

# Alton Park Junior School

Alton Park Road, Clacton-on-Sea, CO15 1DL

## Inspection dates

1–2 May 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
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.

- Pupils' achievement is not yet good because the progress of pupils from their individual starting points is not rapid enough.
- In mathematics, pupils do not always have enough time to consolidate their learning before new work is introduced.
- Pupils who start in Year 3 around one year behind their age group are not making enough progress to enable them to catch up with their peers.
- Teaching is not yet consistently good enough to make sure pupils always make good progress. Pupils' work is marked but not all teachers make sure pupils know how to improve their work and check that they have done this.
- Not all teachers are setting high enough expectations for pupils' achievement, including neat handwriting and presentation of work.
- Leaders responsible for overseeing important subjects or aspects of the school do not have opportunities to see, first hand, what goes on in lessons. Therefore, they cannot give teachers detailed advice to help them improve their practice.
- In lessons, pupils do not always listen carefully to their teacher or work as hard as they can do to complete their work.

### The school has the following strengths

- Since her recent appointment, the headteacher has built on improvements made in the quality of teaching and pupils' progress since the previous inspection.
- Teachers' performance is now managed well and all are held accountable for how well pupils are learning.
- The school provides good pastoral support for its pupils and keeps them safe.
- Teachers' and teaching assistants' good relationships with pupils lead to a positive atmosphere in classes. Pupils say they feel safe in school.
- Attendance has improved considerably and the number of exclusions has declined.
- The Chair of the Governing Body has ensured that governors have developed a clear understanding of their responsibilities and carry these out.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 14 lessons and observed pupils working in small groups with teaching assistants. The majority of visits were with the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, governors and staff. Inspectors spoke with three groups of pupils, including school councillors.
- A discussion was held with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of school documentation including: the school's own evaluation of its performance and its improvement plan; information about pupils' progress and the support given to pupils eligible for pupil premium funding. Inspectors also looked at evidence of leaders' monitoring of teaching and records relating to safeguarding and attendance.
- Inspectors looked at the local authority's and Her Majesty's Inspector's reports of the school's progress towards improvement since the previous inspection.
- Inspectors looked closely at pupils' work in all year groups and heard some pupils from Year 3 and Year 6 read.
- Inspectors took account the school's own very recent questionnaire completed by 152 parents and discussions with parents at the start of the school day. There were only five parental responses to Parent View, therefore no information was available from this source.
- The 16 responses to the questionnaire for school staff were also taken into consideration.

## Inspection team

Cheryl Thompson, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
David Webster	Additional Inspector
Robert Bone	Additional Inspector

