

Cliffedale Primary School

Northcliffe Road, Grantham, Lincolnshire, NG31 8DP

Inspection dates 24–25 March 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	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.

- The school's performance has declined since the previous inspection. Instability in governance and leadership, now settled, has had an adverse impact on most aspects of the school.
- Not all teachers have sufficiently high expectations of what all pupils can achieve. Tasks are sometimes neither challenging enough nor questions probing, holding back pupils' progress.
- Governors' checks on the work of the school, such as ensuring that policies are reviewed in a timely manner and holding staff to account, have not been fully effective.
- Teachers' marking and target setting do not consistently lead to rapid improvements in pupils' work, especially in mathematics.
- The frequent changes of headteacher have held back the development of effective subject leaders. Roles have frequently changed. Until recently, this has limited post-holders' opportunities to check and review practice and plan developments.
- Rates of progress across year groups and subjects vary and are not consistently good. In Key Stage 1 in 2014, progress in mathematics was static.
- Pupils' behaviour requires improvement because their often quiet and compliant attitudes in class lead to 'coasting', especially for the most able.
- For all pupils, progress in writing is slower than that in reading. Accuracy, particularly in grammar and structure, is not always insisted upon. Opportunities to produce longer pieces of writing, where pupils can practise and develop their skills, are relatively rare.

The school has the following strengths

- The revitalised ethos introduced by the new headteacher is having a hugely positive impact on the drive for improvement. It sets a strong climate for good progress and behaviour.
- Standards are above average by the time pupils leave Year 6. Rates of progress have accelerated recently for most pupils.
- Children get off to a good start in the early years because they are well taught and the provision is well led.
- Pupils are kept safe. This is a happy school where all pupils are valued. Pupils throughout the school are polite and considerate. Behaviour around school is good. Pupils' attendance is above average.
- Checks on teaching and learning are rigorous. The new headteacher, together with the highly effective support of the local authority and that of a national leader of education over the past year, has placed the school in a position to move forward on its own.
- The partnership with parents has recently strengthened. Most parents would recommend the school to others. All those who stated a view are sure their child is safe and happy at this school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 22 sessions of learning covering all classes. This included the teaching of early reading skills and listening to pupils read.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils informally in lessons, around school and at lunchtime. Inspectors also spoke formally with several groups of pupils about their reading, and other groups about their personal development and their understanding of British values.
- Inspectors talked with pupils about their work during lesson observations. They also looked at pupils' work for this academic year to gain a view of the impact of teaching over time.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, subject leaders and a representative of the governing body. Inspectors met with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke with parents informally when they were in school. They also took into account the 55 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents.
- Inspectors looked at a range of school documentation including whole-school policies and the range and quality of information on the school's current website. They also looked at the school's evaluation of the quality of teaching, the most recent data on the attainment and progress of pupils, information regarding the safeguarding of pupils, the most recent performance management information and recent data regarding the attendance and punctuality of pupils.

Inspection team

Ruth McFarlane, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Colin Lower	Additional Inspector
Janette Daniels	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is a larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. A few are from a variety of minority ethnic heritages. Very few speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, who are supported by additional funding known as the pupil premium, is lower than that found nationally. The pupil premium is additional government funding the school receives to support those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or those looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is broadly average.
- The early years comprises two Reception classes for children who all attend full time.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6.
- A new Chair of the Governing Body and a new Vice-Chair were appointed in April 2014.
- Over the past year and a half the school has been led by a series of interim headteachers and temporary senior staff while the governing body sought to appoint the right headteacher. A substantive headteacher was appointed in January 2015.
- The school is supported by a national leader of education (NLE) from Bourne Abbey Church of England Primary School.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching by:
 - ensuring that teachers have consistently high expectations of what all pupils can achieve
 - checking pupils' understanding frequently and responding quickly by providing new challenge as soon as pupils show they understand
 - improving the quality of teachers' questioning so that no opportunity is missed to deepen and broaden pupils' learning
 - ensure that teachers' marking and target setting leads to prompt improvements in pupils' work especially, but not only, in mathematics.
- Improve pupils' achievement in writing by:
 - ensuring that teachers insist on accuracy in pupils' work
 - increasing the focus on writing at length across a range of subjects.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - sharing leadership responsibilities more widely to review practice and plan development
 - improving the impact of staff with allocated responsibilities in checking the quality of teaching and learning
 - developing a school marking policy that is adopted consistently
 - ensuring that pupils have targets that are subject-specific, regularly reviewed, and are challenging but achievable
 - improving the monitoring of all aspects of the school by leaders and governors
 - improving governors' understanding and the execution of their roles and responsibilities.

