

Blenheim Park Primary School

Lancaster Road, Sculthorpe, Fakenham, NR21 7PX

Inspection dates 27–28 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	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.

- While pupils have good numeracy skills, they do not have sufficient opportunities to apply them to solve problems in real-life situations.
- The most able pupils are not always given the harder tasks they need to make the progress they should.
- Pupils do not have the guidance they need to help them to improve their work.
- Sometimes pupils cannot learn for themselves because they do not have the equipment they need.
- While school leaders know what needs to improve, they are less clear about how it is to be done. As a result, while pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching are both improving, the rate of improvement is slow.
- Governors do not hold school leaders to account sufficiently.

The school has the following strengths

- Children settle quickly into the Reception class and are inquisitive learners.
- Pupils say, and parents confirm, that they feel safe in school and well cared for.
- The vast majority of pupils make the level of progress expected in reading and writing between Years 3 and 6.
- The headteacher and staff know the pupils well and what each needs to do to improve.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector sampled parts of eight lessons. All were jointly observed with the headteacher.
- The inspector made other visits to classes, looked at pupils' workbooks and listened to pupils reading.
- Discussions were held with pupils, the headteacher, other staff, governors, a number of parents and a representative of the local authority.
- There were insufficient responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, so the inspector talked to nine parents. The responses to 10 staff questionnaires were also considered.
- The inspector looked at a number of documents including: the school's own information on pupils' progress; planning and monitoring documentation; the school's view of its own performance; records of how the school uses its funding, especially how the money from the pupil premium is spent; records relating to behaviour and attendance; and documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Robert Greatrex, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average primary school.
- The vast majority of pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium (the extra government funding for pupils looked after by the local authority and those known to be eligible for free school meals) is below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is well above average. The proportion supported at school action plus is also well above average. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs.
- Pupils are taught in three mixed-age classes: Reception and Year 1; Year 2 and Year 3; and Years 4, 5 and 6. Occasionally, a small number of pupils will work in class with older or younger pupils if it is thought to meet their needs better.
- In 2013, the school had too few pupils to make an accurate comparison with the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The turnover of teaching staff has been relatively high in recent years.
- An independent play school is based on the school site and is inspected separately.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that achievement also improves by:
 - giving pupils more opportunities to use numeracy skills to investigate and solve real and relevant problems in mathematics and other subjects
 - giving the most able pupils tasks at just the right level of difficulty so they make good or better progress.
- Enable pupils to play a greater part in shaping their own learning by:
 - ensuring they always have clear guidance on how to improve their work
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to decide how to tackle mathematical problems
 - giving them the tools, particularly in mathematics, to learn for themselves.
- Improve the effectiveness of leaders and managers, particularly the governing body, by:
 - setting targets in the school improvement and development plan that are clear and measurable so everyone is clear what must be done, and how and when it will be achieved
 - ensuring governors have the training and guidance necessary to support, question and hold the school to account for the progress of all pupils.
- An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because the rate of pupils' progress through the school is not good, particularly that of the most able pupils. Some pupils have gaps in their knowledge of basic skills, and standards in mathematics generally lag behind those in reading and writing.
- Children start school in Reception with skills and experiences typical for their age, although they are lower in some years because of the relatively high proportion of pupils who have special educational needs. Basic number and writing skills are relatively low, but personal and social development is generally stronger. They make steady progress during the year and enter Year 1 with broadly average attainment.
- Through the school, pupils' progress varies between classes because the impact of teaching varies too much. This is caused by the relatively high staff turnover. Too many of the most able pupils reach average rather than above-average levels because the tasks they are given do not always build sufficiently on what they have already accomplished.
- Standards in mathematics are below average. Some pupils have gaps in their basic knowledge but most pupils have a good understanding of basic number rules and operations. However, pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to practise these skills to investigate problems or apply their knowledge in other subjects. As a result, they do not learn how to apply numeracy skills to real-life situations. In mental calculations, too, pupils can struggle to decide how to tackle anything other than very straightforward questions.
- The way letters link to the sounds they make (phonics) is taught well, so results in the 2013 screening check were above average and the current Year 1 are expected to do well, too. This is a very positive response by leaders to below-average results in the 2012 screening check, after which more staff training and new teaching methods were introduced to good effect.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs achieve well because these pupils receive extra help to meet their precise needs, often from skilled teaching assistants.
- Beneficial to pupils' progress is that some move classes occasionally and work with others of a similar level to themselves.
- In 2013, there were no pupils in Year 6 for whom the school received pupil premium funding, so it is not possible to comment on the attainment of this group of pupils in relation to others. Through the school, these pupils reach levels in English and mathematics similar to those of their peers.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Not enough teaching is good or better to promote good achievement, particularly in mathematics and for the most able.
- Sometimes, particularly in mathematics, pupils are given straightforward tasks that offer them few opportunities to apply what they already know and tackle work that makes them think harder.

