

Ellesmere Primary School

Elson Road, Ellesmere, SY12 9EU

Inspection dates 8–9 July 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		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

- Pupils at Key Stage 2 have not made good progress since the school was last inspected. In 2013, standards in mathematics and writing fell to below average.
- More-able pupils and those of average ability do not achieve as well as other pupils due to work not being demanding enough.
- Variations in the quality of teaching do not enable pupils to make steady, good progress as they move through the school.
- Teachers do not use information on pupils' achievements well in planning tasks designed to move pupils quickly to the next stage of their learning.
- Some teachers rely too much on testing to assess attainment rather than assessing pupils' class work.
- Teachers' and other adults' knowledge in some areas of the curriculum is not fully secure.
- Marking of pupils' work is not consistently effective in informing pupils what they do well and what they need to do to improve.
- Pupils do not think things out or develop a better understanding of their learning in response to some teachers' questioning.
- Pupils are not given enough opportunities to improve writing and solve problems in different subjects.
- The behaviour of some pupils has been a concern. Pupils do not present their work in a neat and well organised manner.
- Checking the impact of teachers' work on standards is not rigorous enough. The work of support staff is not checked as thoroughly as that of teachers.
- Governors have not been quick enough to hold school leaders to account for improving pupils' achievement and the school's effectiveness.

The school has the following strengths

- Children get a good start in the Nursery and Reception, where they achieve well in all areas of learning.
- Achievement through Key Stage 1 is getting better and standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are improving steadily.
- Most pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They are safe in school.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress because they are supported well.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 14 lessons. Eight lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher or the deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors heard pupils read and looked at the work in their books.
- Meetings were held with governors, senior leaders, subject leaders, and pupils. An inspector had a phone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors looked at a wide range of documentation, including the school’s own judgements on its strengths and weaknesses, and the data it collects on pupils’ progress.
- Questionnaire responses from seven members of staff were analysed.
- Inspectors took account of 26 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. In addition, they considered the results of the school’s most recent questionnaire, giving the views of 73 parents.
- An inspector talked to parents at the end of the school day.

Inspection team

David Speakman, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Jeannette Mackinney	Additional Inspector
Carol Deakin	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is a larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are White British. A few come from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds. A very small minority speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is about average. In this school, the additional funding is for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- In 2013, the school did not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- In the last school year, there have been significant changes in staffing. There is a new headteacher and deputy headteacher and five teachers are new to the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is at least good in all classes by:
 - improving teachers' use of performance information to set demanding work that ensures all groups make rapid progress
 - achieving a consistent approach to marking and feedback to pupils so that they know what to do next in their learning
 - making sure that teachers challenge pupils and deepen their understanding of what they are learning
 - improving adults' subject knowledge where it is not fully secure, including the teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make), to ensure accuracy in the development of pupils' knowledge and understanding.
- Raise attainment at Key Stage 2 particularly in writing and mathematics by:
 - making sure that middle and higher attaining pupils make more rapid progress
 - providing more opportunities to write in different styles and in a broader range of subjects
 - giving pupils more problem solving in mathematics
 - improving the presentation of pupils' work.
- Increase the impact of leadership and management by making sure that:
 - staff are more able to assess accurately the levels at which pupils are working and rely less on testing
 - leaders extend the arrangements for checking teachers' work to support staff
 - senior leaders check teaching and learning with more rigour
 - governors hold senior leaders fully to account for the school's improvement.