# Full report

## Information about this school

- This school is much larger than most primary schools. There are four classes for each year group.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is broadly average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is high and around a quarter of the school roll; in the past three years at least, this has been the usual proportion for the school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding high and equates to just over half the number on roll. In this school, this extra funding is for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.
- Since the previous inspection, there has been a change of headteacher which resulted in the school being without a headteacher for one term. There has been long-term absence of a small number of teachers including senior management team members.
- The school does not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is at least good and enables pupils to make faster progress by:
  - pitching work at the right level for the most-able pupils so that their progress is more rapid
  - checking that pupils who find learning difficult, particularly in mathematics, have time for practising and consolidating their learning before moving on to new work
  - all teachers setting high expectations for pupils to behave well and work hard in lessons
  - all teachers marking pupils' work in the manner specified by the school so that pupils know exactly what they need to do to improve and have time allocated for doing this.
- Improve the organisation and teaching for Year 3 so that pupils can make a smooth transition into the school and can make good progress straight away by:
  - teachers making effective use of the information about pupils' attainment they receive from the infant school to set pupils work that is hard enough as soon as they start in Year 3
  - all staff setting high expectations for pupils' achievement, presentation of work and work rate
  - making sure that teachers or teaching assistants who teach early phonic skills (the sounds that letters make and how to use them for reading and writing) have a clear understanding of methods and time needed to ensure pupils' good progress
  - ensuring that pupils who find reading difficult have frequent opportunities to read suitable books.
- Strengthen the impact of leaders, managers and the governing body on improving pupils' progress and raising standards by:
  - allocating middle leaders time to check on lessons and provide teachers with detailed advice to help them improve their practice
  - reviewing the school's mathematics curriculum to give consistency and enough time to the teaching of basic calculations, especially for pupils who find mathematics difficult.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Pupils enter the school with knowledge and skills well below those expected for their age. Their achievement over time has not been good enough to close the gaps. The main reason for this is the slow start made by the least-able pupils, including those with disabilities and special educational needs, in Year 3. These pupils account for about one third of the year group. The majority of this group make the expected progress by the time they reach the end of Year 6.
- For all pupils, progress in mathematics, although improving at a good rate is not as good as in reading and writing. The way mathematics is taught in the school does not provide pupils who find mathematics difficult, for example of addition and multiplication, enough time to practise and consolidate their learning before they are moved on to different work.
- Pupils achievement in reading and writing requires improvement in Year 3. In this year group, pupils who struggle with reading and writing do not have enough opportunities to practise their reading with an adult. The school's organisation for the teaching of phonics does not build effectively on their previous learning in their infant school.
- In the older classes, pupils do not read widely and develop their knowledge of a range of authors. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to 'read between the lines' and work things out for themselves in order to read with a deeper understanding and make good progress.
- The most-able pupils do not make enough progress. Although they are making similar progress to the group nationally, few make better progress than this, especially in mathematics. The reason for this is that few teachers routinely set these pupils work to make them think hard and extend their learning further.
- The achievement of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding has improved since 2013 but requires further improvement. They now make similar progress to their classmates. The gaps in attainment between these pupils and their classmates have closed well since 2011 when they were over a year behind their classmates. The school's most recent data show the gaps to be a little over a term in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The achievement of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs requires improvement. In their class work, they do not always have the right sort of task or support to help them make good progress. In the one-to-one or small-group teaching sessions with staff who know them well, pupils often make good progress in their learning.
- In the main, pupils make the best progress in Year 6. In this year group, the staff are senior teachers who set their pupils challenging targets. Pupils are keen to do well, know their targets and want to meet them. They make good progress in catching up on slower learning in preceding years. However, there is a legacy of underachievement that is still evident in the below-average standards attained at the end of the year.
- The school's most recent and accurate information from tracking pupils' progress shows that this school year, more pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 are making the progress they should in reading, writing and mathematics. Year 4 pupils are making good progress in making up for slower learning in Year 3.

**The quality of teaching****requires improvement**

- Teaching is too variable and as a result pupils' progress has not been consistently good as they move through the school.
- The organisation for teaching in Year 3 requires improvement. The improved links with the infant school ensures that Year 3 staff know how well pupils are achieving before they start in Year 3. This information is not being used to best effect to make sure that pupils make a good start in their learning as soon as they start in Year 3.
- For example, pupils who find learning difficult, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs do not always have enough time and skilled teaching provided to help them practise their reading and learn phonics (letter sounds and how to use these to help read and write). Similarly, they do not have enough time and focused teaching with the use practical apparatus to remind them of, and build on, their previous learning.
- The quality of teachers' planning has improved so that all classes in the same year group have similar work. The reason that teaching requires improvement is that on occasions, more able pupils or disabled pupils and those with special educational needs do not have work that makes them think and work hard. In these circumstances, pupils do not always apply themselves wholeheartedly to their tasks.
- Teachers do not always set high enough expectations for pupils' achievement, including the presentation of work, work rate and neatness of work. For example, teachers do not ensure that pupils routinely spell the days of the week correctly and make their writing legible.
- Teachers always mark pupils' work. However, the marking does not always indicate the next steps in pupils' learning, nor are there regular opportunities provided for pupils to reflect on, and apply their teacher's suggestions for improvement.
- Since the previous inspection, teachers have developed their understanding of pupils' levels of attainment which they are beginning to use more precisely when they plan their lessons.
- In the main, teachers deploy their teaching assistants well which is an improvement since the last inspection. On occasions, though, teaching assistants need explicit guidance, for example, on vocabulary to encourage or how to ask the right questions to direct pupils' learning.
- Teaching in Year 6 is a particular strength. In these classes, expectations are high and pupils work hard towards the challenging targets set them.
- The good relationships between teachers and pupils do much to create a positive atmosphere for learning in classes.

