

Firs Estate Primary School

Raven Street, Derby, DE22 3WA

Inspection dates

20–21 November 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Early years provision		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that has serious weaknesses.

- Over time, the management of teachers' performance has not been sufficiently rigorous. Subject leaders have not been effective enough in improving achievement and teaching.
- Leaders' and governors' checking of teaching has not provided an accurate picture of its quality.
- The drive to improve the quality of teaching has been hampered by staff changes. As a result, teaching is not currently strong enough to ensure that pupils make good progress.
- Until recently, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve and the targets set for them to reach have been too low, especially for disadvantaged pupils.
- There has been a high rate of exclusion from the school, although the number of exclusions has fallen this term.
- Teachers do not use information on pupils' achievement well enough to plan learning and set work so that all make good progress, especially the most able.
- Not all teachers check that pupils follow the guidance from marking in order to improve their work.
- Until recently, pupils, including the most able, have not made the progress they should. Their achievement has declined since the previous inspection and is inadequate.
- There are not enough opportunities for pupils to apply their reading, writing and mathematics skills in different subjects.
- By the end of Year 2 and Year 6, attainment is below average in reading, writing and mathematics.

The school has the following strengths

- The acting executive headteacher, senior leaders and governors are taking decisive action to deal with weak teaching and poor behaviour. As a result, achievement and teaching have improved this term.
- Staff are giving senior leaders strong support in the drive to improve the school.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well.
- Staff manage pupils' behaviour well so that, although it is not yet good, it is improving. Pupils enjoy school and feel safe.
- Attendance has recently improved so that it is now close to the national average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed parts of 19 lessons, including several shared observations with senior leaders. In addition, inspectors listened to several pupils read and looked at samples of their recent work.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, teachers and members of the governing body. Inspectors met with the local authority's representative. Discussions took place with groups of pupils.
- Inspectors scrutinised a variety of school documents, including: the school's self-evaluation; its development plan; behaviour records; governing body documents; and documents relating to the management of teachers' performance.
- The views of the 13 parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, were taken into account. Inspectors also considered the views expressed in the 48 questionnaires returned by school staff.

Inspection team

Steven Cartlidge, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Rebecca Meredith	Additional Inspector
Susan Aspland	Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

Information about this school

- This is a larger than average-sized primary school.
- Children in the early years are taught in one Nursery and two Reception classes. Children in the Nursery attend part time.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is above average, as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language. This includes pupils of Gypsy/Roma heritage and pupils from Eastern European countries. The majority of these pupils have little or no experience of education or knowledge of English when they join the school.
- The number of children who join or leave the school during the year is much higher than national average.
- Over half the pupils in the school are disadvantaged and eligible for pupil premium funding, which provides additional funding for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. This proportion is above the national average.
- One in four pupils is disabled or has special educational needs. This proportion is above the national average.
- The school does not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- There have been changes to the staffing recently. A new acting executive headteacher, acting head of school and special educational needs coordinator took up post in September 2014.
- A breakfast club and after-school club are provided by the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Rapidly improve teaching and accelerate progress in reading, writing and mathematics for all groups of pupils by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve and embedding the recently introduced more challenging targets
 - improving teachers' use of assessments to check each pupil's level of understanding, to set work closely matched to their abilities and, particularly, to challenge the most able
 - giving pupils regular opportunities to use and apply their reading, writing and mathematical skills in a range of subjects
 - checking that pupils act on the advice teachers give them through their marking.
- Improve the effectiveness of the school's leadership and management through:
 - using the staff appraisal system to continue to improve teaching and learning
 - establishing a robust system to assess the impact of funding on the achievement of disadvantaged pupils
 - developing the role of subject leaders and managers so they have a greater impact on improving achievement and teaching
 - ensuring that the previously high rates of pupils' exclusions continue to reduce
 - confirming that staff training is continuing to have the impact intended to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

