

Vernon Terrace Primary School

Vernon Terrace, Northampton, NN1 5HE

Inspection dates 17–18 September 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Early years provision		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- The standards reached by pupils by the end of Key Stage 1 are significantly below those expected for their age in mathematics, reading and writing.
- Progress is not consistent across year groups and subjects, particularly in writing.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve in mathematics, reading and writing are not high enough and pupils are not challenged sufficiently to reach the higher levels. This is particularly so for the most-able pupils and pupils in Key Stage 1.
- Teachers do not expect pupils to take pride in their work, and presentation in books is often untidy.
- Leaders, do not analyse how well different groups of learners are doing precisely enough. Consequently, their plans for improvement are not focused exactly on what they need to do to improve. Their targets to raise standards are not ambitious enough.
- The early years provision requires improvement because teachers do not enable the most able children to make as much progress as they should.
- Planned actions to improve the quality of teaching are not easily measurable. Therefore it is difficult for governors to hold senior leaders to account for their work.
- Governors do not challenge senior leaders rigorously enough to improve the quality of teaching so that outcomes for pupils are improved.

The school has the following strengths

- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make consistently good progress across the school. This includes those pupils who attend the hearing impaired unit.
- The school ethos of care for individual pupils is strong. Pupils respond to this and their behaviour around school is good. The school's work to keep pupils safe is good.
- Leaders' work to improve attendance is effective. It has risen considerably this year to be in line with the national average.
- Pupils' progress from their starting points accelerates across Key Stage 2, and is significantly better than expected, particularly in mathematics and reading in Years 5 and 6.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 15 lessons, including some jointly with members of the senior leadership team.
- Members of the inspection team heard pupils read and looked closely at samples of their work.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of school documents including development plans, the school’s own self-evaluation reports, monitoring files, information on performance management, safeguarding documentation and policies.
- Meetings were held with three different groups of pupils chosen at random. Inspectors also spoke informally to pupils during lesson observations.
- Discussions were held with senior leaders, subject leaders, the special educational needs leader, the curriculum leader, the school nurture leader, teachers and other staff. The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body were also interviewed. A further meeting was held with the governor responsible for safeguarding.
- A meeting was held with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors were unable to take account of responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, as there were insufficient numbers available. Inspectors spoke informally to parents in the playground at the beginning of the day.
- Inspectors considered the 19 staff responses to the staff questionnaire that were submitted.

Inspection team

Jan Connor, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Clare Cossor

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Kathy Hooper

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Vernon Terrace Primary School is an average-sized primary school.
- The proportions of pupils supported through a statement of special educational needs or the new education, health and care plan, is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium (which in this school provides funding for pupils known to eligible for free school meals) is above average.
- Over four-fifths of the school's pupils come from minority ethnic heritages. The largest groups being White British and pupils from any other White background. About two thirds of pupils speak English as an additional language, representing around 42 different home languages.
- The school has specially resourced provision for pupils with special educational needs. The hearing impaired resource base (HRB), currently supports eight pupils using a 'natural aural' approach. This involves intensive use of spoken language and hearing aid technology to develop pupils' language skills and to support their inclusion and learning.
- The school is an area of high mobility with families often staying for short periods of time before moving on.
- The headteacher was absent from school during this inspection.
- In 2013, the school met the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that:
 - teachers raise their expectations and plan lessons that challenge all pupils, particularly the most-able
 - teachers develop a better understanding of pupils' progress in writing and plan activities to improve the quality of writing across the curriculum
 - teachers insist on the highest standard of presentation in pupils' books
- Raise standards and increase progress at Key Stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics and in Key Stage 2 in writing by:
 - setting ambitious targets to raise pupils' attainment to at least age-related expectation by the end of Year 2 and Year 6.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels, including the early years, by:
 - ensuring that plans to improve the quality of teaching include clear and measurable targets for pupils' achievement
 - improving governors' understanding of achievement data so that they are able to provide effective and timely challenge to school leaders in order to hold them to account for their work

