

Featherby Junior School

Chilham Road, Gillingham, ME8 6BT

Inspection dates

22–23 January 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- There are inconsistencies in the quality of teaching between different classes. As a result, pupils' progress is uneven as they move up through the year groups.
- Some pupils do not make enough progress in reading, writing and mathematics, particularly in Years 5 and 6.
- Too few pupils attain the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- Improvements in attainment in 2013 were not sustained in 2014, when overall attainment fell back to below the national average.
- The school's use of additional funding has not been effective in improving the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. In 2014, the attainment of these pupils fell further behind pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teachers' expectations of pupils of differing abilities are not sufficiently high. Teaching does not always challenge the most-able pupils fully. Support for lower-attaining pupils, disabled pupils and for those with special educational needs is not good enough.
- Gaps in pupils' basic literacy skills are not being addressed quickly enough. Pupils' grammar, punctuation and spelling skills are not sufficiently secure for them to achieve well in writing.
- Teachers do not always identify and correct basic spelling and punctuation errors in pupils' written work.
- There are too few opportunities for pupils to practise and develop basic literacy skills in longer pieces of writing and when writing in different subjects.
- Governors have not been effective in holding the school to account. The governing body is not sufficiently focused on raising pupils' achievement and on the key priorities for the school's development.
- Not all middle leaders have a clear understanding of how well pupils are learning or of what needs to be done to raise achievement.
- Senior leaders' high expectations are not yet shared by all staff, including some middle leaders.
- Leaders, managers and governors have not ensured that teaching and achievement have improved enough to be good.

The school has the following strengths

- Teaching is improving and some is effective, particularly in Year 3 and 4. Pupils make rapid progress where this is the case.
- Classrooms are attractive and positive places to learn. Most pupils behave well. They work and play together harmoniously and feel safe.
- Sports premium is used well. Many pupils regularly participate in the wide range of clubs provided.
- Leaders have improved links with parents. Most parents express confidence in the school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 13 lessons or part-lessons, including three joint observations with one of the assistant headteachers. They also observed pupils working with adults other than their teachers.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, teachers, members of staff, parents and pupils. Discussions were also held with the Chair of the Governing Body and three additional governors. The lead inspector met with two representatives of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of 23 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. In addition, they considered the views expressed by parents informally at the start of the school day.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and considered a range of policies and documents. These included the school's improvement plan, information about pupils' progress, attendance records, and safeguarding policies and procedures. Inspectors also looked at samples of the governing body minutes.
- Inspectors looked at a sample of pupils' work provided by the school, as well as in lessons. They also listened to pupils in Year 3 read.

Inspection team

Julie Sackett, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Barbara Saltmarsh	Additional Inspector
Bryan Meyer	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is above average. Pupil premium is additional government funding to support those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average.
- The school meets 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 the quality of teaching by ensuring that teachers:
 - have consistently high expectations of all pupils
 - provide sufficiently challenging work for the most-able pupils
 - support the least-able pupils, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, so that they are able to successfully complete the work set
 - identify basic punctuation and spelling errors in pupils' work, and help them to make the corrections needed.
- Improve pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics by:
 - ensuring that teachers consistently use assessment information to identify and address gaps in pupils' basic literacy and numeracy skills
 - ensuring pupils write at length and in different subjects.
- Improve the impact of leadership and management at all levels by ensuring that:
 - additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is used more effectively to accelerate progress
 - all leaders and governors share senior leaders' high expectations of staff and pupils
 - all middle leaders have an accurate view of the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement, and what needs to be improved in their subject areas
 - governors focus more sharply on pupils' achievement and check the impact of developments more rigorously.

An external review of governance and 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