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

- In the past, the management of staff performance was weak and lacking any clear lines of responsibility for improving teaching, including in the early years. The system of staff appraisal lacked rigour and targets set for staff were not monitored accurately.
- Equal opportunities have not been assured for disadvantaged pupils. They make less progress than other groups. Until recently, there has not been an adequate analysis of the impact of spending of the pupil premium on eligible pupils' progress. Nevertheless, school leaders tackle effectively any instances of discrimination.
- Subject leaders have not had sufficient impact on improving teaching or pupils' achievement. This has contributed to a decline in standards since the previous inspection.
- Senior leaders have not ensured a consistently good standard of teaching across the school. A different style of leadership this year is now helping to strengthen the quality of teaching. There are now established routines for checking teachers' effectiveness. For example, more rigorous monitoring of classroom practice has already addressed some weaknesses in teaching.
- All teachers know they are accountable for pupils' progress and this is checked regularly. Leaders know that their next steps are to check, even more carefully and regularly, that staff training is helping to improve teaching quickly.
- The acting executive headteacher has a clear vision of the pathway to improvement and is ably supported by the other members of the senior leadership team, teachers and teaching assistants in the school. There is a new-found confidence among staff, and the current quality of teaching demonstrates that they are able to move learning onwards.
- The school's leaders and managers demonstrate the skills, commitment and clarity of vision to bring about the rapid improvement required. Senior leaders' analysis of pupils' progress and their accurate checks of the school's work give all teachers and the governing body a clear understanding of the school's performance, including in the early years. This means that improvement planning is sharply focused on identified weaknesses. This is seen, for example, in the successful action recently taken to improve attendance and behaviour and which also shows the school's capacity for continued improvement.
- The school has established links with external agencies to work with Gypsy/Roma and Eastern European families prior to them starting school. The work of learning mentors and specialist behaviour teachers also includes supporting these pupils. This support has proved effective in improving these pupils' attendance and progress.
- The curriculum offers pupils some opportunities to develop their learning across a range of subjects, but there are not enough opportunities for pupils to apply their reading, writing and mathematics skills in different subjects. The range of subjects and topics covered in all years recognises local, regional and global differences, including different cultures and beliefs, and it promotes an understanding of others' point of view.
- Planning of learning promotes fundamental British values of democracy, liberty, and respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. Pupils from all heritages are prepared well for life in modern British democratic society. Information about what is taught in the school is published on the school website and meets statutory requirements.
- The school is working towards applying its preferred approach to assessment. Pupils' books demonstrate that most pupils understand how well they have achieved and what they need to do to improve. However, leaders have yet to ensure a consistent approach to marking across the school.
- The school's facility, 'The Nest', offers nurture provision and support for pupils with a broad range of

complex social and emotional needs. It makes an effective contribution to these pupils' social adjustment, behaviour and progress.

