

Bradfield Primary School

Heath Road, Bradfield, Manningtree, CO11 2UZ

Inspection dates 14–15 May 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		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Although pupils' attainment and progress are improving, they have varied considerably over time and remain inconsistent across the school.
- Sometimes, activities do not provide enough challenge for more-able and disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.
- Older pupils do not always have a well-developed understanding of the sounds that letters make (phonics).
- Some pupils do not have enough opportunities to apply their mathematical skills to solve real-life problems.
- Marking is not always helpful in showing pupils how to improve their work. Teachers do not check to make sure pupils respond to any advice they are given.
- The headteacher is leading the school forward at an increasing rate but too much responsibility falls to her at present. The arrangements planned for the leadership of subjects have not yet been finalised.
- Staff and governors are working with the headteacher to secure improvement, but governors do not have a deep enough understanding of pupils' attainment and progress to fully support this role.

The school has the following strengths

- Teaching is improving and pupils are making better progress this year across all key stages.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning.
- Attendance rates are above average.
- Pupils feel safe. Their parents agree.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well.
- The school council are rightly proud of the work they are doing on the school environment.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed eight lessons taught by four staff. Two joint observations were carried out with the headteacher. The inspector also observed a range of activities carried out by the school to support individuals and small groups of pupils.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, members of the governing body, subject and other leaders, a school volunteer and a group of pupils. He spoke with a representative of the local authority by telephone.
- The inspector took account of the 40 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and responses to an inspection questionnaire from 11 staff. The inspector also spoke to parents in the playground to obtain their views about the school.
- The inspector looked at the school's development plan, data on pupils' attainment and progress, records of the monitoring and evaluation of teaching, a wide range of policies and procedures, and the school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils.
- In addition to looking at pupils' work in lessons, the inspector carried out a scrutiny of pupils' work jointly with the headteacher and teaching staff.
- The inspector listened to pupils reading.

Inspection team

Michael Sutherland-Harper, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The vast majority of the pupils are White British.
- A larger-than-average proportion of pupils join partway through their primary school education, especially in Key Stage 2.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above the national average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium is below the national average. This is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those in the care of the local authority.
- There were too few pupils in Year 6 in 2013 for the government's floor standards to be applicable.
- The headteacher has been in post since September 2012. There has been a high staff turnover recently.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning and accelerate pupils' progress by:
 - ensuring that lesson activities fully challenge all groups of learners, particularly disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs and the most able pupils
 - checking that marking and assessment indicates to pupils how to improve their work, and that such advice is followed up by pupils
 - reinforcing the understanding of phonics in Key Stage 2 to help with the ongoing development of reading
 - giving pupils further opportunities to use their mathematical skills in practical situations.
- Increase the impact of leadership and management by making sure that:
 - leadership responsibilities are more effectively delegated across the school
 - there is effective leadership in all subjects
 - governors have a full understanding of what performance data indicate about pupils' attainment and progress.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Pupils' attainment has varied over time. Progress rates have risen but are not yet consistently good.
- The school monitors all pupils' progress each term. Current data show that most groups are now making nationally expected progress as they move through the school, and the attainment of pupils currently in Year 6 is on course to exceed that of the 2013 year group at the end of the year.
- Pupils who join the school late are currently making similar progress to their peers because the school assesses their needs accurately and provides appropriate support through work in smaller groups in and out of class. However, the results for this group have sometimes affected data on pupils' attainment and progress. For example, in 2013, when results dipped, two-thirds of the Year 6 pupils had joined the school in the course of Key Stage 2 and some had attended several schools.
- Children start in the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and understanding slightly below the levels expected for their age. Skills on entry are most variable in literacy and strongest in personal development. By the time they enter Year 1, children are currently working at age-expected levels of development. The proportion increased this year.
- There is a similar picture in Key Stage 1. Attainment is better in reading than in mathematics and writing at present, but all areas improved considerably in 2013 on 2012 results. The current Year 1 have especially benefited from work on developing their social skills. Year 2 are on track to maintain the standards achieved in 2013.
- Pupils are making progress at a faster rate than previously in English. The school has amended the way it teaches the subject, placing additional emphasis on using themes like the Aztecs to teach English. Pupils' progress in mathematics is increasing because of the very recent emphasis on mathematics for practical purposes, such as measuring or finding directions to a buried treasure in a Year 2 and 3 class.
- Pupils reached above expected standards in the Year 1 phonics screening check in 2013. Similar results are expected in 2014 because of the extended work done in the Reception and Year 1 class to reinforce the links between sounds and letters. Some pupils' skills on breaking down words into letters and sounds are less secure in Key Stage 2.
- Pupils are generally making good progress in reading. The school has provided more, and different, books to make reading more attractive to pupils. It is working with parents to encourage them to read together with their children more often. Most pupils read fluently and enjoy discussing where their story is heading.
- More-able pupils are usually making progress in line with their peers but for them, and for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, progress is very occasionally slower when the activities set are not sufficiently difficult to stretch them.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are usually well supported when working in small groups and individually to address their specific needs, but such sessions are not yet consistently effective across all years and subjects.

