

Murston Junior School

Sunny Bank, Sittingbourne, ME10 3QN

Inspection dates

3–4 December 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Teachers are not always clear enough about what they want pupils to achieve in lessons. They sometimes set work which is too easy so pupils do not all do as well as they could, especially in writing and mathematics.
- Teachers' expectations are sometimes too low. They do not all make sure pupils finish tasks or make the right corrections to their work.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to practise writing at length. This holds back their progress.
- The targets set for pupils are not specific enough to help teachers measure exactly what pupils know and can do.
- Pupils eligible for the pupil premium do not do as well as other pupils at Murston.
- Teachers often keep pupils waiting too long before they get started on their work. This means some pupils stop concentrating on their learning. The behaviour policy is not always used effectively enough to help pupils behave well.
- Teaching assistants do not all play an active part in whole-class phases of lessons to support teachers and improve learning.
- Although the curriculum meets requirements it does not inspire pupils to learn.
- The newly appointed subject leaders have not fully developed their roles to help improve the quality of teaching and raise standards.
- The school's action plans do not set out well enough exactly how identified improvements will be achieved.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher is a strong leader. She knows exactly what she wants for the pupils and is determined they will get the best. The staff team is fully behind her.
- Pupils are given many opportunities to enjoy books and as a result they make good progress in reading.
- The school's ethos is promoted effectively and pupils understand that respect for others is very important.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe is good.
- The widening range of sports clubs is encouraging pupils to develop healthy lifestyles.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed learning in eight parts of lessons together with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, subject leaders for mathematics and English, the special educational needs coordinator, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector met with a group of pupils and spoke informally to pupils at lunchtime. The inspector also attended a school assembly.
- Informal discussions were held with parents at the start of the school day. The inspector also took account of 70 responses to the school's own questionnaire to parents. There were not enough responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) for it to be considered. Responses to the staff questionnaire were also analysed.
- A range of documentation was examined including the school's action plans; records of pupils' progress and attainment; records of attendance, behaviour, child protection and safeguarding; the school's self-assessment; documents relating to performance management; and records of governing body meetings.

Inspection team

Amanda Gard, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school. There are six classes altogether. The majority of pupils are taught in mixed-age classes. There is one single-age class in Year 4.
- Four new teachers joined the school in September 2014. At the same time a new coordinator for special educational needs joined the school. The subject leaders for English and mathematics are new to these roles.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is far higher than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the pupil premium grant provides support is almost double the national average. This funding is used to support pupils in the care of the local authority and those who are known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement by:
 - providing more opportunities to write at length in English and other subjects, and checking pupils finish all their work
 - ensuring pupils' targets show exactly what they are aiming for and how well they are doing
 - creating a more inspiring curriculum which motivates pupils to learn
 - using the new behaviour management policy consistently to help focus pupils on their learning.
- Improve the quality of teaching so it is consistently good or better and pupils make good progress by:
 - ensuring teachers pinpoint exactly what they want pupils to learn and set tasks at the right level of challenge
 - maximising the amount of time pupils are given to tackle the tasks teachers set
 - checking pupils make corrections to help them improve their work
 - directing teaching assistants effectively to support learning throughout lessons.
- Develop leadership by:
 - involving middle leaders more fully in improving standards of teaching and achievement
 - ensuring action plans show exactly what will be done to raise standards to help leaders and governors check progress.

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

require improvement

- The headteacher is building a new leadership team. The newly appointed subject leaders and special educational needs coordinator are developing their roles. They have not had time to make a difference to the quality of teaching and learning. As a result leadership and management require improvement.
- The headteacher is highly ambitious for the school. She is determined to 'put Murston on the map'. Almost all the teachers are new this year but the development days at the start of term helped to ensure they are all working to the same goals. One member of staff spoke of the headteacher as 'an inspirational leader' and certainly the staff team all agree that they are proud to work at the school.
- The headteacher checks the work of the school carefully and knows exactly where improvements need to be made. She has sensibly organised additional help for inexperienced teachers to develop good practice.
- The new subject leaders for English and mathematics receive useful support from a consultant and senior leaders to develop their roles. They have started to investigate how well their subjects are taught and have planned next steps but this work is at an early stage: it is too soon to see if they are making a difference.
- The new special educational needs coordinator and his assistant have taken swift action, putting systems in place to raise standards for pupils requiring extra help. They provide useful guidance to teachers to help pupils achieve well. They recognise that targets on the new plans for additional support are not sharp enough to measure exactly how well pupils are doing.
- All leaders have action plans setting out their work. However, plans do not all show exactly what leaders want to achieve, how they will make improvements and how they will check success.
- Most teachers joined the school after the curriculum was planned and they were not involved in its design. Although it covers all the right areas, subjects do not link together well and it does not excite pupils or motivate them to learn.
- Pupils gain a good understanding of life in modern Britain. They learn about the legal system through visits to a magistrates court and the Houses of Parliament. The elections for school councillors and house captains help them to recognise the importance of democracy while the school bank teaches them about good money management. The school's ethos of respect underpins all its work: pupils know they should treat others well.
- Pupils have a good range of opportunities for spiritual, social, moral and cultural education. The recent Remembrance service helped them empathise with the families of Murston men who fell in the Great War, while music and poetry during the service helped them to reflect. The many opportunities to take responsibility such as prefects and eco councillors prepare pupils well to take part in society.
- The school promotes equal opportunities effectively, ensuring that all pupils have access to the full range of subjects and activities, and learn without fear of any type of discrimination. Initiatives such as EIGAS (everyone is good at something) help to promote good self-esteem.
- The pupil premium grant has been used to help disadvantaged pupils make expected progress but they do not do as well as other Murston pupils. Leaders are rightly targeting support more specifically this year to close the gap.
- Parents are encouraged to work with the school. The Murston Planner provides them with a wealth of useful information on areas such as attendance, how to do calculations in mathematics and what to do if your child is being bullied. It helps parents see what their child is doing at school and enables helpful communication with the class teacher. Special events such as the community chef and class assemblies bring many parents in to see the school's work.
- The primary physical education and sport premium is used effectively. The specialist teacher provides helpful professional development for teachers. Pupils say they enjoy the wider range of clubs now on offer and the increased participation in sport is helping pupils develop healthy lifestyles.
- Safeguarding arrangements are robust. Leaders keep careful records to show how they work with other agencies to support children whose circumstances may place them at risk. Child protection training is fully up to date.
- The local authority has rightly provided more help recently due to the high proportion of new and inexperienced staff. Specialist teachers and leaders offer valuable advice to develop teaching. The headteacher actively seeks support from other schools through the Gateway Alliance which has proved useful to provide models of good practice.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors provide effective challenge to help leaders improve the school. They carefully check expenditure to ensure value for money and question leaders thoroughly about pupils' progress. They

