

Thorpe Greenways Junior School

Greenways, Southend-on-Sea, SS1 3BS

Inspection dates 22–23 May 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		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

- The quality of teaching and the quality of leadership and management both require improvement because pupils' progress is not good enough and standards are too low in mathematics.
- Too often, pupils, especially the more able, are not given hard enough work to do to help them learn faster.
- There are insufficient planned opportunities for pupils to solve mathematical problems in mathematics lessons, or to use their mathematics skills in different subjects.
- Marking is not used consistently well to ensure that all pupils are aware of what they need to do to improve their work.
- Subject leaders do not make enough use of information about pupils' progress to help teachers to help their pupils reach higher standards.
- Governors have not challenged school leaders rigorously enough to help improve the school more quickly.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher and senior leaders are making good use of the federation to drive improvement across the school.
- Pupils' progress is improving because the quality of teaching is getting better.
- Pupils behave well. They feel safe and they enjoy learning. Their attitudes to learning are often exemplary.
- Pupils are developing a sense of responsibility for themselves, their school and the wider community.
- There is now a well-planned training programme in place to develop staff and to enable leaders to challenge underperformance.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors visited parts of 24 lessons, 10 of which were observed jointly with leaders.
- Pupils were observed before school, in the breakfast club, in assembly, during break and at lunch time.
- Discussions were held with staff, members of the governing body, a representative from the Parent Forum and the local authority.
- The inspectors met formally with a group of pupils and talked informally with many others.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read from all year groups and spoke to pupils informally about reading.
- The views of the 180 parents who responded to the online survey, Parent View, and those who communicated with inspectors, were considered. This represents over a third of the school's population.
- A range of documentation was checked, particularly that relating to pupils' progress and keeping pupils safe, the school's evaluation of its own effectiveness and its plans for improvement.
- Questionnaires from 52 members of staff were considered as were their views during informal and formal meetings.

Inspection team

Ruth Brock, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Susan Heptinstall

Additional Inspector

Mehar Brar

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than most junior schools. It is situated on the same site as the infant school.
- Most pupils are from families of White British heritage, although the proportion of pupils from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds is increasing. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for funding through the pupil premium grant (which is extra money given to schools for pupils in local authority care, and who are known to be eligible for free schools meals) is above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is above average and rising in contrast to the proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs which is broadly in line with national averages.
- The school has worked jointly with the neighbouring infant school, as a federation, since September 2012 under the leadership of one headteacher, two heads of school and a single governing body.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school runs breakfast and after-school clubs.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that they are consistently good or better by summer 2015 by:
 - ensuring that all lessons provide more challenge for pupils, particularly for those able to learn more quickly, and especially in mathematics
 - providing opportunities for pupils to solve problems in mathematics, to practise and use their mathematical skills in different subjects, and to understand the importance of mathematical learning in everyday life
 - extending the good marking practice seen in Year 3 to all classes so that all pupils are aware of what they need to do to improve their work and are given time to consider and respond to oral and written feedback.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that leaders at all levels are clear about their roles and responsibilities and that they fulfil them well in order to improve teaching and help pupils learn faster
 - ensuring that governors check more thoroughly how well the school is doing, that they challenge leaders more rigorously about any pupils who are not learning well enough.

