

Ellington Infant School

High Street, St Lawrence, Ramsgate, CT11 0QH

Inspection dates 5–6 March 2015

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
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Pupils have, in past years, made insufficient progress in developing their knowledge of phonics (the sounds letters make) by the end of Year 1. While standards are now rising, inconsistencies in the quality of teaching of phonics remain.
- Teachers do not always have sufficiently high expectations of what pupils can achieve. They do not consistently plan lessons which provide sufficient challenge for the full range of pupils, including the most able.
- Teachers do not always have high enough expectations of the quality of pupils' written work.
- Pupils have limited opportunities to practise their writing skills in subjects across the curriculum.
- The quality and frequency of marking varies from class to class. Pupils are not always told how they can improve their work.
- Pupils do not have consistently positive attitudes in lessons.
- Monitoring by senior leaders is not always rigorous or timely enough to ensure that weaknesses are tackled promptly.
- The school's evaluation of its own effectiveness is overgenerous and does not provide sufficient challenge for improvement.
- Governors do not always seek sufficient first-hand evidence to enable them to evaluate the full impact of initiatives. They are unsure how to evaluate the impact of the funding used to support the achievement of disadvantaged pupils.

The school has the following strengths

- Weaknesses in early years have been successfully addressed. Provision is now securely good.
- Despite weaknesses in teaching, pupils attain broadly average standards by the end of Year 2.
- Pupils feel safe and conduct themselves well.
- Pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs achieve well.
- The school collaborates effectively with other schools.
- Disadvantaged pupils are now learning more rapidly than the others because they are supported well. Hence, the gaps between their attainment and that of their peers, both in school and nationally, are closing.
- Recent appointments have increased the capacity of the leadership team to drive improvement.
- School leaders have shown determination in driving through some crucial changes which are contributing effectively to improved achievement.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 20 lessons, 10 of which were seen jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors looked closely at pupils' written work for the current school year. They listened to some pupils read.
- Meetings were held with a group of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and another governor, the school's senior and subject leaders, and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 25 responses to the staff questionnaire and the 43 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. They also took account of a survey of parents' views conducted recently by the school.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of school documents, including plans for improvement and records of the school's checks on the quality of teaching. They also considered the governing body minutes and records relating to behaviour, attendance, safeguarding and the systems used to check pupils' progress.

Inspection team

George Logan, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Bruce Waelend	Additional Inspector
Fiona Robinson	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Ellington Infant School is larger than the average-sized infant school.
- The great majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is close to the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium is close to the national average. This is additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after.
- The early years unit provides for Reception children, all of whom attend full time.
- The school offers a daily breakfast club. This was included in the inspection.
- The deputy headteacher was appointed in January 2013.
- The school works closely in an informal collaboration with three other schools, both infant and junior, within the West Ramsgate Achievement Partnership.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is consistently at least good by:
 - ensuring that all teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve, particularly the most able, thereby supporting better attitudes to learning by pupils
 - setting high expectations for the quality and presentation of pupils' written work
 - ensuring that all work is marked regularly, giving pupils clear guidance as to how they can improve
 - ensuring that all staff have sufficient confidence in the teaching of phonics.
- Build upon pupils' current good achievement in early years, so that a greater proportion make similar accelerated progress in Years 1 and 2, by ensuring that:
 - actions already taken to improve pupils' knowledge of phonics and their skills in reading are sustained so that existing weaknesses are effectively addressed
 - the most-able pupils make more consistently rapid progress and attain at higher levels
 - more opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their writing skills across the curriculum.
- Improve the impact of leaders and governors by ensuring that:
 - the monitoring of the school's work at all levels is more rigorous and timely, leading to more rapid pace of change
 - evaluations of school effectiveness are more rigorous, providing greater challenge for improvement
 - the impact of initiatives is more rigorously evaluated
 - the curriculum provides sufficient challenge for the full range of pupils.