- Leaders have not ensured sufficiently rapid improvements in the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. There are too many variations in pupils' progress in different year groups and between groups of pupils. While there are some signs of improvement in the quality of teaching, there are too many inconsistencies across the school to ensure that all pupils make good progress. Senior leaders have high expectations of staff and pupils. However, these are not fully shared by all members of the school community. This is hindering the pace of improvement.
- Not all middle leaders have a sufficiently robust view of the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement in their subject responsibility, and their expectations of staff and pupils are too low. The effectiveness of middle leaders is too variable to support rapid improvements in pupils' achievement.
- Some middle leaders play a very effective role in the school's development. For example, the sports leader's strong subject knowledge and enthusiasm ensure that the sports premium is used very effectively. A wide range of clubs offers something of interest for most pupils and, as a result, pupils' participation in sport has increased substantially, including disadvantaged pupils.
- The headteacher's determination to improve pupils' achievement has secured some improvements in the quality of teaching and in pupils' outcomes. While leaders' evaluations of the school's effectiveness are overgenerous, they have an accurate view of the school's strengths and development needs.
- The assistant headteachers have made significant contributions to improvements, including leading and developing the quality of teaching and ensuring that pupils continue to behave well. They work closely with the headteacher and members of staff to ensure that teachers know what they are doing well and what further actions they need to take to improve their practice.
- Pupil premium funding is not used well enough to ensure that disadvantaged pupils achieve as well as their peers nationally. Gaps in achievement are not closing fast enough.
- The school promotes equality of opportunity and is a harmonious community. Good relations are fostered and pupils behave well. Leaders are committed to securing further increases in teachers' expectations and to ensuring equal opportunities for all pupils. For example, they have identified the need to close the gap between disadvantaged pupils' achievement and others as a school priority for development.
- Discriminatory incidents between pupils are rare. Records show that leaders respond promptly on the few occasions when they occur.
- Subjects are taught in a lively and interesting way so that most pupils are keen to learn. The school participates in a number of high-quality arts projects which motivate and inspire pupils, such as, for example, working with a soundscape artist and an opera company. However, aspects of the curriculum require improvement to ensure that all pupils achieve well. Teachers' expectations are not consistently high enough and the work set for pupils is not planned well enough to meet pupils' differing needs. There are too few opportunities for pupils to write at length and in different subjects.
- Teaching contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils learn about a number of world faiths, including Christianity, and respond thoughtfully during assemblies and other opportunities to reflect. Teachers ensure that pupils have regular opportunities to discuss issues relating to everyday life, such as 'respect' and 'friendship'. As a result, pupils successfully develop some of the personal skills needed for life in modern Britain.
- The headteacher has improved links with parents substantially so that they are more involved in their children's learning. Events such as parents' evenings are very well attended so that parents are better informed about their children's progress. Parents who spoke to inspectors expressed confidence in the headteacher and the school, and most parents who completed the Parent View questionnaire online were positive about the school's work.
- Leaders value the support provided by the local authority, including successful training to improve teachers' practice.
- Safeguarding arrangements are systematic, effective and up-to-date. Leaders ensure that staff are qualified and that they are clear about procedures should a concern arise.

governance of the school:

- The governing body has not been effective in securing necessary improvements in pupils' achievement. Governors are not sufficiently focused on the key priorities for the school's development. The headteacher ensures that governors know how the school is performing in relation to other schools nationally. However, governing body meetings do not focus sufficiently on the school's work to raise pupils' achievement. As a result, leaders are not supported and held to account robustly enough. Governors' expectations of pupils' progress, including disadvantaged pupils, are not sufficiently high.

While governors know how different funds are used, their checks on the difference this is making to pupils' achievement are not rigorous enough. The headteacher provides regular reports to governors about the quality of teaching so that they are aware of some improvements. They regularly visit the school so that they have a first-hand knowledge of the school's work and of pupils' behaviour. Governors know how senior leaders support teachers to improve their practice and how performance management procedures are used to challenge and develop the quality of teaching. They ensure that safeguarding arrangements are given a high priority so that pupils are safe.

The behaviour and safety of pupils **are good**

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. The school has a calm and orderly atmosphere. Pupils are friendly and treat each other with respect.
- Pupils want to do well in lessons. Their work is well presented and neat. They cooperate well with each other when completing tasks and respond quickly to adults' instructions. Just occasionally, pupils' attention flags during lessons and their progress slows. However, this rarely disrupts the learning of pupils more widely.
- Adults supervise pupils well during breaktimes so that they are safe and well behaved. Pupils enjoy the wide range of activities provided during lunch breaks and use the equipment with care.
- Leaders record incidents of poor behaviour thoroughly and conscientiously. They regularly analyse this information for any trends or patterns in behaviour. Records show that the support provided for individual pupils is having a positive effect on their behaviour.
- Most parents who responded to Parent View feel that pupils behave well.
- Leaders ensure that parents understand the importance of pupils' regular attendance, and rewards and sanctions are used appropriately. Attendance is consistently in line with the national average.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Pupils understand what bullying is and some of the different forms this can take, including cyber-bullying. They know what steps they can take to reduce the risks of using the internet.
- School records indicate that there are very few incidents of bullying and that racist incidents rarely occur. Records are well maintained and show that any concerns are followed up appropriately.
- Most parents who responded to Parent View, and those who spoke with inspectors, feel that their children are safe and happy in school.