An external review of governance, including a review of the school's use of the pupil premium, should be undertaken to assess how these aspects of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- In Key Stage 2, too few pupils have made good progress. Performance information shows that achievement at Key Stage 2 has not been good since 2011. In the end of Key Stage 2 tests in 2013, standards were below average in writing and mathematics.
- The number of pupils who achieved the higher levels at the end of Year 6 was below the national average in writing and mathematics. This means that more-able pupils did not achieve as well as they should have. Similarly, too few pupils who joined Key Stage 2 with average attainment made good progress and did not achieve their potential either.
- Pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium made slower progress than other pupils, particularly in reading and writing. Gaps in attainment were not closed and qualifying pupils were about two terms to a year behind other pupils in school in reading, writing and mathematics and about a year behind all pupils nationally. There are signs that attainment gaps are closing more this year.
- Pupils' progress in the mixed-age Year 3 and 4 classes is weaker than in other year groups. It varies from class to class and in some classes there are differences between the progress made by pupils in Year 3 and those in Year 4. This is because teachers do not always plan work to challenge different ages and abilities to accelerate the progress of all pupils.
- The percentage of pupils achieving the required level in the Year 1 screening check in phonics (the sounds that letters make) is average. Those pupils who did not reach the required level are still struggling to read fluently, relying on letter sounds and pictures to help them read. None of the pupils heard reading liked reading because they find it hard and read little at home.
- Lesson observations, pupils' books and the school's tracking information indicate that this last year there has been some improvement in pupils' progress, although progress is not yet good. Achievement is improving as school leaders take effective action to improve teaching but there is still some 'catching up' to do in Years 5 and 6. Previous weaknesses in writing are limiting current progress. Progress in mathematics has been good this year.
- Children in the Nursery and the Reception Years are making good progress, both when adults teach them and when they are working on their own and exploring for themselves. They learn well through structured play. Attainment on entry to the Nursery is below that typical for children of this age because language skills and physical development are weak. Current attainment at the end of the Reception Year is above the national average, with a greater percentage than national achieving a good level of development.
- Attainment at the end of Year 2 has been broadly average year-on-year in reading, writing and mathematics. This has been rising slowly and is now close to being above average, indicating achievement that is improving, but is not yet good.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress and lower ability pupils achieve well. Support for these pupils is well organised and closely monitored by the special needs coordinator so pupils do not fall any further behind. Extra support has been arranged; teachers and teaching assistants are giving suitable work to these pupils. As a result, they are now making good progress in relation to their starting points.
- Pupils from minority ethnic heritages who speak English as an additional language and are at the early stages of learning English receive effective support in learning English. They soon acquire

enough language to access a range of subjects and topics and from this point achieve well.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because it is not having enough impact on learning, particularly at Key Stage 2.
- Teachers do not use the information they have on pupils' achievements well enough to plan work that is challenging. For example, in Year 5 mathematics, all pupils were given the same task of sorting angles by sight and measuring them using a protractor. Lower attaining pupils coped with the task and it was clear that nothing had been planned to move higher ability pupils on to harder work.
- Not all teachers are confident in assessing pupils' work without using tests. Some teachers use pupils' day-to-day work or specific pieces of work to identify the levels at which pupils are working accurately. Others lack confidence and rely heavily on testing.
- Marking and feedback to pupils do not always identify how pupils could improve their work. There is some good quality marking, which tells pupils what they have done well and what they need to do next. Sampling of pupils' books shows that this quality is not consistent across the school.
- Teachers do not always adopt approaches that will make pupils think and deepen their understanding. For example, some questions are vague and it is difficult for pupils to channel their thoughts.
- Adults' subject knowledge is sometimes not fully secure and the information given to pupils is confusing, such as complicated and incorrect names given to shapes. In some phonics sessions, adults' management of groups does not ensure that all pupils are challenged.
- Pupils do not get enough opportunities to develop their writing skills. Although they do write in different styles and in a range of subjects, not enough emphasis is placed on the quality of writing in lessons other than English. As a result, work in books is often untidy. Teachers do not consistently insist that pupils present it neatly enough and low expectations contribute to limiting achievement.
- Pupils do not have enough practice in applying their mathematical skills to solve problems in other subjects.
- One-to-one and small group support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is well-targeted. This means that this group of pupils makes good progress. Support through the pupil premium for eligible pupils is not yet consistent from class to class so these pupils do not yet make enough progress.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Adults record children's achievements accurately, are fully aware of how well they are doing and carefully plan what children will learn next. Adults put a high focus on developing children's communication skills. They talk a lot with children, giving them confidence. Children have a wide choice of interesting and stimulating activities which provide them with good opportunities to learn through investigation and play.