An external review of governance, including the use of the pupil premium, should be undertaken to show how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The school suffered a period of declining effectiveness from its outstanding position a few years ago. This was due to instability of leadership, lack of rigour in holding staff to account and weak governance.
- Staff roles have changed and those with specific subject or aspect leadership responsibilities (middle leaders) make an inconsistent contribution to school improvement. Guidance from the new headteacher has led to good improvements to their practice this term but there are still weaknesses. For example, the revised curriculum introduced this year is not checked for effectiveness. Action to devise new assessment procedures are also at an early stage of development.
- The use of the pupil premium funding is being reviewed to ensure it is spent only on disadvantaged pupils to accelerate their progress. This was not previously the case. Checks of the current progress of these eligible pupils show that any gaps in performance are closing.
- The primary school physical education and sport premium funding is used properly to develop teachers' skills when teaching physical education and to provide more opportunities for pupils. The school has not yet measured the impact of this spending.
- The new headteacher has galvanised action and ensured that staff promote British values. Pupils can explain how they are prepared for life in modern Britain; they have developed tolerance and respect and they know how British democracy works. This is an inclusive school providing equality of opportunity to learn, albeit that some of the teaching lacks challenge. The school provides good opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The headteacher has quickly inspired a strong sense of purpose among staff. Leadership of the early years is good. There is a collective focus among all staff on improving the quality of teaching and pupils' learning behaviour. Checks on teaching are robust. Records already show improvement and good action to tackle weaknesses. Consequently, although pupils' achievement is not yet good, particularly in writing, this is now an improving school.
- The arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements. The headteacher was quick to ensure on his arrival that staff training was updated to meet all the latest requirements. Parents who responded to the online questionnaire and those who spoke with inspectors all say their children are happy and safe at the school, and most would recommend it to others.
- The local authority has supported the school exceptionally well through leadership uncertainty. It has linked the school with support from a nearby national leader of education. Recently, the local authority carried out a thorough and accurate review of most aspects of the school. Judgements accord with the headteacher's own accurate assessment, auguring well for further improvements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Take-up for the several sessions of governor training provided by the local authority was poor. As a result, although those governors who did attend the training are now aware of their roles and responsibilities, the governing body as a whole has not provided sufficient support and challenge to the school or held it to account. This is why the school's effectiveness has declined.
 - Governors' monitoring is weak. When the new headteacher arrived, he found many policies, including the safeguarding policy, to be out of date. His efforts, rather than those of the governors whose responsibility this is, have ensured that all the latest safeguarding requirements are met.
 - Governors' understanding of data and how teachers' performance is managed is not well developed. Consequently, they do not have a good knowledge about the quality of teaching in the school and how teachers are rewarded and underperformance is tackled.
 - Finances are managed efficiently overall. However, governors have not checked that pupil premium funding is used as required or checked that the sports funding is having the impact intended.
 - The local authority has helped the governing body to realise that its spread of expertise needs to

broaden and this is in hand.

- Governors have been highly effective in appointing a strong substantive headteacher and this has set the school on a secure path of improvement.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Pupils are usually keen to learn and want to be challenged. However, in Years 1 to 6, when activities are mundane and do not require enough of them, pupils do not try as hard and their progress slows.
- Pupils respond to the relaxed atmosphere in most classes by working at too leisurely a pace. They do as they are told and seldom show a thirst for learning. There is often an atmosphere of passive and friendly compliance.
- Behaviour around school is good. Pupils treat the premises and resources with respect. Pupils' conduct with each other and with adults is polite and courteous.
- In the early years, children's curiosity for learning is strong. Their questions and keen interest in finding things out help them to make good progress.
- The school's systems for promoting high attendance are good so that overall attendance is above average. Pupils are punctual to lessons.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure requires improvement. The school's risk assessments, policies and procedures to secure the welfare, health and safety of pupils are all in place, but these are not checked regularly enough to ensure that paperwork is always at hand and kept up-to-date.
- The school is currently reassessing its behaviour and anti-bullying policies which, while compliant with requirements, are not efficiently organised. When asked if they had experienced bullying in school, pupils were very clear that they had not. Pupils are aware of different types of bullying, including racist and homophobic bullying. None of the pupils spoken to either in groups or around school had witnessed any racist or homophobic name calling.
- School systems for checking the safety of the school site are sound. The school buildings are clean and tidy.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school and are able to assess risks, such as those associated with the internet and dangers on the roads. Pupils are clear that, if they had concerns about safety, adults in school would help and support them.
- All the parents who responded to the online questionnaire, and those who spoke with inspectors, feel their children are safe and happy in school.
- School staff have sufficient understanding of how to safeguard pupils and are familiar with the latest documents guiding how they deal with any concerns they may have about pupils. Consequently, pupils are kept safe.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching requires improvement because not all teachers present the same level of challenge for all pupils. Teaching has not secured consistently good progress for all groups of pupils in mathematics, reading and writing over time. The good start children receive from good teaching in the early years is not systematically built on.
- Writing activities across different subjects do not demand the same standards as in literacy lessons. Consequently, pupils do not always ensure that they apply the correct rules of grammar and punctuation to longer pieces of writing. They do not have opportunities to develop their skills to write at length in literacy or in other subjects. Progress in writing remains below that of reading and mathematics. Not all staff insist on accuracy.
- Teachers' planning to meet the learning needs of pupils does not always sustain their interest. As a result, pupils do not always put their best efforts into their learning and the pace of progress slows. Sometimes, work is not challenging and learning is too leisurely.