understand exactly where strengths and weaknesses in teaching lie, and link pay awards to teachers' performance. They make careful strategic decisions to improve the school, such as creating the additional position of assistant special educational needs coordinator to strengthen this area of the school's work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

require improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Although they usually sit quietly in lessons they are not always listening to the teacher. They lose concentration when tasks are too easy or they are kept waiting too long before they start work. They say that when teachers ask them to talk to a partner about their learning they often talk about other things.
- Some parents express concern that lessons are disrupted by a small number of pupils. Pupils say that this is true. The school's new behaviour policy is starting to make a difference and the number of disruptions is decreasing. Some teachers regularly remind pupils about the school's expectations for good behaviour but others forget which makes behaviour management less effective.
- Pupils conduct themselves well around the school, in assembly and in the lunch hall. They are polite and courteous to visitors. They look after their school with pride, for example taking part in regular litter-picking sessions and ensuring classrooms and shared areas are tidy.
- Attendance is in line with the national average.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say they feel very safe in school.
- Pupils really take on board the school's strong messages about the importance of respect for others. They say bullying is rare but if it occurs adults deal with it well. Regular lessons about issues such as e-safety help pupils keep themselves safe. The site is well maintained and secure.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teachers are not always clear enough about exactly what they want pupils to learn by the end of a lesson. They often give pupils work which is too easy because they have not checked carefully enough what pupils already know and can do. In some classes pupils are kept waiting too long before starting their own work. As a result pupils do not all do as well as they could, including in key areas of reading, literacy and mathematics.
- There is some good practice on which to build. The most effective teachers show pupils exactly how to tackle their learning. These teachers set challenging tasks and ask probing questions to make pupils think really hard. Their pupils make rapid progress.
- Teaching assistants provide some useful help especially for pupils who find learning difficult. They work with them in smaller groups to help them tackle their work. However, in some classes support staff are not involved enough when the teacher is teaching the whole class. They do not do enough to help lessons run smoothly or check pupils' understanding.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and give pupils useful pointers for improvement. Some pupils make progress because they act on their teacher's advice. However, many teachers do not encourage pupils to make corrections or check that they have understood. In these cases work does not improve.
- All pupils have target cards in English and mathematics. The targets show where pupils should be by the end of the year. They do not help teachers to check just how well pupils are doing because they do not measure the smaller steps pupils need to take to reach their goals.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement in reading, writing and mathematics is variable across the school. Different groups of pupils do not make consistently good progress.
- Pupils in Year 6 in 2014 started at the school with standards significantly below the national average in reading and mathematics and below the national average in writing. They caught up well. By the end of Year 6 the proportion reaching the expected level in each subject was in line with the national average.
- In mathematics some teachers challenge pupils to think hard and explain their reasoning, which helps

them make good progress. However, this is not consistent practice across the school, so standards in mathematics vary too much.

- There is a strong drive to improve standards in reading. The new approaches introduced in September are already working and progress across the school is more rapid. Pupils enjoy reading and proudly show off the high-profile displays which celebrate their achievements.
- Regular handwriting practice sessions help pupils to develop a joined script so they write more quickly and neatly. However, teachers' expectations for the amount of writing pupils produce are often too low. Pupils do not always finish their work. This limits progress, especially for more able pupils.
- Disadvantaged pupils do less well than their peers. They were nearly a year behind other pupils in the school in reading and mathematics, and two terms behind in writing when they left in July 2014. Although they made progress in line with other pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics, from their starting point when they joined the school, they did not make rapid enough progress to catch up with other pupils at Murston. Gaps in attainment widened: this is still the case for pupils currently attending the school. Leaders are now properly focusing more support on these pupils to help them catch up.
- Few pupils in the cohort completing Year 6 in 2014 entered the school at the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics. By the end of the year the proportion reaching the higher levels remained below the national average.
- The majority of the most able pupils made expected progress in reading, and all did as well as they should in writing. In mathematics, specialist teaching for the most able paid off with all pupils making expected progress, and a higher proportion making more than expected progress than seen nationally. Across the school, as for other groups, progress for the most able is too variable.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs also make inconsistent progress from year to year in reading, writing and mathematics. The new special educational needs coordinator is rightly taking steps to address this by helping teachers to plan additional support to help these pupils catch up. It is too early to see just how effective this work is. Leaders are aware that the targets set for this work are not precise enough to check exactly how well pupils are doing.

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	118353
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	444232

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	152
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Bob Edom
Headteacher	Mrs Patricia Hatt
Date of previous school inspection	November 2009
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