement over time.
- Leaders' checks on progress in Years 1 and 2 are not rigorous enough to ensure consistently good learning by pupils over time.
- External support from the local authority has lacked urgency and has not raised achievement quickly enough.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders, including governors, have, in the last year, secured significant improvements in teaching, which has led to better achievement. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 are making more rapid progress than in the past.
- Good teaching and effective support in Reception have been sustained.
- There are effective procedures for keeping pupils safe.
- Systems which set teachers' targets for improvement are increasingly effective.
- Several new leaders responsible for aspects of the school's work have significantly increased the school's capacity for improvement.
- Governors are increasingly effective in holding senior leaders to account.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in 25 lessons, seven of which were seen together with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with a group of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors, the school’s senior and subject leaders, and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 45 responses to the staff questionnaire and the 125 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View).
- Inspectors 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. They also looked closely at pupils’ written work for the current school year, and listened to pupils reading.

Inspection team

George Logan, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Velia Hartland

Additional Inspector

Gillian Coffey

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

- Billingshurst is much larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The vast majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. There is a small number of 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 through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also below average.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the additional funding known as pupil premium (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 below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Billingshurst Primary was established in 2010 through the amalgamation of the former infant and junior schools which operated on the same site.
- Since it opened, the school has experienced considerable turbulence in staffing and high levels of extended staff absence.
- The National Mathematics Partnership is working with the school to improve the teaching of mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching across the school, so that pupils' progress is at least good, by:
 - ensuring all teachers have high expectations of what all pupils, including the most able, can achieve
 - improving significantly the quality and presentation of pupils' written work in all subjects, especially in Years 1, 2 and 3
 - developing the skills of teaching assistants and carefully monitoring the impact of their work
 - making sure that teachers assess pupils' knowledge and skills consistently and accurately.
- Raising standards so that all pupils, including those who are disabled or who have special educational needs, achieve well by:
 - ensuring that teachers in Years 1 and 2 provide high levels of challenge for children who leave Reception with above-average attainment so that they typically reach Level 3 by the end of Year 2
 - ensuring the intensive support for mathematics currently provided is reflected in significantly better attainment by the end of Year 6.
- Implement more rigorous procedures for recording and analysing pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning, noting trends in the behaviour of individuals and groups, and taking prompt action to tackle emerging issues.
- Improve the impact of leadership and management by:

- ensuring that all senior leaders fully support and implement effectively the headteacher’s drive for improvement
- ensuring that new middle leaders have a thorough understanding of pupils’ performance across the school
- implementing rigorous monitoring of pupils’ work in Years 1 and 2
- ensuring that all external support provides a consistently high level of challenge so that current trends of improvement are sustained.

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

An external review of the school’s use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- Achievement is inadequate because, over time, too few pupils have progressed well enough from the time they joined the school. For the last three years, pupils in Years 3 to 6 have underachieved significantly. Although standards in reading and writing rose to broadly average levels in 2013, those in mathematics and in grammar, punctuation and spelling were well below average.
- In the past, the school has not given sufficient priority to ensuring high-quality handwriting and written work. As a result, pupils have not developed these skills to a high enough level. The recent focus on this has contributed to faster progress in Years 4, 5 and 6. However, weaknesses are still evident in Years 1, 2 and 3.
- Actions to tackle weak teaching in mathematics and the recent intensive support programme to boost achievement are driving better progress. However, despite the fact that teaching in Year 6 is mostly effective now, progress has not accelerated sufficiently to compensate fully for slow progress in earlier years.
- The school is now targeting the most able towards being successful in the challenging Level 6 tests. Until the current year, the most-able pupils have, like the others, consistently underachieved.
- Although the school monitors the progress of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, and their achievement is improving, these pupils have typically made less progress than similar pupils nationally.
- Children enter Reception with levels of development in line with those typically expected for their age. They make good progress in their learning, because both teaching and support are mostly good, reaching standards well above those normally found on entry to Year 1.
- Pupils are now making better progress at Key Stage 1, so that standards are, overall, slightly above average by the end of Year 2. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher Level 3, however, is below the national average.
- In 2013, Year 6 pupils supported by additional funding were the equivalent of around one year behind their classmates in English and mathematics. However, the school has revised its use of available funding so that these pupils, across the school, now make better progress. Currently, they are making progress at least in line with their peers.
- A well-above-average proportion of Year 1 pupils attained the expected standard in the phonics (the sounds that letters make) screening check in both 2012 and 2013. Recent improvements in teaching are helping to accelerate progress in reading.
- Pupils of Traveller heritage make mostly good progress. Their attainment is close to the levels expected for their age.

The quality of teaching

is inadequate

- Teaching has not, over time, enabled pupils to make the progress they should and too many have underachieved. It has not provided sufficient challenge to drive rapid progress across the school. This remains the case, for example, where the work set by teachers does not build well enough on pupils' enthusiasm for learning.
- Teachers' expectations of the quality of pupils' handwriting and the presentation of their written work remain too low in Years 1 to 3, where teachers too readily accept poor-quality work.
- Teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment levels have often, in recent years, been inaccurate. The school has introduced new procedures to ensure that evaluations of pupils' knowledge and skills are accurate, which inspectors confirm are beginning to be effective.
- The support provided by teaching assistants varies in quality because the school has not ensured all are trained and equipped well enough with the necessary knowledge and skills to promote

good learning.