- The school has allocated the primary school sports funding to provide sports coaches and out-of-hours sport activity clubs. Pupils talk enthusiastically about sport activities available after school, which are already having a positive impact on many pupils' lifestyles and physical well-being.
- The local authority has a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and has recently begun to support the school through regular visits. Evidence of their positive impact can be seen in the challenge provided to school leaders to ensure they sustain recent improvements.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governance requires improvement. In the past, governors have not challenged senior leaders sufficiently and they have too readily accepted, without question, the information presented to them about pupils' progress. A recent review of governors' work carried out by the acting executive headteacher, and strategically focused additional training provided by outside agencies, have ensured that governors are confident that data on progress are accurate and reliable and that teaching is improving. As a result, the governing body is now in a better position to provide more effective challenge to leaders over the performance of pupils and teachers.
- Governors know how the pupil premium funds are spent and understand the reasons for previous poor performance. They are monitoring more closely the indications of a more positive impact this year on improved outcomes for eligible pupils. They also have an understanding of new National Curriculum requirements, including the rigour needed for assessment processes. They make sure that the curriculum promotes tolerance and respect, and prepares young people for life in modern Britain.
- Governors are appropriately involved in overseeing the way pay and promotion are linked to staff performance. They have regular training on various aspects of their role and make sure the school meets its statutory responsibilities for safeguarding. Governors have a good understanding of financial matters.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Poor behaviour has concerned staff and pupils in the past. There are good relationships between staff and pupils, and teachers now manage behaviour well. As a result, behaviour is getting better, although there are still occasional occurrences of inappropriate behaviour. For example, there are instances of play fighting during playtime or lunchtime, although these are dealt with quickly by adults in the playground.
- There has been a high number of exclusions, although these have reduced this term because of the impact of work done by leaders. For example, leaders make sure that pupils understand what good behaviour looks like, and what they are expected to do to achieve it, and they ensure that staff consistently apply the behaviour policy.
- Some pupils' work is not always neatly presented, but many pupils do take pride in themselves, their school uniform and their school. Pupils behave well in lessons. They are keen to learn, well motivated and happy to share their learning in discussions with their partners.
- While there are still instances of unacceptable behaviour, including bullying in the recent past, pupils now feel safe and say they are better supported if there is any inappropriate behaviour. They also acknowledge behaviour has improved, both in classrooms and in the playground.
- The school has recently altered its behaviour policy and has demonstrated success in promoting positive behaviour. It has altered the focus of 'Golden Time' (reward time for good work or behaviour, where pupils can choose their own activity). This is now more focused on activities which promote learning. Pupils are responding well to the new behaviour policy, as seen in the reduction of poor behaviour in school.

- Pupils also mostly behave well when not in lessons. They often play happily together, do as they are told by dinner supervisors and move around the school sensibly. Most have good manners and are polite towards visitors.
- Pupils' attendance is improving. It is now close to the national average and pupils are punctual. Pupils say that they enjoy being part of the school.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. The school ensures that all safeguarding procedures are in place. For example, all perimeter gates are locked during the day and public access is only possible through the school office.
- Pupils feel safe and are aware of how to keep safe and secure. For example, they understand the potential dangers when using the internet or when talking to strangers. They also report, and records show, that staff deal with bullying effectively. Where bullying does occur, pupils say that it is mostly related to minor disagreements.
- The vast majority of parents feel that their children are kept safe and are well looked after.

The quality of teaching

is inadequate

- Weaker teaching of reading, writing and mathematics in the past has left pupils with a great deal of catching up to do, and the gaps in learning have not fully closed. As a result, progress for pupils currently in the school is inadequate.
- Although teachers' expectations of pupils' achievement are increasing and the targets they set for pupils' learning are more challenging, in some cases, they are still too low. This situation does not help pupils to catch up quickly enough to achieve the levels of which they are capable.
- Some teachers' planning of learning is not matched to pupils' different abilities, including for the most-able pupils. This means that, in some classes, pupils do not understand exactly what they have to do or are set work that is too easy or too hard for them to complete.
- Over time, the teaching of reading has been poor. Evidence seen in classrooms demonstrates it is now improving. The teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) is effective and there are arrangements to give additional support to pupils who are identified as not having made sufficiently good progress.
- Teachers' marking is too variable. Teachers do not consistently ensure that pupils act on the advice that they are given through marking.
- The overall improvement in pupils' learning this year reflects the better teaching now evident, including in early years. Much additional support for pupils, higher expectations from teachers and teaching assistants are raising the rate of progress. Although teaching has not had the necessary positive impact on pupils' achievement over time, improvements in teaching have resulted in better attainment and progress for most pupils currently in the school.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work as a team to provide valuable additional support and develop effective relationships with pupils. As a result, there are now only very rare instances of pupils' poor behaviour.
- Pupils' homework prepares them well for the following lesson. Parents who expressed a view are very supportive of the progress that homework helps their children to make.