The quality of teaching **requires improvement**

- Teaching is not consistently strong enough to ensure that pupils make good progress and achieve well. Teachers' expectations are too low and the work set for pupils is not sufficiently well matched to their needs. As a result, some pupils find the work too easy, while others find the work too difficult and complete only very limited amounts of work, particularly in writing.
- Pupils' books are regularly marked in line with the school's policy. However, expectations are not always high enough and too often marking indicates that pupils have been successful when the work produced is poor quality or incomplete.
- The teaching of writing requires improvement. Teaching does not equip pupils sufficiently with the basic skills needed to write effectively. While teachers now teach specific aspects of writing more regularly, including spelling and grammar, there are too few opportunities for pupils to practise writing skills in longer pieces of work and in different subjects.
- The teaching of reading has improved. For example, teachers in Year 3 liaise with the infant school so that phonics (the sounds that letters make) is taught consistently in both key stages. This ensures that pupils are familiar with the approach used and continue to develop the basic phonics knowledge they need to read successfully. However, pupils' progress remains variable despite these improvements because of inconsistencies in the quality of teaching.
- Leaders have extended the range of reading books available to meet pupils' changing needs and a teacher provides extra help for younger pupils who find reading more difficult. Pupils' progress is improving in some classes as a result. However, while pupils enjoy reading and use a range of reading strategies with increasing confidence, there are still differences in the effectiveness of teaching, so that pupils make

better progress in some classes than in others.

- The teaching of mathematics has also improved. Teaching is more sharply focused on the key facts and skills pupils need to solve mathematical problems. Teachers increasingly use assessments at the start of each mathematical topic to plan lessons, although some teachers' expectations are still too low. Teachers use classroom displays to provide pupils with some of the basic mathematical facts they need to complete their work. This helps pupils in some classes to complete their work more successfully.
- Teaching assistants are organised effectively during lessons and provide valuable reassurance, particularly for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. However, the impact of their work is not as successful when the work set for pupils is too difficult.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 has been variable for some years. While pupils' progress has improved in some classes, there are still too many differences between subjects and groups across the school to ensure that pupils achieve well.
- Weaknesses in teaching in the past mean that some pupils have gaps in their knowledge, particularly in basic literacy skills. Teaching is not helping pupils to catch up with their peers by the end of Year 6.
- The most-able pupils make variable progress between classes and subjects. In 2014, the proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels was below average in reading, writing and mathematics. Information about pupils' progress indicates that, while pupils are on track to secure some improvement in 2015, this is not likely to be significant.
- Lower-attaining pupils, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs do not make sufficiently rapid progress. The work in pupils' books reflects the mixed progress made by pupils in different year groups.
- Disadvantaged pupils do not achieve well enough. In 2014, their attainment was about eight months behind their classmates in reading, six months behind in mathematics and a year behind in writing. They were about a year behind pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. A number of pupils arrived part way through Year 5 and 6. These pupils made good progress from the time they joined the school. However, there was too little time to enable these pupils to catch up with where they should have been by the end of Year 6.
- While gaps in achievement have not closed, leaders can point to improvements in the progress made by disadvantaged pupils currently in the school. For example, disadvantaged pupils make rapid progress in those classes where teaching is consistently effective. However, as is the case with their classmates, they make slower progress in other classes.
- Pupils' work shows that their progress in writing is not consistently good enough across the school. While pupils' attainment improved to average levels in 2013 and 2014, this does not yet represent good progress from their starting points in Year 3.
- Pupils have too few opportunities to complete longer pieces of written work during their time in the school. As a result, they are not able to build on previous learning strongly enough and some lack the stamina needed to write at length. Information about pupils' progress indicates that some are making better progress than previously. However, elsewhere, pupils' progress is still not good enough.
- Pupils' progress in reading is uneven between classes and year groups. In 2014, pupils' attainment in reading was below average at the end of Year 6.
- In 2014, attainment in mathematics was well below average. However, the work produced by pupils currently in the school indicates that they are making faster progress than previously, particularly in their ability to solve mathematical problems. As a result, standards are likely to improve in 2015.

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	118420
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	453597

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	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	353
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Ainsley
Headteacher	Barry Symons
Date of previous school inspection	14–15 March 2013
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