

Picklenash Junior School

Ross Road, Newent, GL18 1BG

Inspection dates 10–11 February 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.

- Pupils do not achieve as well as they should given their starting points.
- Standards in writing are below national levels at Year 6. They are not as high as in reading and mathematics which are at average levels. Many pupils do not apply grammar, punctuation and spelling skills accurately in their writing.
- Gaps in achievement between different groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and their classmates, have not closed rapidly enough.
- The work set for pupils, particularly for the most able, does not always take enough account of what they already know. As a result, their rate of learning is slower than it could be and not enough of them reach the higher levels in their work.
- Teaching is not consistently good. Pupils' progress varies between classes and year groups.
- Expectations of how pupils should present their work are not always high enough.
- Pupils do not always take note of teachers' comments to improve their work.
- Some staff are new to their leadership responsibilities and are yet to have an impact on pupils' standards and progress.
- Leaders and managers have not ensured that the school has improved sufficiently since the previous inspection.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher and governors have brought the school through a period of high staff turnover. There are now signs of improvements in the quality of teaching and in pupils' progress.
- The headteacher gives clear direction on how to improve the school. Together with the deputy headteacher, she is having a positive impact on improving the quality of teaching.
- The pupils benefit greatly from the school's work in promoting spiritual, moral and social development. They also benefit from good involvement in the local community.
- The actions of leaders have increased pupils' attendance significantly.
- Pupils behave well. The pupils enjoy being at school and say they feel very safe. This is because the school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Parents agree.
- The care and welfare of pupils are strengths of the school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 17 lessons. Six of these were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors looked at work in pupils' books and listened to pupils read in all year groups.
- Inspectors met with pupils to gather their views of the school. They spoke informally to pupils at break and lunchtime.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including assessments and records of pupils' progress, the school's checks and records relating to safeguarding, child protection, behaviour and attendance, records of how teaching is managed and the school improvement plan.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior staff and four governors. Inspectors also met with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 28 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the 10 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Michael Bartleman, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Stephen Bywater

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized junior school, where most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The school shares a site with the infant school and a children's centre.
- The school has been federated with the neighbouring infant school since May 2011, forming the Federation of Newent Schools, and shares the same governing body.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been some staffing changes, and middle and senior leaders now have responsibilities across the junior and infant schools. The headteacher is the executive headteacher for both schools. The deputy headteacher of the infant school was appointed as deputy headteacher of the federation in September 2013.
- One pupil in five is supported by the pupil premium which provides additional funding for disadvantaged pupils, including those eligible for free school meals. This is below the national average.
- One pupil in six is disabled or has special educational needs. This is broadly in line with the national average.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is consistently at least good by:
 - making sure that teachers take account of what pupils already know and set work that is always at the right level of difficulty, particularly for the most able
 - ensuring the work and support provided for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs enable them to make rapid progress
 - making sure that teachers have high expectations for pupils' presentation of their work
 - making sure that pupils respond to teachers' comments to improve their work.
- Increase pupils' progress and raise their attainment, especially in writing, by:
 - setting challenging tasks so that increasing proportions of pupils reach the higher levels in reading and writing
 - improving pupils' standards of grammar, spelling and punctuation
 - raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils so that gaps in achievement narrow
 - closing the gaps in attainment between groups of pupils in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Improve the effectiveness of leaders and managers by:
 - ensuring the roles of subject and phase leaders are fully developed so that these staff can check on the quality of pupils' work and the quality of teaching
 - ensuring that pupils make equally rapid progress in all classes by monitoring teaching rigorously and tracking pupils' progress more frequently and accurately.