An external review of governance, including 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 monitoring of teaching is not fully effective. School leaders undertake a range of activities, but this is not having a sufficiently rapid impact on improving teaching, pupils' achievement or behaviour. Evaluations are sometimes unduly affirmative and this contributes to the relatively slow pace of improvement. Weaknesses in pupils' work are not tackled promptly enough.
 - Key subject leaders share information from their monitoring activities with senior leaders. There are significant strengths within, for example, the leadership of early years and of the provision for children with disabilities or who have special educational needs. However, some subject leaders share an overly optimistic view of the school's day-to-day performance and do not always respond promptly enough when, for example, the quality of pupils' work begins to decline.
 - Leaders' view of the school's effectiveness is overly positive and not sufficiently challenging. However, in discussion, school leaders are well aware where improvement is needed.
 - Senior leaders promote a positive ethos and are ambitious for the school. With the appointment of the current deputy headteacher, the capacity of leadership to tackle underlying weaknesses and accelerate change has increased further. However, considerable time has been required to address inherited issues of weaker teaching, staff deployment and shortcomings in subject leadership.
 - Initially delayed, the implementation of the current, more effective system for teaching phonics is providing a sound bedrock for the better development of pupils' reading skills.
 - More rapid improvements have been secured in implementing new assessment procedures and in improving early years provision so that this is now securely good.
 - The school has prepared well for the implementation of the new National Curriculum. This is providing some engaging learning opportunities for pupils, including an introduction to archaeology for pupils in Year 1. However, not enough priority is given to enabling pupils to develop their writing skills across the curriculum.
 - The school has begun to adapt its assessment system, giving due care to validating the emerging judgements. It has adopted a system which appears to meet its future needs without the use of levels.
 - School leaders evaluate the impact of pupil premium expenditure in detail. They can demonstrate that, following a slight decline in 2014, current eligible pupils are achieving higher standards.
 - The primary physical education and sport premium is used well to improve training and to provide additional sports clubs. Seven in every 10 pupils now participate in sporting clubs and activities. None did so two years ago.
 - The local authority has, until recently, provided 'light-touch' support, given the school's status as a 'good' school. More recently, it has provided more intensive support to improve early years provision and resources. This help has enabled the school to improve teachers' skills and expertise.
 - Staff promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. They plan opportunities to extend pupils' awareness of other cultures in the curriculum. They promote British values of tolerance and respect effectively, emphasised within the recently developed school values statement. Staff teach pupils about local history effectively. Consequently, pupils begin to gain some understanding of their rights and responsibilities as British citizens and are prepared appropriately for life in modern Britain.
 - The school is striving to ensure equality of opportunity for all, although the most-able pupils are not served consistently well. Discrimination in any form is not tolerated.
 - The school has good links with parents and with neighbouring schools. School links have contributed positively to the validation of judgements and the sharing of good practice.
 - Safeguarding arrangements are securely in place and are effective. All staff are trained to the appropriate levels.
- **The governance of the school:**
- Although governors do not contribute to the writing of the school improvement plan, they are clear about the most important strengths and areas for improvement. As a result of training, they understand their role and carry out their statutory duties, including those for pupils' safeguarding, diligently.
 - Governors know how the school performance relates to schools nationally. They are increasingly able to engage with data, and are now challenging the school more effectively. However, while the school has begun to address recognised areas of weakness, such as phonics, governors have not always intervened directly enough to assess for themselves the impact of changes made. They are aware of past underperformance in teaching and recognise that improvements have been achieved, albeit at a

relatively slow pace. The management of teachers' performance is now broadly effective, with a mostly accurate alignment of the effectiveness of teachers and their pay level, despite some over affirmative evaluations of teaching. Governors ensure that pay increases are closely aligned to the outcomes of this process.

- Governors are committed to supporting other leaders in ensuring equality of opportunity, tackling discrimination and promoting good relationships. However, while they monitor, in broad terms, the performance of all groups of pupils, they do not yet have sufficient understanding of the impact of the spending of additional funding to support the performance of disadvantaged pupils.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

require improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Pupils are motivated and engaged when tasks are well planned and offer a good level of challenge. However, in Years 1 and 2, there are too many occasions when some pupils find it difficult to sustain attention, leading to low-level disruption and occasional calling-out. This has an adverse effect upon their learning. When pupils are not required to produce written work to a good standard, the quality of the work deteriorates.
- Where teaching sets a brisk pace and expectations are higher, particularly in the Reception classes, behaviour is positive and pupils sustain their interest well, showing a real commitment to learning.
- The school's records show that, while individual pupils occasionally demonstrate challenging behaviour, serious behavioural incidents are rare events, as are exclusions. Pupils' behaviour is well managed in lessons and around the school.
- Pupils contribute well to the smooth running of the school through taking on responsibilities, such as taking the register to the office. Several participate in the school council.
- Attendance has continued to improve and is broadly average. Monitoring systems are rigorous. Pupils enjoy coming to school.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. The site is secure and carefully monitored. Pupils feel safe and are sure that staff will deal promptly with their concerns. Risk assessments are thorough. Staff are fully checked prior to appointment.
- Pupils have some understanding of the potential risks in the world around them. The school helps pupils to protect themselves from a range of risks, including those relating to 'stranger danger', and advises them, for example, on whom to approach if they are lost. Pupils know how to make safe decisions.
- They know also that some pupils might pick on others or annoy them. However, they feel that few instances occur and that staff are always there to help.
- Early arrivers at school receive good care in the breakfast club.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- In Years 1 and 2, teachers do not always take sufficient account of the full ability range of pupils. They sometimes do not provide enough challenge for the most able. The pace of lessons is occasionally slow and pupils become restless. This affects the amount of progress pupils make in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Despite examples of some better practice, teachers' expectations of the quality of presentation of pupils' written work, and of the amount of work they could achieve, is not always high enough.
- The marking of pupils' work varies in quality. Some work, particularly in writing and mathematics, is marked thoroughly. In a few classes, marking is superficial, with some unmarked work and insufficient guidance to help pupils improve their work.
- While standards in phonics are rising from their previously low levels, there are still weaknesses in teachers' subject knowledge and the effectiveness of their teaching of reading.
- Teaching in the early years is consistently good. Thereafter, the pace of learning slows. Overall, while pupils make mostly expected progress, not enough sustain the accelerated progress evident in early years.
- The support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, and the progress they make, is good. Disadvantaged pupils are supported well through additional teaching. They now make better progress, so that the gap in attainment with other pupils is closing. Overall, learning support staff