- School leaders have sought to improve the quality of teaching since the amalgamation. Not all teachers were, initially, fully committed to a culture of high expectations. As new staff have been recruited, the overall quality of teaching has continued to improve. Inspectors saw the impact of this both in lessons and in the quality of pupils' work.
- The school has implemented consistent systems for checking and improving pupils' progress. Most work is carefully marked, often with helpful extended comments. Some opportunities are provided for pupils to act upon the comments in teachers' marking.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage benefit from effective teaching, leading to good progress. Staff observe children carefully, identifying what is needed to move their learning on quickly.
- More thorough tracking and better-targeted support are ensuring that pupils for whom the school receives additional funding make increasingly rapid progress.
- When pupils learn well, they cover a lot of ground. For example, in a successful Year 2 writing session, pupils were learning to use adventurous vocabulary. Pupils were very motivated and most, particularly boys, produced a considerable amount of good-quality work. This good practice is not seen often enough in Years 1 to 3.
- The teaching of reading has improved, with planned opportunities to enable pupils to catch up. Pupils now read confidently and with understanding.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

require improvement

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Over time, pupils' attitudes towards learning have not been sufficiently positive to enable them to make the progress of which they are capable. Although, with better teaching, there have been improvements in progress, behaviour, even now, quickly deteriorates when teaching fails to engage pupils' interest. Pupils' conduct around the school is good. Poor behaviour is rare. The school does not, however, give enough priority to the analysis of information about pupils' behaviour, incidents of low-level disruption, or the monitoring of trends over time.
- Pupils are courteous and treat others with respect. Exclusions are rare. Pupils are consistently proud of their school. Parents and carers who gave their opinions have mostly positive views about behaviour.
- 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. Bullying is rare. Pupils understand that bullying may take many forms and say that any incidents are tackled rigorously.
- Pupils are aware of the risks posed by unrestricted access to the internet.
- Attendance is above average, with very few pupils being persistently absent. Pupils typically arrive at school punctually.

The leadership and management

require improvement

- Not all senior leaders have fully supported the headteacher's drive for improvement. As a result, the senior leadership team has been under strength. Progress has been made very recently to resolve these issues, but leaders know that there is work to do to fully ensure a shared commitment to rapid improvement.
- Most of the recently appointed staff responsible for aspects of the school (middle leaders) are now having a significant impact on raising achievement, although not all have a clear understanding of the school's overall performance.
- Exceptionally high levels of staff turnover, extended staff absences and an inherited culture of low expectations have adversely affected pupils' achievement in the past few years. However, weak teaching has now been largely eliminated. School leaders are rigorous in selecting new staff. The impact of these actions is reflected in the improvements already evident in Years 3 to

6.

- The curriculum is rightly focused on securing improvements in literacy and numeracy skills. However, the additional learning sessions provided for some Year 1 and 2 pupils are not monitored closely enough to ensure that learning is effective. Pupils access a very wide range of extra-curricular activities, which boosts their learning and the development of a variety of skills.
- The monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are thorough. Senior leaders now hold staff more accountable for pupils' progress.
- Senior leaders track the progress of groups and individuals thoroughly, identifying gaps in their knowledge and understanding. They have reorganised the provision of additional teaching so that it is now more effective in closing gaps in pupils' learning.
- School leaders have a realistic view of past issues around achievement and teaching. Their evaluations of teaching and learning are now accurate. Systems for setting teachers targets so that they improve their practice now ensure a closer link between teachers' performance and pay progression. School leaders and governors require thorough evidence of the impact of teachers' work, so that only effective teachers qualify for higher pay levels.
- School leaders monitor the impact of additional funding closely to ensure that it has maximum impact on pupils' learning.
- Use of the primary sports funding is appropriately planned. This is improving the quality of sports coaching and pupils' health through the development of staff coaching skills, alongside new activities such as badminton.
- Support from the local authority has not, over time, been fully effective, and this has also contributed to the slow pace of improvement. External support is not providing sufficiently robust challenge to accelerate improvement. The school has chosen to use specialist external support as necessary.
- Provision to promote pupils' social and moral development is good. Community links and partnerships, including with the main secondary school, are actively developed. Links with parents and carers are good.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are very aware of the complex staffing issues, both in teaching and leadership, which compromised the school's efforts to improve achievement more rapidly. They acknowledge that they have been too slow to take the necessary radical action to resolve the significant staffing issues. However, the level of challenge they provide has improved significantly. They are now more rigorously focused on testing the accuracy of the assertions of school leaders, rather than taking things on trust. Governors undertake appropriate training to improve their skills and understanding. They recognise the school's weaknesses, but consider that, in most year groups, 'the corner has been turned'. They compare the school's performance with national data and know that further improvement is needed. Governors are committed to ensuring equality of opportunity, tackling discrimination and promoting good relationships. They have a good knowledge of the quality of teaching. They are working to ensure that pay and promotion are more closely linked to teachers' effectiveness. Governors carefully evaluate the impact of additional funding to close gaps in pupils' achievement and they ensure, along with senior leaders, that safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. All other statutory duties are met.

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	135183
Local authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	431061

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	610
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alison Sutton
Headteacher	Helen Williamson
Date of previous school inspection	20 June 2012
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