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 the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement are not good enough. Partly as a result of the high number of staff changes since the previous inspection, the pace of improvement has been too slow.
- Despite recent improvements, there remain some inconsistencies in the progress pupils are making, particularly in writing, between classes and across year groups.
- Middle leaders, such as staff with subject and year group responsibilities, are new to their roles. They have yet to contribute effectively to the school's actions to speed up pupils' progress and to raise attainment. They are not yet fully involved in checking the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher regularly observe lessons, but their judgements of the impact of teaching on pupils' learning are sometimes overgenerous. Senior leaders' observations do not focus enough on the progress of different groups in the subject being taught. This prevents weaknesses in teaching being remedied quickly enough.
- School improvement planning focuses on the right priorities, but does not provide enough detail about specific actions to improve teaching and writing, including spelling and handwriting. This hinders school leaders in checking the impact of new systems on raising standards.
- The school has proven its capacity to improve. This is shown by the rise in pupils' overall achievement from a low base to average in the last two years due to improvements and higher expectation of teachers, pupils' rising standards in mathematics and reading, and the improvement in teachers' marking since the last inspection.
- School leaders have established routines to review teachers' targets, pay and career provision. Teachers' pay is linked to their performance. Teachers are supported effectively to improve their teaching through the training provided by the school, visits to other schools and coaching one another. Newly qualified teachers are well supported. However, improvements in teaching have not been rapid due to the high number of staff changes.
- All staff who responded to the staff questionnaire praised the impact of the headteacher's work and commented on their involvement in school developments. As a result, staff morale is high, with all staff actively supporting the headteacher's drive for improvements.
- The local authority has provided timely help for the school since the last inspection. For example, it has provided training for governors and for newly qualified teachers. This is now helping the school to improve.
- Positive relationships are clearly evident and discrimination is not tolerated. The school is inclusive. All pupils have the opportunity to take part in the wide range of activities on offer. Pupils who have joined the school recently described to inspectors how easy it had been to settle in. They explained that this was because people are so friendly and respectful towards each other. The headteacher's knowledge of the pupils and her actions successfully promotes the well-being of pupils. She leads by example. Leaders are fully aware that differences remain in the achievement of different groups of pupils and are taking action to bring improvement.
- Leaders use the pupil premium funding to provide additional support in small groups and on an individual basis. However, disadvantaged pupils make inconsistent progress across the school and the gaps between their achievement and that of other pupils are not closing rapidly enough.
- The strong leadership of the headteacher has ensured that the school site is safe for pupils, inadequate teaching has been eradicated, attendance has increased and expectations of teaching and pupils' achievements have been raised.
- The curriculum is organised around various themes which provide good opportunities for promoting pupils' reading, writing and mathematical skills. Although, this has not always led to rapid improvements in standards. The curriculum enables the pupils to benefit from a broad range of lessons, activities and opportunities that capture their interest and help them to develop positive attitudes to learning. During the inspection, Years 3 and 4 pupils had science lessons at the local secondary school to further develop their knowledge of fossils.
- The extra sports funding is enhancing teachers' subject knowledge through the work of sports coaches and the school offers an extensive range of sports, including dance, lacrosse and competitive sports. The decisions to employ sports coaches and to develop a new curriculum have greatly increased pupils' opportunities to take part in extended learning activities.
- The school works very well to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This serves to reinforce pupils' understanding of British values, including respect for different faiths and cultures and the importance of democracy. Staff successfully prepare pupils for life in modern Britain.
- Safeguarding arrangements are highly effective, go beyond statutory requirements and include robust

background checks on adults working with pupils. There are comprehensive risk assessments covering aspects of school life, such as educational visits.

■ The governance of the school:

- The governing body is ambitious and determined that the school should improve to become a good school. It is led and managed well by an experienced and knowledgeable Chair who has significantly improved the governors' range of expertise. Since the last inspection, the governing body has reviewed its effectiveness and received appropriate training, including in understanding pupils' assessment information and in judging how well the school is performing in relation to other schools nationally. Governors now have a secure understanding of this.
- Governors ask challenging questions and show good levels of support. Members ensure statutory requirements are met. The governing body has its own regular monitoring procedures which include scrutiny of pupils' assessments and reports on teaching from the headteacher.
- Governors are aware of the strengths in teaching and that improvement in writing remains a pressing priority. They conduct regular reviews of the impact of spending on the achievement of different groups, including for those in receipt of the pupil premium. They are aware that while improvements have been made to these pupils' achievement progress is still inconsistent as pupils move through the school. They acknowledge there is more to be done to ensure pupils' progress in reading and writing is at least in line with that of other pupils nationally. All governors have completed the required training for safeguarding.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are keen to learn and are supportive of each other during lessons. Disruption in lessons is rare and teachers deal effectively with any challenging behaviour.
- Pupils respond well to the school's approach to rewarding and encouraging good behaviour. Pupils like to take on additional responsibilities, for example as prefects, sports and house captains and monitors. Pupils have a great pride in their school and welcome visitors.
- Staff encourage pupils to develop a strong sense of right or wrong and to value the importance of the democratic process. For example, pupils speak extremely positively about their role as school council members and how they can influence what goes on in school.
- Lunchtimes and playtimes are calm and orderly. Pupils use the different areas of the playgrounds well and are very respectful towards the adults who work in school. They enjoy taking part in organised games and use a range of play equipment sensibly.
- The vast majority of parents who spoke with inspectors and responded to the school's parental survey are positive about pupils' behaviour. A review of the school's records confirms that incidents of poor behaviour are rare and are dealt with effectively.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Rigorous safeguarding policies and procedures are securely in place and regularly updated. The highly effective systems were shown to work well when leaders responded to an incident during the inspection.
- The school site is completely safe. Visitors are checked thoroughly before they are allowed into the school. The pastoral lead ensures that all staff are trained on a regular basis and that staff, as well as parents, understand who they can talk to if they have any concerns.
- Pupils say they feel completely safe in school and are cared for very well. They appreciate how much teachers and other adults do to ensure their well being. They have a very good knowledge of different forms of bullying, and understand the difference between bullying and falling out. They say that bullying is very rare, and that there is none in school at the moment. They say that if it happens, the school reacts quickly and it is 'always resolved'.
- The curriculum ensures that pupils know how to stay safe and to protect themselves from harm. Pupils spoke confidently about personal safety, and how to keep themselves safe on roads, when cycling and when using the internet.
- Parents are entirely confident that their pupils are completely safe and very well cared for. Parents who spoke to the inspector were very supportive of the school. One said that 'the school does a great job and my child couldn't be happier'.
- Leaders and governors rigorously check pupils' attendance. Effective systems are in place to support pupils to ensure they attend regularly. As a result attendance has improved to above national levels since the previous inspection.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because it does not ensure that all groups of pupils make fast enough progress in reading, writing and mathematics as they move through the school.
- Basic skills such as handwriting, punctuation and spelling are not taught well enough. Teachers do not always insist on good standards of grammar and handwriting.
- Sometimes teachers do not use what they know about pupils' abilities to set work that is challenging enough. In particular, the most able pupils are not always given demanding work to enable them to make as much progress as they could in lessons.
- Until very recently, staff have been inconsistent in what they expect of pupils in presentation of work and how pupils should respond to teachers' marking of their work. Teachers mark work regularly and assessments are accurate, but pupils do not always respond to improve their work. As a result, they do not make as much progress as they should.
- In literacy lessons, teachers provide interesting contexts and ensure pupils develop their vocabulary and speaking skills well. However, they do not consistently ensure that pupils have enough time to complete their work and, in some classes, pupils' writing books show some work is unfinished.
- Teaching is improving, partly because there have been fewer staff changes recently and partly because teachers have more opportunities to benefit from learning from each other. This is particularly evident in teachers' use of questions. Teachers are also using information on pupils' progress to provide support earlier for disadvantaged pupils and to identify those who are in danger of falling behind. The support provided by learning support assistants is good, but their impact has been limited because, until recently, the work set by teachers for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs was not always at the right level.
- The teaching of mathematics has improved since the previous inspection. Teachers have good subject knowledge and set high expectations. They help pupils to develop basic skills so that they can then use these skills in problem solving. More effective teaching of the most able mathematicians is helping to raise these pupils' attainment to the highest levels.
- The teaching of guided reading sessions has improved well since the previous inspection. All groups of readers, including those working with the teacher or independently, learn well. For example, all groups in a Year 5 reading session made good progress. This was accomplished through the teacher's careful planning to ensure all activities focused on reading and built well on pupils' existing reading skills.
- When pupils are given tasks which challenged their thinking and understanding, they learn well. For example, in a Years 5 and 6 class, a pupil took the role of Neil Armstrong while other pupils questioned him. This allowed all pupils to develop an understanding of emotive language well before they did their own writing.