**The behaviour and safety of pupils****requires improvement**

- Pupils' attitudes to learning are not consistently good in all lessons. At their best, pupils' attitudes to learning make a good contribution to their progress. For example, in a Year 4 mathematics session, pupils listened carefully to their teacher and worked hard on their tasks of adding fractions. However, where teachers' expectations are not high enough, pupils are not motivated to work as hard as they should. Sometimes, for example, pupils chat too much and do not apply themselves to their tasks.

- Pupils behave well around the school and are polite towards adults. At break times pupils are respectful of one another and play well together. However, a few pupils report that there are a small number of pupils who, on occasions, are not as kind as they should be.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure requires improvement. Recording of pupils' and parents' concerns regarding behaviour of others is not always as detailed as it should be.
- Pupils have a suitable understanding of how to keep themselves safe from potential dangers when using the internet and how to avoid cyber bullying. They say that bullying is rare now and are confident that the headteacher deals very effectively with any poor behaviour.
- Almost all parents who responded to the school's questionnaire consider that the school keeps their child safe.
- The school's relentless promotion of the importance of regular attendance, and the steps taken to deal with poor attendance, have paid off. There is an improving trend in attendance since the previous inspection, although it currently still remains below average.
- The school provides good pastoral support for pupils mainly through learning mentors and the family support worker. Pupils are confident that should they have worries, they have someone to turn to.
- The school is rigorous in following up any child protection issues. Similarly, if pupils change schools, there are always checks with the previous school or with the school the pupil is moving too.
- The school deals firmly with unacceptable behaviour. The incidence of exclusions has declined.

### **The leadership and management**

### **requires improvement**

- The recently appointed headteacher has continued with actions which have built on the improvements made since the last inspection in the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. However, although the gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding are closing, and pupils are now making better progress, these have yet to be reflected in national tests.
- The role of the year group leaders and the mathematics and literacy leaders has still to be developed further. They have a good understanding of what the school's information tells them about pupils' progress. However, they have not had opportunities to observe lessons so that they can see where they can help teachers improve their practice.
- The way that subjects are taught is not consistently good enough. Across the school in mathematics, pupils who find mathematics difficult do not have enough opportunities to consolidate their learning of basic concepts before they move on to the next stages. For pupils starting in Year 3, until recently, not enough thought has gone in to how to organise teaching to ensure that these pupils can 'hit the ground running' and pick up their learning where they left off in their previous school.
- Since the headteacher's appointment in January 2014, a new approach to the teaching of mathematics is being tried out in Year 3. Already, there is noticeably good improvement in pupils' progress and enjoyment in learning.

- The local authority has an accurate view of the school's performance. It has provided the school with good support, particularly in ensuring that the middle tier of managers have had appropriate training how to undertake their monitoring roles.
- The headteacher and senior team use data about pupils' progress and whole-school priorities to set teachers demanding targets to achieve. These targets make it very clear that unless pupils make acceptable levels of progress, there will be no pay rise.
- Links with the nearby infant school have developed further since the previous inspection. These links have enabled staff to gain a better understanding of how pupils are taught and their starting points in Year 3. Although very few parents recorded their responses on Parent View, discussions with them and their responses to the school's own questionnaire undertaken at parents' evenings, indicate that parents are pleased with all the school provides and have confidence in the staff.
- The school is using the primary sports funding effectively to promote further pupils' engagement with sporting activities and staff's knowledge and skills for teaching physical education activities. Pupils say they enjoy the increased range of clubs and the opportunities for competitive sport.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Under the dynamic leadership of the recently appointed Chair, governors have developed their roles considerably since the previous inspection. They have all attended training and increased their understanding about pupils' achievement and the strengths and weaknesses in the school's work.
  - Through their recent training, governors have developed their understanding of the information they receive about the school's performance, including performance data, so that they can make secure judgements about the school's performance.
  - Governors question the headteacher as to why performance is not better.
  - Finances are managed well, including spending of pupil premium and sports funding in order to increase pupils' achievement.
  - The governing body makes sure that the school meets the current national requirements for safeguarding and child protection.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	114721
<b>Local authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	431615

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	434
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Lisa Ball
<b>Headteacher</b>	Doretta Cowie
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	27 September 2012
<b>Telephone number</b>	01255 424335
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