- In Year 6 in 2013, the number of pupils eligible for the pupil premium was too small to comment on their attainment without risk of identifying individuals. Throughout the school, however, eligible pupils make similar progress to their classmates. Attainment gaps are now closing more quickly because the support on offer is being refined, for example by concentrating on any gaps for individual pupils and working steadily on them with the pupil.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They know that their attainment and progress will be recognised by the school and are eager to obtain the recognition which follows in assemblies and the school newsletter.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching has not been good enough over time to lead to high attainment and continued and rapid progress rates across all key stages. Following a period of staff turnover, staffing is now more settled. Recent observations show that teaching is now increasingly good, and attainment and progress are starting to rise more consistently across all key stages.
- Where learning is less effective, pupils, including the more-able, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are not challenged fully enough by the activities on offer. Sometimes, their understanding is not checked so that they can then be directed to the next steps in their learning.
- The school has reviewed its marking and assessment policy to make it clearer to pupils and parents. Work is marked regularly. Presentation is improving and is now good in most classes. However, marking does not always indicate to pupils how to improve their work and, where it does, such advice is not always followed up by pupils to take their work forward.
- The teaching of literacy and numeracy has improved because it has been a focus for staff development. The teaching of reading is now more often good. The school library has been revamped, with a wider choice of books. Pupils enjoy reading and have regular opportunities to read in class. Where reading requires development, this is addressed through one-to-one sessions with individual pupils. Pupils' understanding of phonics is not reinforced well enough across Key Stage 2 at present to help weaker readers read more rapidly.
- Where learning is strongest, pupils are fully engaged by the topics taught and are continually encouraged to improve their work. In a Year 4 and 5 English class, pupils had to write about the three characters involved in a love triangle. The fact that one was a highwayman especially engaged boys, but all pupils came up with imaginative responses.
- Teachers show good subject knowledge and make good use of questions and interactive whiteboards to present subjects. They take increasing care to remind pupils of the qualities they expect to see in successfully completed work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They behave well in class and around the school. Pupils are polite to each other and welcoming to visitors. They know that good behaviour earns rewards, including house points, and that their achievements are highlighted in the weekly newsletters, and are keen to obtain these rewards.
- The school's high expectations of behaviour are made clear in classrooms and assemblies as well

as by signs around the school to reinforce behaviour codes. Regular work in small groups takes place in the areas near the corridors and these sessions can flow smoothly because a sense of calm and quiet pervades the school.