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because pupils have not made enough progress over time, particularly in writing.
- Year 6 pupils' results in national tests in the last two years have risen to broadly average from the low standards attained in previous years. However, this does not represent good achievement, considering pupils' attainment on entry to the school.
- The most recent school assessment information, scrutiny of work and hearing pupils read show that the current Year 6 are on track to attain average standards in reading and mathematics and slightly below average standards in writing. Not enough pupils are on track to attain above average standards.
- The most able pupils do not always reach the higher levels of which they are capable by the time they leave school. They sometimes do not make enough progress in lessons. The tasks they are set are not demanding enough in some lessons. At times, they have to sit through teachers' explanations of work which they can already do before starting on their tasks.
- Work in Year 6 pupils' books shows that a few pupils of all abilities still have weaker spelling, punctuation and handwriting than they should. This prevents standards rising more quickly. Grammar, punctuation, spelling and handwriting skills are not developed well enough in Years 3 and 4 and this limits the proportions of pupils reaching average and higher levels in writing by Year 6.
- Pupils talk with great enthusiasm about reading. They understand their reading and know how to use books and the internet to find information. Guided reading groups focus on stretching pupils' ability to understand text through teachers' challenging questions. Standards of reading are improving throughout the school. Pupils who do not read regularly outside school are supported well.
- Until very recently, support for individual pupils who were underachieving was not provided early enough or not precisely targeted at their needs. Currently, these weaknesses are being overcome. Progress is not yet consistently good because there are still too many pupils who are not making progress in line with national expectations. This is confirmed by the school's own analysis of data and by inspectors' analysis of

pupils' work. Expectations of what pupils should achieve in writing are still too variable for pupils in all year groups.

- The progress made by disabled pupils and those with special educational needs requires improvement. Pupils are often taught in small groups, but tasks are not set at the right level for individuals. Sometimes the work set for them in reading and writing is too hard.
- Disadvantaged pupils make inconsistent progress from their individual starting points. At the end of Year 6 in 2014, these pupils were two terms behind their classmates in mathematics and reading and three terms behind in writing. They were three terms behind other pupils nationally in mathematics, four terms in writing, and one and a half terms behind in reading. Their progress was below that of other pupils in the school in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2014, the gap in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and others increased. The school data show that, currently, the difference is reducing, though not consistently in all subjects and in all classes.
- Leaders have succeeded in improving achievement in some key areas. Better use of assessment, earlier identification of pupils' needs, more training for staff and reduced class sizes are having a positive impact on improving current progress. However, the leaders are aware that the gaps in progress between different groups of pupils are not closing rapidly enough.

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	115733
Local authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	453675

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	152
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Aidan Dowle
Executive Headteacher	Lin Griffiths
Date of previous school inspection	27–28 February 2013
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