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because it has not secured consistently good teaching in every key stage. Leaders sometimes have an over positive view of how well some pupils are doing.
- Information about the progress and attainment of different groups of pupils is not detailed enough. As a result, school improvement plans are not focused sufficiently well on clear measurable targets for improving the quality of teaching, particularly in Key Stage 1 and for the most-able pupils so that they make more rapid progress.
- The mathematics and English subject leaders carry out checks on the quality of work in their subjects. They have identified key areas for improvement and have implemented plans to address these.
- Systems for managing teachers' performance are well established and linked to the Teachers' Standards. However, targets for improving the quality of teaching are not precise enough and do not have sufficiently measurable outcomes to be as effective as they could be.
- Leaders of the hearing impaired resource unit, along with the special educational needs coordinator, are effective in planning for interventions. This results in good outcomes for pupils in the unit and for pupils with special educational needs throughout the school.
- The school provides well for the social and emotional needs of its pupils. Relationships between the many different ethnic communities are good. School leaders work well with different external agencies to address pupils' needs and are successfully supporting different pupils to stay in school to keep learning.
- The primary sports funding is used to increase opportunities for pupils to take part in different kinds of sport and to train teachers to improve the quality of their teaching in physical education. A dedicated sports coach works with pupils to increase their fitness through the 'Golden Mile' challenge. There are indications that pupils' fitness is improving.
- The curriculum is carefully planned and broad. New strategies to promote pupils' development of key literacy and numeracy skills are beginning to have an impact on pupils' outcomes. It is successful in teaching pupils about life in modern Britain and British values. Planning for the spiritual and cultural education of pupils is a strong feature of the school.
- The school has implemented appropriate procedures to safeguard pupils. Some policies do not take full account of the very latest guidance on safeguarding pupils in education. Nevertheless, the school does ensure that pupils are safe.
- The school has used its pupil premium funding well to provide intervention groups for disadvantaged pupils and to enrich the curriculum for these pupils through visits out of school and by enabling them to attend clubs. As a result, the achievement of these pupils is improving and gaps are closing between the attainment of these pupils and others.
- The local authority has recently carried out a review of the quality of education at the school with the headteacher. It has recognised the decline in leaders' effectiveness and challenged leaders to improve. It has identified areas where it might support the school to improve, one of which is support for the governing body.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body does not have a sufficiently detailed understanding of all aspects of the school's performance to hold leaders and managers to account as effectively as it could.
 - The regular visits which governors make to the school are not sufficiently focused on the school's priorities for improvement.
 - Governors are aware of how additional funding, such as pupil premium grant and primary school sports

funding, is spent. However, they do not have measurable evidence of the impact of the spending, in other areas, such as the resourced provision for hearing impaired pupils, they know that money is being spent well to improve learning.

- Governors have a thorough knowledge of how the performance management of teachers is linked to pay progression and manage the headteacher's performance with the support of an external consultant.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' behaviour is good. Pupils enjoy coming to school and want to learn. They have good attitudes to their work and this can be seen in their response to homework. Pupils spoken with said they were pleased to have homework and this work is returned to school regularly and on time. Pupils are helpful, polite and well-mannered in classrooms, around school and in the playground. Pupils are proud of their school and respectful of their classmates from a wide range of cultural backgrounds.
- Pupils' enjoyment of school is evident in their improved attendance this year. The school's work to ensure pupils are in school to learn regularly is effective. No pupils have been excluded.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning in lessons are good. Very few instances of off task behaviour were seen during the inspection. Pupils want to succeed and work diligently.
- Pupils have a good awareness of different forms of bullying, including racist name calling, homophobic bullying and bullying associated with gender. Pupils are very clear about the use of the word 'gay' as a derogatory term; they are adamant that this word is not used in their school. Pupils say that unkind words are sometimes used as a means of causing upset. However, they say this is rare, and that the adults take this seriously and it is dealt with swiftly and effectively by school leaders.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Parents spoken with during the inspection were unanimous in saying they felt their children were safe and well cared for at school.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of how to keep themselves safe on the internet. Pupils know that no personal details should ever be shared with anyone, and they know how to check if an unknown site is safe. Pupils understand the importance of sharing their concerns with adults at school or at home.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because not enough of it is good. Teachers' expectations of what pupils are able to achieve are sometimes too low.
- Teachers do not always challenge the most-able pupils sufficiently well. These pupils do not get enough opportunities to broaden and deepen their understanding of the subjects they are studying. Frequently, their work is too easy. As a result, not enough pupils reach the higher levels in mathematics, reading and writing in Key Stage 1 and in writing at Key Stage 2.
- The teaching of writing requires improvement because teachers do not plan activities which build systematically on what pupils already know and can do. Teachers support those pupils who speak English as an additional language well and they provide regular opportunities to write in a range of subjects. However, these activities are not based on sufficiently challenging targets. Consequently, pupils do not learn as quickly as they should.
- Teachers' marking and assessment support pupils to improve their learning by encouraging them to think carefully about their work. Teachers give pupils clear guidance on their successes and mistakes, both in lessons and in their books. The most effective marking and assessment is in Year 5 and Year 6 where teachers begin a dialogue with pupils about their work that rapidly improves their learning.
- The use of intervention groups to raise pupils' achievement is effective. This contributes significantly to the better progress pupils make in Key Stage 2. Teaching assistants work well with different groups of