- Provision for the most-able pupils provides them with appropriate challenge in some classes. However, as for other pupils, they do not make the progress of which they are capable in writing. When teachers question pupils, they are often satisfied with basic answers. This means that they do not spot pupils' misconceptions or see when they are ready for more challenging work, taking action accordingly. This largely affects the most-able pupils, whose progress therefore slows.
- Teachers encourage pupils to assess their own work frequently, in a positive response to the recommendation of the previous inspection. Teachers' marking is variable, however, and some does not lead to prompt improvements in pupils' work. In mathematics especially, the use of a tick for correct answers and a dot for incorrect answers fails to explain or promote learning. The pages and pages of ticks in some books checked suggest that work is not challenging, and pupils who were asked about this say that work is often very easy.
- Pupils are set individual targets in literacy, numeracy and for their personal development. In some classes, targets are pinned on the wall rather than being to hand during lessons. Examination of the targets shows that many are not subject-specific. There are several examples of mathematics targets which refer to improving the neatness of work rather than the content. Some pupils are not sure how to improve, even though they can point to their targets. Targets are not checked regularly enough.
- The teaching of phonics (the sounds letters make) is highly effective. Pupils are now building on this learning through the school. Teachers plan well to teach specific reading skills.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are well provided for by caring staff. They receive extra help both in class and through one-to-one sessions with skilled teaching assistants.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- In Key Stage 1 and 2, pupils' progress varies too widely and not enough pupils make good progress. In mathematics at Key Stage 1, in writing in Years 1 to 6, and for the most-able pupils in all subjects, progress requires improvement. While most pupils' progress is now accelerating, good progress is inconsistent and patchy across year groups.
- From their good start in the early years, and the above-average performance in the Year 1 phonics screening check, pupils' progress by the end of Key Stage 1 in 2014 slowed. This is confirmed by the results in the teacher assessments being broadly average in reading, writing and, especially, mathematics. The school has recognised this and begun to deal with it by introducing good strategies that are improving teaching.
- In Key Stage 2, progress is variable across the year groups. It accelerates in Years 5 and 6 so that pupils catch up on previous dips. They leave the school as they entered Year 1, with above-average attainment. Pupils are, therefore, ready for secondary school.
- The attainment of the most-able pupils varies. A higher-than-average proportion of pupils achieve the higher Level 3 in Key Stage 1, except in mathematics. By Year 6, although a higher proportion than average achieve the higher Level 5, fewer than average achieve the highest Level 6, especially in writing. Pupils develop a leisurely attitude to their work in class because they are not always given sufficiently challenging work.
- There are too few disadvantaged pupils to make a valid comparison with others in the cohort or nationally without potentially identifying them. Checks on individual progress show that it varies, as for other pupils.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similar progress to their peers, from their different starting points, in reading, writing, and mathematics. Pupils in minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language also make the same progress as others. Staff are caring and supportive of individual needs and small groups, and individual work ensures any falling behind are helped.

- Reading standards are above average when pupils leave because they are given a good start to learning to read in the early years and this is built on in Key Stage 1. By the time pupils leave Year 6, even the weakest readers read frequently for pleasure and research.
- Pupils show pride in their work and present it neatly. The new headteacher reorganised pupils' books in a more logical manner and reduced the reliance on work-sheets. He had noticed that this was holding back progress for the most able. It was also holding back progress in writing, because the worksheets offered little opportunity to write longer pieces. Pupils appreciate the changes because they can now see more clearly the progress they are making.

The early years provision

is good

- Leadership and management of the early years is strong. The leader has a clear understanding of what still needs improving. The good and consistent methods of assessing and recording children's work in 'learning journeys' enable staff to move children on as soon as they are ready. This has improved children's achievement.
- When children start in the Reception class, their skills are broadly typical for their age. They settle well because every effort is made to ensure that parents are kept well informed of their child's learning. Adults create a happy atmosphere where teachers plan exciting and interesting activities in which children make good progress. Children enjoy learning both indoors and outdoors. The school is working on improving its resources so that the learning in the good quality teacher-led sessions can be reinforced when children choose activities for themselves.
- Consistently effective teaching leads to a higher than average proportion of children reaching a good level of development. The teaching of phonics to read unknown words is particularly effective and all adults are particularly skilled in this area of learning. In their understanding of shapes, space and measures, technology, expressive arts and design, and moving and handling, all the children reached or exceeded the expected standard in 2014. Children are well prepared for Year 1.
- Children are motivated and interested in a broad range of activities. Behaviour is good, especially regarding children's interest in their activities. Open the door to the early years and a buzz of eager learning greets the visitor. Children listen carefully to adults and each other. They are well taught on how to think about safety matters. Consequently, all the children achieve well in assessments about dealing with feelings and behaviour, health and self-care. Adults' careful observations of children at work and play ensure that they are kept safe.

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	120393
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	453237

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	317
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Roger Bannister
Headteacher	Paul Lidbury
Date of previous school inspection	14 October 2008
Telephone number	01476 568740
Fax number	01476 591566
Email address	enquiries@cliffedale.lincs.sch.uk

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