- The most able pupils do not always learn at the quicker pace they should. Some tasks are below their current attainment, so they learn little. For example, in one lesson questions such as 'twenty one divided by seven' were answered without needing to think, and at the end of the lesson a pupil who was asked, 'Tell me something about division,' said, 'It is the inverse of multiplication,' demonstrating a higher level of understanding than required in the lesson.
- Pupils have helpful prompts in their classrooms that they can use if they struggle with their general work. Displays, for example, include lots of advice which pupils say is very useful. However, specific guidance about current work in writing and mathematics, that they can turn to for reminders, is missing so they cannot figure things out for themselves.
- Many pupils are given too little guidance on precisely what they need to do next to improve their work. As a result, although they try hard, their energies are not focused and they do not see how one piece of work builds on what they have mastered previously. They are not given regular opportunities to assess for themselves how they are doing, so they learn to take some responsibility for their learning.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are positive; the school is calm, and pupils are polite and friendly. As a result, lessons flow without interruptions.
- In Reception, good use is made of shared experiences, such as a recent visit, to stimulate dialogue so that descriptive vocabulary is good.
- Reading is taught well because of good training. Teachers lead discussions confidently. Similarly, basic numeracy skills are taught effectively. However, teachers sometimes limit opportunities for pupils, particularly the most able, to tackle problems.
- Questioning is used effectively, and teachers are skilful in overcoming the reticence of some pupils to answer by asking questions randomly. Teachers sometimes check pupils have listened and understood by asking them to repeat what they have heard.
- Teaching assistants generally have a very beneficial impact on learning. Because they have been trained well, they know how to help pupils who struggle and helpfully explain things to them in a different way.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Some pupils do not try hard, or show a willingness to 'have a go' when asked to think. A very small number of pupils struggle to behave well.
- Although most pupils respond well to the rewards, such as 'golden time' and 'chance' cards, a small number of pupils struggle to manage their own behaviour. There have been no exclusions.
- In older year groups, a small proportion of pupils lack enthusiasm and, for example, do not offer answers to questions unless asked.
- Some of the most able pupils are impatient to learn. One parent said, 'My child is not learning everything she could, outside of school she takes whatever they have learnt further.'
- In the Reception class, children are highly motivated and 'throw' themselves into learning. For

example, they could not wait to get started when their teacher suggested they made their own dinosaurs based on those seen on a recent visit.

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. All pupils spoken to, and parents asked, said pupils feel safe at school. Pupils say bullying is very rare.
- Pupils are proud to serve on the school council, and of their achievements. They generally take responsibility seriously, such as helping around the building.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Assemblies demonstrate a real sense of community and pupils celebrate one another's achievements.
- Attendance has improved and is now just above average. Most, but not all, pupils are punctual to school. School systems are working well.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- School leaders know what needs improving, but they do not set out clearly how these improvements will be achieved. Goals are not specific and very few can be measured to check they have worked, or to change them if not. Staff with responsibilities for subjects do not contribute enough. Governors do not hold the school to account, and more training is needed so they can use the information they are given to make sure the school is doing well.
- The curriculum is good. Pupils particularly feel they learn best from visits and occasions when learning is brought to life, such as in the school grounds.
- The school gives every pupil an equal opportunity to participate in all it offers. Clear procedures are in place to tackle any form of discrimination.
- Sports funding is used to meet pupils' needs. Opportunities are accessible to all because some costs have been reduced. Equipment purchased has increased the range of sports and a member of staff has been trained to teach specific skills.
- Most parents spoken to feel the school is good. They say, 'Staff have the children's interests at heart,' and, 'They will do anything for the children.' They like being involved directly in their children's learning, such as at the 'reading cafe'.
- The school works well with other local schools, for example, to give pupils opportunities to work and play with those they will meet at high school. Staff benefit, too, from sharing ideas to meet challenges.
- The school was built for many more pupils and has vast grounds. Maintenance and heating, particularly, consume a greater proportion of the available funds than in many schools with a similar number of pupils. As a result, some resources, such as library books, are well worn and the headteacher has to teach for a disproportionate amount of the week. While this enables him to know his school and every pupil in great detail, it reduces his capacity to carry out other aspects of his role as headteacher. The local authority is working with the school to find ways to reduce these costs.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors want to help the school improve and they do much to see that the building,

grounds and general upkeep are in good order. Many also give freely of their time to help with activities directly relating to pupils and their families, such as the very popular 'messy church.' However, few have undertaken the training necessary so they can use information about pupils' achievement and progress to ensure all are making good progress. The exception to this is the progress of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding. Like all financial matters, governors monitor this very closely to see value for money is good. Staff pay is linked to performance and governors have some awareness of how underperformance would be tackled. Legal requirements, including safeguarding, 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	120907
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	430775

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	74
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Barnie Wordsworth
Headteacher	Richard Stanley
Date of previous school inspection	30 April 2012
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