are well deployed and effective.

- Pupils make better progress when work is challenging. In a successful mathematics lesson in Year 2, pupils were introduced to the concept of coordinates in the first quadrant. They were quickly able to name a particular square by its position on the grid. Subsequent activities included the identification of possible routes from one square to another, in terms of movements up or down, backwards or forwards. Some pupils found the second task demanding, although all enjoyed the challenge provided, showing an enthusiasm for learning. Almost all pupils were suitably challenged.
- Homework contributes effectively to pupils' learning. Tasks are set and their completion is monitored.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- The school's strategy for teaching phonics has, until recently, had limited impact on pupils' achievement. The proportion of pupils achieving the nationally expected level in the Year 1 screening check was well below the national average in both 2013 and 2014. A new approach to the teaching of phonics is now having greater impact. Phonic awareness is now taught effectively in the Reception classes. Projections for 2015 predict a substantial rise in the proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard by the end of Year 1.
- Despite underlying weaknesses in pupils' knowledge of phonics, attainment in reading has been at least in line with the national average in the last three years. This is because pupils have relied upon recognising words according to their context, and by sight. Their ability to 'sound out' unfamiliar words has been, and remains, insecure.
- Pupils do not build upon their good progress in Reception, and their well-developed skills in literacy and mathematics, effectively enough in Years 1 and 2, because there is not enough consistently good teaching. In particular, the most-able pupils are adversely affected when the pace of lessons is slow and the planned work offers insufficient challenge for them to accelerate their learning.
- Not enough attention is given to promoting writing skills in subjects across the curriculum. The volume of written work in pupils' books is lower than is typically found at this age.
- Although pupils' learning is not always developed effectively enough, their progress is sufficient to enable them to reach broadly average standards by the end of Year 2. In 2013, standards were above average. School data suggest that standards are on track to be slightly above average in 2015.
- Disadvantaged pupils have generally attained marginally less well than their classmates and other pupils nationally. In 2014, the gap between the attainment in reading and mathematics of disadvantaged Year 2 pupils and others in the school was just over one term behind. The gap for writing was around half a term behind. The gap between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally was around term in reading, writing and mathematics. School data show that disadvantaged pupils are currently making increasingly rapid progress in relation to the others across the school and that the gaps in attainment are narrowing.
- Staff accurately identify the needs of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, and meet their needs well. With effective support, they make mostly good progress.

The early years provision

is good

- Sustained good leadership and management, and recent input to ensure consistency of good practice across the three classes, have enabled early years provision to improve more rapidly than elsewhere. There have also been improvements to outdoor learning.
- Most children enter Reception with skill levels below those typical for their age. Staff focus on developing key basic skills, particularly in children's personal and social development, and in their communication and language development. Recent initiatives to improve the teaching of reading have been effective. Children now acquire a secure knowledge of sounds and letters, and an initial love of reading.
- Children, including those who have special educational needs, are constantly challenged to achieve well. The school has identified significant weaknesses in children's speech and language development when they enter school. Specialist support is available to enable these children to make up lost ground rapidly, thereby ensuring they are not disadvantaged by poor communication skills.
- Consistently good teaching ensures that children make good progress so that, on leaving Reception, they are well prepared for entry to Year 1. The proportion of children reaching levels that are typical for their age was above average in 2014. This has also been the case for several years.
- The early years as a place to learn, both indoors and outside, is stimulating and attractive. Recent enhancements, such as the 'mud kitchen', have ensured that children are readily engaged by the activities

available to them. These contribute to their growing knowledge of the world and promote their personal development well. Children have positive attitudes to learning. They select resources with confidence and most sustain concentration well.

- Staff ensure that children behave well. They are safe and well looked after. The school engages well with parents and encourages their involvement in their children's learning.
- Staff know individual children well. Detailed checks and carefully recorded observations provide accurate information about children's progress. Thorough, attractively produced portfolios of evidence are maintained for each child. In one room, children each have a space on the wall where they display the work of which they are most proud.

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	118414
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	449755

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	5–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	263
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Derek Kirkaldie
Headteacher	Nicky Brown
Date of previous school inspection	8 December 2009
Telephone number	01843 591638
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