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

- In 2013, Year 6 pupils' results in the national tests in mathematics and grammar, punctuation and spelling, were significantly below pupils in other schools. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels was also below the national average.
- Data held by the school, taken alongside the work in pupils' books, show that the number of pupils reaching the higher levels is increasing across the school but is not yet evident in the end of Key Stage 2 national test results.
- From their above average starting points in Year 3, pupils in Year 6 made significantly less than expected progress in mathematics, reading and writing in 2013. In reading, boys made significantly less progress than girls. The school has tackled this issue well and the gap between boys and girls is now closing.
- The school's own data confirm inspection findings that, although it still requires improvement, pupils' progress in mathematics, reading and writing is now better across the school than in the past. Pupils' enthusiasm for learning is helping to drive this improvement.
- Pupils' mathematical skills are developing well and more-able pupils are now being given more difficult work to do in mathematics. There is, however, no consistent planning for all pupils to be involved in practical problem solving or data handling, or to use their mathematical skills in different subjects.
- Pupils eligible for the pupil premium grant are supported well through one-to-one activities and small group work. Current school data and inspection evidence both indicate that these pupils are making similar progress to other pupils. In 2013, they were nearly two-and-a-half terms behind other pupils in mathematics, and just over two-and-a-half terms behind in reading and writing.
- In 2013, disabled pupils and those who have special education needs did not make as much progress as similar pupils nationally. The school's current data show that this group across the school is now making progress in line with that of their peers.
- Pupils' literacy skills are developing quickly in all year groups and in most classes. This is because their needs are already understood when they transfer from the infant school and support is put in place quickly for those who need it. In all year groups, there is a strong emphasis on speaking and listening. These key skills are very well developed.
- More pupils are enjoying sport and committing to healthy lifestyles due to the increased choice of activities available to them as a result of the primary schools sports funding.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- High expectations are not established for all pupils in all classes. Despite leaders having worked hard to structure the planning and teaching of mathematics and English, too often, planning does not translate into good learning for all pupils. This is because teachers sometimes lack confidence to be flexible and build upon what pupils already know.

- In some lessons, activities are pitched at too low a level and learning slows. As a result, pupils sometimes become restless in these lessons. Opportunities are missed for pupils to develop their own ideas when they are clearly able to do so.
- The best marking provides excellent points for pupils to consider when improving their work, and it generates well-considered responses from the pupils, who heed what is said. More often, however, pupils mark their own work. While they learn a lot by doing this, pupils, particularly the older ones, say they would welcome more guidance from their teachers to help them understand how well they are doing and how they might improve their work.
- There is a small amount of outstanding teaching in the school but the quality of challenge and teacher support varies in different subjects and classes. Excellent examples were seen in guided reading sessions with the youngest pupils. Here, learning was pitched at the right level for all pupils, and it was supported well by teaching assistants, resulting in all pupils being fully involved and making excellent progress. In too many other lessons, however, progress varies too much, especially for more-able pupils, because learning is not always demanding enough.
- Questioning by the teacher is sometimes skilful, prompting pupils to challenge their own thinking. This builds pupils' confidence and supports their progress well. The quality of responses, even from the youngest pupils, is often impressive. For example, in one lesson, pupils had been reading a book about a mother who had left the family home and they had to write to persuade her to come home. 'The heart has been ripped out of the family and we are lost without you' was typical of the way pupils used their emotive language to good effect.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Around the school, in lessons and in the playground pupils are courteous, polite and helpful. They support each other well in their learning and readily carry out a range of responsibilities, of which they are very proud. Disruption to learning in classes is rare.
- Pupils are very well focused on learning and are not afraid to ask questions or to say when they do not understand. Most are capable, articulate and confident learners, who quickly learn to think for themselves.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Instances of bullying are very rare. Pupils say that they are clear about what to do if it does happen. Parents and carers are confident that pupils are safe and behave well, although a small minority expressed a concern about behaviour management. Inspectors found that pupils' behaviour is managed well and the school takes great care to ensure that they are safe.
- Pupils have a very good understanding of right and wrong. This is because examples are often discussed in class, the school's values are implicit and pupils understand and subscribe to them. Displays, rules, and codes of classroom behaviour make clear what the school's expectations are and the well-understood behaviour policy is applied consistently.
- The school has a well-developed Parent Forum which helps to involve parents in key decisions that affect their child's time at the school. For example, as a result of Parent Forum representatives talking with parents and understanding their concern about safety on the school's road, the end of the day will be staggered from September 2014 to limit congestion.