pupils within classes and in smaller groups. This support is particularly effective for those pupils who have special educational needs and for the pupils who attend the hearing impaired unit.

- The teaching of reading is becoming increasingly effective. Pupils are gaining reading skills more quickly early on, as a result of better teaching in phonics (the sounds that letters make). Improvements in how the school systematically teaches reading and phonics mean pupils progress in this subject is accelerating.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because not enough pupils reach or exceed the expected standard in mathematics, reading and writing at Key Stage 1 and in writing at Key Stage 2.
- While most groups of pupils have made good and often significantly better progress, from low starting points, compared to pupils nationally by their final year, this good progress is inconsistent across the school. In 2013, pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 was below the national average in reading by two terms and in writing by a year. However, in mathematics it was broadly in line. The 2014 end of Key Stage 2 assessments show an improving picture with attainment broadly in line with the national average.
- Pupils' standards in reading, writing and mathematics at Key Stage 1, although rising, remain below the national average.
- The most-able pupils make progress in line with their peers. However, this is not rapid enough for them to reach the higher levels in writing in particular.
- The teaching of phonics has improved. In 2013, the percentage of pupils who reached the required standard in phonics was below that of pupils nationally. However, the school's results for 2014 show a marked improvement. This indicates that the school's work to improve learning in reading is being successful.
- The progress and attainment of different groups of pupils from different ethnic backgrounds is similar.
- Not all pupils present their work in a neat and tidy way. Writing is often characterised by different sized letters and letter formation is not always consistent. Presentation in mathematics books does not always support pupils to think in a systematic way about numbers and the relationships between them.
- Pupils enjoy reading, and teachers share a good range of books with them. A better focus on the teaching of reading skills means more pupils are gaining a better understanding of how to improve their learning in this subject.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, including those in the hearing impaired unit, make good progress in their learning in mathematics, reading and writing. The gaps between them and their peers in school are narrower than those seen nationally.
- The progress of pupils supported through the pupil premium varies across year groups and subjects. In 2013 the gap between pupils supported by pupil premium and other pupils was two years in mathematics, one year in reading and over a year in writing. In 2014, gaps have closed significantly and pupil premium pupils' attainment is better than their peers in all three subjects at the end of Key Stage 2.

The early years provision

requires improvement

- The early years provision requires improvement because not enough children exceed the expected levels for their age.

- Early years leaders do not analyse the attainment and progress of different groups of pupils well enough. As a result, planning to improve the quality of teaching is not focused accurately on areas of learning where they could raise attainment further, particularly for the most able.
- Children settle quickly into the early years. Typically, children start Nursery with skills and knowledge below, and in some cases well below, levels expected for their age. By the end of their time in the early years, the majority of children are working within expected levels for their age in all areas of learning.
- The quality of the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) in Reception is mostly good. Imaginative activities capture children's interests and they are motivated to learn. In one lesson, a small group of children worked with a teaching assistant to find silver coins in the sand tray outside. They were encouraged to read out the initial sounds of the words on the coins. This fun approach helped them practise their skills and develop their confidence in early reading.
- The school's relationship with parents is good. Parents are welcomed into school and they have opportunities to stay and find out what their children are doing in Nursery and Reception. Parents say they are happy with how their children settle into school.
- Early years leaders keep children safe and review their risk assessments carefully to ensure their procedures are sound.

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	121920
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	449377

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	247
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ruth Lowe
Headteacher	Jacqueline Lapsa
Date of previous school inspection	17 May 2011
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