- The school's eco-council is especially keen to ensure that good behaviour helps to maintain an orderly site. They are proud of the work they have helped to do to develop the outdoor environment.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning from the time they join Reception. They enjoy the various topics they cover in their studies and respond well to the frequent praise they receive, which boosts their confidence levels and adds to their enjoyment.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and sound is good. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet all current requirements.
- Parents feel that their children are safe in school and the children themselves say that they are safe. Older pupils help adults to ensure safety on the play areas at breaks and lunchtime. The school's work in sports helps to keep children fit and healthy.
- Pupils say that any bullying is quickly sorted out. They can identify the different sorts of bullying, such as pushing and shoving and name-calling. Pupils are alert to the dangers posed by cyber-bullying and know how to keep safe when using the internet. Their understanding of how to stay safe around the school site and elsewhere is reinforced by prominently displayed guidance and regular reminders in assemblies. An adult is always nearby to assist any pupil.
- Attendance is above average and has improved following leaders' close checking of attendance patterns. Holidays in term-time are discouraged.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The headteacher's detailed development plan has accurately identified achievement and teaching as areas for improvement. Working together with governors and staff, she has made her expectations of progress in both areas clear and is now driving improvement forward at a quickening pace, but is not yet supported by a delegated leadership team.
- In addition to the headship, the headteacher is also in charge of literacy and is the school's special educational needs coordinator. This means that too much responsibility currently falls to her. Following a period of considerable staffing turbulence, she has managed to recruit permanent staff over the past year. The school has the capacity for sustained improvement now but too much still depends on one person.
- Subject leaders' roles have yet to be finalised for some areas because most staff, although experienced, have only recently been appointed. Where subject leaders are in place, they are now helping to drive improvement forward at a faster rate than previously. They are working – for example, in Reception – to the high standards set by the headteacher.
- A clear programme of lesson observations, book scrutinies and interviews ensure that improvement is now more continuous. This ensures that staff are quickly aware of any possible underachievement by pupils and can take appropriate measures to address any gaps. For example, the school is reviewing how the understanding of phonics is taught across the school so that pupils retain these skills throughout.

- Pupils enjoy a wide range of interesting subjects, taught through topics such as houses and bug-hunting; these two make good use of the surrounding area, which pupils know well. The school has adapted this thematic approach to make the content appropriate to each age group. It has also reviewed when subjects are taught in the school day so pupils always know what they are doing and when. Art and written work around the school show how well pupils are responding to what they study.
- Primary school sports funding is being used to develop staff skills in an additional range of sports such as cricket, tennis and squash so as to increase what is on offer to pupils. Sporting links with the local cluster of small schools have been expanded, for example through extra sports coaching for pupils to take their skills to higher levels.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted very well. The school has good links with the local community and church, with regular visits and visitors. Imaginative approaches in many year groups, for example linking literacy to art work, engage pupils well. Pupils have very strong opinions about the preservation of their outdoor area and what it is right and wrong to do. Good links exist with other local schools through sports activities. Regular visitor exchanges take place with a school in Ghana, whose deputy headteacher has given pupils a flavour of Africa during her regular visits to the school.
- The local authority has close links with the school. It keeps a careful eye on its present rate of development and how to support the headteacher.
- Leaders manage staff performance rigorously. This process is closely linked to the national *Teachers' Standards* and to the priorities in the school development plan. Staff are in no doubt that they are accountable for the standards reached in their classrooms.
- The school newsletter, with its wealth of information, enables the school to maintain regular links with parents. Parents' interest in the school was shown by the good response to the online survey. Many parents attended a regular 'Family reading session' during the inspection to work on reading skills with their children.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors work closely with the headteacher and the local authority to take the school forward. They are supportive, visit regularly and provide effective challenge on achievement, finance and teaching quality. They are now reviewing how to retain good staff. Governors have a general understanding of what data tell them about attainment and progress, but it is not currently sharp enough to support them in helping to raise achievement to consistently good or better levels at an even more rapid rate. Governors are involved in formulating the school development plan and monitoring the use and impact of pupil premium and sport funding to drive improvement forward. They ensure that teachers' pay rises are linked to the progress that pupils make and to the priorities outlined in the school development plan.

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	114735
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	443912

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	95
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Stuart Hopwood
Headteacher	Maria Luck-Davies
Date of previous school inspection	7 July 2011
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