The achievement of pupils**is inadequate**

- Children start the school with skills, knowledge and understanding well below those typical for their age. Many of those from minority ethnic groups are learning English as an additional language, and a high proportion join or leave the school part way through their primary education. Since the previous inspection, the school has been unable to reduce the gap in attainment between its pupils and pupils nationally. Pupils' progress has started to improve, but only very recently. Consequently, they have a great deal of catching up to do to reach average standards. In 2014, pupils left Year 6 more than two years behind pupils nationally.
- In 2014, pupils' attainment in Year 2 increased slightly in mathematics, reading and writing but at around 18 months behind pupils nationally, remained well below average. Low attainment in Key Stage 1 has meant that pupils begin Year 3 lacking a firm basis for their future work. In Key Stage 2, in 2014, standards declined sharply in all subjects.
- The most-able pupils, until recently, have not achieved well because the school has not provided additional challenge or set high enough expectations for what they can achieve. This has meant these pupils have not attained the higher standards of which they are capable. Although there is still a great deal of catching up to do, the school is now addressing this and there is evidence in pupils' books of improved progress in both key stages.
- Pupil premium funding is used, in part, to provide additional one-to-one adult support and small-group work. This has not proved to be successful in reducing the gap between the attainment of these pupils and other groups. In 2014, disadvantaged pupils at the end of Year 6 were around two terms behind their classmates in reading and writing, although they did slightly better than their classmates in mathematics. However, when compared to all other pupils nationally, disadvantaged pupils were two and half years behind in reading and mathematics. They were three years behind other pupils nationally in writing.
- Over time, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs have made similar progress to their classmates. Senior leaders have taken action to improve their progress by appointing a new member of staff to oversee learning for these pupils. These pupils' specific learning needs have been identified and the close support they receive is well directed, but it is too soon to judge the impact of these measures.
- Until recently, the attainment of pupils identified as learning English as an additional language, and of Romany and Gypsy children, lagged behind that of other children in the school and nationally. However, evidence seen in classrooms and in pupils' books indicates that these pupils are beginning to make better progress.
- The results of the national check for phonics for pupils in Year 1 show that the teaching of early reading skills has improved. Although still below the national average, there was a 16% improvement in the scores in 2014 compared with 2013. Achievement in reading is improving as a result.

The early years provision**requires improvement**

- Since the previous inspection, leaders have not done enough to tackle identified weaknesses. For example, there has been a lack of progress since the last inspection on developing the outdoor area to enable Nursery and Reception children to reinforce and extend their communication, numeracy and social skills.
- The local authority has analysed data on children's attainment on behalf of the school, but early years leaders have not carried out their own analysis. As a result, planning of learning has not swiftly identified priorities needed for staff development or led to more rapidly improved outcomes for children.
- Children start the early years provision with levels well below those typical for their age. Teachers and teaching assistants focus on basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics, ensuring that children gain a firm foundation to learn more effectively. As a result, most children make expected progress. However, that means that their attainment is still low at the end of the Reception Year.

- Recent improvements in teaching in the early years have resulted in children making better progress than in the past. All adults in Nursery and Reception work together to create a strong and effective team. Teachers and other adults model language well for children and, by continually challenging them to express themselves and extend their use of new words, children's vocabulary and confidence develop quickly.
- Children are given opportunities to demonstrate their developing confidence and enthusiasm in the classrooms and in the outside area. When left alone to explore, many make their own discoveries and solve problems. Occasionally, some children are left to wander during activities they choose for themselves, and so they do not use this time effectively.
- There is a positive partnership with many parents, who are encouraged to contribute to their children's learning journals through 'Wow' moments, where they have the opportunity to celebrate their child's good work. Many have recently attended a 'letters and sounds' training session organised by the school.
- Disabled children and those who have special educational needs are identified early so that they are given appropriate support to make similar progress to that of their classmates.
- All safeguarding and child protection policies and procedures are fully in place.

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	112778
Local authority	Derby
Inspection number	448987

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	364
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lisa Allen
Headteacher	Paula Martin (Acting Executive Headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	30 January 2013
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