The behaviour and safety of pupils requires improvement

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Although most pupils are courteous and polite to each other and to adults, a few pupils have taken advantage of new teachers. In one Year 6 class the behaviour of some pupils has been poor and learning interrupted. The situation has been largely resolved and pupils are now more settled.
- Pupils say they have been concerned over the behaviour of some older pupils, and they say there are some people who 'are a bit silly but there are more people who are good'. There has been an increase in the number of fixed-term exclusions, but this is limited to a few pupils, mostly with identified behaviour difficulties. New systems now record serious incidents of misbehaviour, but records prior to the current term were haphazard. The new records show improving behaviour.
- Pupils do not exercise enough care over their work. The presentation of work is not as good as it should be and handwriting is not well formed. Pupils do respond to teachers' comments when they are made and work gets neater, although improvement is not always sustained. Pupils say that they find 'a lot of lessons too easy and some work sheets boring'.
- Pupils have generally positive attitudes to school. They say they like lessons best when 'the work is hard and there is a lot of challenge', and they like practical work.
- Pupils move around the school in an orderly way. They behave well in assemblies and are proud when they receive awards for doing well. There is a lot to keep pupils occupied at break times and behaviour seen in the playground was generally good and pupils enjoyed themselves safely.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. The school gives good advice to pupils on anti-bullying and pupils speak with understanding about potential dangers while using the internet. They value the cycling proficiency training and road safety training provided by the school, saying it is very useful now and for the future. Pupils are not aware of any recent incidents of bullying taking place. They are confident that staff would sort out any issues.
- Attendance has improved this year and is broadly average.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because since the school's previous inspection, leaders have not done enough to maintain the good quality of teaching and pupils' achievement reported then.
- Checks on the quality of teaching and learning are not yet planned in sufficient detail. They are not rigorous enough to cover different aspects of the school's work. For example, there are not enough regular checks on pupils' books to ensure suggested improvements are having an effect. Procedures to check the work of support staff are not yet as robust as those for teachers.
- There is a focus on reading, writing and mathematics, but an evaluation of topics by new leaders has identified too few links between subjects and too few opportunities to develop writing and numeracy in a range of subjects.
- Pupil premium funding has not proven fully effective in helping eligible pupils catch up in reading, writing and mathematics. The funding has been allocated to one-to-one and small-

group support, improving behaviour and learning through a learning mentor and purchasing learning resources. It is also used to enable eligible pupils to join activities for which there is a charge.

- Senior leaders have set priorities for improving the quality of education and pupils' achievement. They have a detailed view of the school's work, drawing on a wide range of evidence, and which forms the school improvement plan. Their evaluations of pupils' achievement, teaching, the quality of leadership and management and the schools' overall effectiveness are accurate.
- There are appropriate procedures to set targets for teachers to improve their work. Targets for all teaching staff, including the senior leadership team, are challenging and focus on improving pupils' achievement.
- There are detailed arrangements for allocating the primary school sport funding. The school aims to improve the skills of all pupils in physical education and sport by widening opportunities for pupils to take part in sports activities and improving teachers' expertise. As initiatives are recent, the school has not yet evaluated the impact on pupils' health and well-being.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has improved. Pupils have a suitable range of cultural experiences. Moral development is adequate and reflected in pupils' behaviour. Pupils have some opportunities to develop a spiritual and social dimension through valuing their own and others' achievements. They have positive views on racism and disability.
- The local authority has been slow to respond a fall in the school's overall effectiveness. Since 2011, pupils' achievement has not been good, and only with the appointment of the new headteacher, has the local authority increased its routine checking. They have not been effective in holding the school to account for pupils' achievements since it was last inspected.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are committed to the school's success and have questioned leaders about pupils' recent achievement. Nonetheless, in the past they have not held leaders sufficiently to account to ensure pupils achieve well.
 - Some governors have recently joined and taken on new responsibilities. Some are well qualified and have enough relevant experience to challenge and support school leaders. Others have completed and updated training so they are more aware of their commitments.
 - Through headteacher's reports and their own understanding of assessment data, governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school. However, as with the local authority, they have not intervened early enough to halt the effectiveness of the school slipping from good to requiring improvement in recent years.
 - Governors make sure that requirements are met, including those for safeguarding and procedures for vetting staff and visitors. They ensure that the school site is safe and secure.
 - Governors set suitable targets for managing the performance of the headteacher and staff. They have an adequate idea of how well staff are carrying out their responsibilities through this process. They are up to date in linking teachers' pay increases to the progress of pupils.

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	123365
Local authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	439914

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	373
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Martin Digby
Headteacher	Dawn Herriott
Date of previous school inspection	16 September 2009
Telephone number	01691 622288
Fax number	01691 624893
Email address	admin@ellesmere-pri.shropshire.sch.uk

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