- The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent has decreased over time and is now low. Attendance is broadly average with an improving trend since the last inspection. Pupils enjoy being in school, value learning and, as a result, want to attend because it is a 'friendly school'. Punctuality is good and few pupils are late for class.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Those who lead and manage different subjects do not check teaching and planning well enough, nor do they provide sufficient guidance for teachers to ensure that learning is at the right level for all pupils and teachers' expectations are high enough.
- The headteacher and senior leaders from both schools in the federation have established a strong momentum of improvement. Central to this has been the accurate assessment of pupils' progress so that improvements can be monitored, particularly at whole-school level. Training for staff has been key in these improvements.
- The headteacher and senior leaders have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The school improvement plan is detailed and includes the most useful priorities for the school.
- Action has been taken to tackle the issues identified at the last inspection, although it is not yet evident in end of Key Stage 2 test results. However, the school's own data shows pupils' progress is improving in mathematics, where more-able pupils are now being challenged to aim higher.
- Teachers have undertaken much relevant training, and say they value it highly. It has been successful because teaching has improved, but not to the point where it is consistently good.
- When observing teaching, leaders correctly identify good and better aspects of teaching and learning and share them across the school. However, they do not always identify when activities do not allow all pupils to achieve to the best of their ability.
- Teachers' performance is judged by leaders observing in lessons, checking pupils' work and examining assessment data. Performance targets for teachers relate to the achievement of their pupils and progress towards these targets is closely monitored. Good use is made of the government's teachers' standards for this purpose and teachers' movement up the pay scale is closely linked to the success of their pupils.
- Parents and carers have confidence in the school and its leadership. Communications with them has improved through the introduction of the Parent Forum and a new website is being developed. Pupils and many parents and carers take pride in their school.
- The school's use of pupil premium funding is effective and has led to an improvement in the achievement of the pupils entitled to it. For example, it has been used to fund staffing for support programmes, and to help with the purchase of appropriate learning materials that have benefited the pupils.
- The curriculum reflects the school's central values, which are also evident in the way that staff and pupils conduct themselves, and the relationships between them. However, the impact of the curriculum on pupils' learning requires improvement because teachers do not always target learning to pupils' needs so that all can achieve well.

- The wider curriculum is enriched by the opportunity to use the school swimming pool and the school grounds. The outdoor learning area, which includes a small environmental section with a pond, is particularly popular with pupils. Visits out of school and visitors to the school also extend pupils' interests and experiences well.
- The school does much to promote equality of opportunity in relation to breaking down stereotypes and eliminating discrimination of any sort. It ensures that all pupils have the opportunity to join in everything on offer and, increasingly, to succeed at higher levels than in the past.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is strong. It is promoted well in assemblies and in lessons. Through its key values the school has established an ethos that builds confident pupils who enjoy learning, want to do well in school and have a desire to understand life beyond their own locality. Pupils are, for example, involved in fund-raising for national charities.
- The local authority has supported the school appropriately by contributing funding to help the school with its work and by providing a school support partner who works alongside the leadership team. The school has obtained further training support from the local cluster of schools it is linked to, and from a National Leader in Education.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet current national requirements, with staff well trained in both welfare and safety procedures. Incidents are logged carefully and the school is prompt in making sure that, where relevant, families and external agencies are quickly involved in any follow up action.
- The school uses its allocated sports funding to employ an external, locally-organised programme of physical education within the school day and through extracurricular sporting activities. Staff benefit from the additional training opportunities this provides and more pupils commit to healthy lifestyles because of the increased range of activities, which they enjoy.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors bring many and varying strengths to their work with the school. They have recently developed their roles to focus more closely on evaluating teaching and learning. Although governors actively support the school, they have not sufficiently challenged school leaders where data and other information about the school's performance show that improvements in the quality of teaching and learning have not been good enough. Governors have worked closely with the headteacher to bring about necessary staffing changes and ensured that these changes, and staff performance, inform teachers' pay rises. They are beginning to consider the leadership structure across the federation so that leaders can more effectively raise standards in the junior school. Governors have an understanding of pupil premium funding and the positive difference it has made to pupils' learning.

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	114777
Local authority	Southend-on-Sea
Inspection number	441993

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	477
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Richard Matthew
Headteacher	Ashley Eastwood
Date of previous school inspection	5 December 2012
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