

Parsons Down Junior School

Hérons Way, Thatcham, RG19 3SR

Inspection dates 23–24 April 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

- The rate of progress for pupils is not yet good in their reading and writing and particularly their English grammar, punctuation and spelling. Not enough pupils make accelerated progress. Improvements have been too slow.
- Teaching is not consistently good, particularly in Years 3 and 6. Too often teachers do not encourage pupils to work with a sense of urgency about their learning. Although there is some strong teaching, it is not yet consistent.
- Pupils are not always expected to make the corrections teachers have indicated, particularly in their spelling. Some pupils are not given enough time to make improvements, or are given help too quickly. This limits the progress they make, particularly in their reading and writing.
- Many middle leaders are new to their roles and have not had sufficient time to bring about the improvements they have identified. They do not always demonstrate the best practice that has been discussed and identified.
- Some middle leaders have not developed their confidence in using the available data for themselves, to identify where they need to take action.
- Leaders do not always check that the improvements they have asked teachers to bring about have happened as quickly and consistently as leaders would like.

The school has the following strengths

- Teaching has been improving, and is often good in Years 4 and 5. In particular, a common approach to marking books is used well.
- Progress in mathematics has improved. Standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6 have been rising slowly, and are now average.
- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are very polite, kind and caring towards one another and adults. They like doing the work teachers have prepared for them.
- The safety of pupils is outstanding. Pupils feel very safe at school because adults care a great deal about their welfare. They confidently weigh up risks and make sensible decisions.
- The executive headteacher, senior leaders and governors have a clear vision for bringing about improvements. They have established good systems to record and analyse pupils' progress, the quality of teaching and the needs of pupils.
- Governors have an accurate view about the performance of the school and understand the urgency of bringing about improvements. They hold the senior leaders to account for taking action so that teaching is improving and standards are rising.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors visited 36 lessons, observing pupils' learning, looking at the work they have done in their books and talking to them about the progress they have made. Senior leaders accompanied the inspectors on about half of these observations.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documents provided by the school. These included: policies and procedures, including those to keep pupils safe; reports about the effectiveness of the school; plans to continue improvements; minutes from meetings, including those of the governing body; reports from external reviews about the work of the school; and teachers' plans for pupils' learning.
- The inspectors reviewed the effectiveness of senior leaders in tackling the key issues raised at the previous inspection. They considered senior leaders' records of checking the quality of teaching and learning, the processes for managing the performance of staff and how this leads to improvements.
- Inspectors held meetings with groups of pupils, middle leaders, senior leaders and with members of the governing body. The lead inspector met with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspection team considered the views of parents by looking at the 32 responses to the online survey for Ofsted, Parent View. They also took into account correspondence sent to the inspection team, met with parents who requested this, and spoke to parents informally before school.
- Staff working at the school gave their views through a survey. Many staff also spoke to the inspectors about their work at the school.

Inspection team

Andrew Saunders, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Paul Smith

Additional Inspector

Angela Podmore

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is of average size. There are three classes in each year group, apart from Year 5 where there are two classes.
- Almost all pupils are White British. The few pupils from other ethnic heritages represent a wide range of backgrounds.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is average. The school has more pupils than average with statements of special educational needs.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is below average. The government provides schools with additional funding, known as the pupil premium grant, to promote the attainment and progress of eligible pupils. Pupils who benefit from this are those who receive free school meals, and children who are looked after.
- The school has recently formed a federation partnership with the infant school located adjacent to the school. There is now a shared leadership team, with an executive headteacher over both schools, a head of school for each school, and further senior leadership roles which are shared. There have been many changes in staffing since the previous inspection.
- A National Leader of Education has supported the school.
- The school meets the current floor standards. The government sets these minimum expectations for the attainment and progress of pupils at the end of Key Stage 2, in reading, writing and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Share the best practice in teaching so that teaching is consistently good and more teaching is outstanding, by making sure that:
 - teachers have higher expectations of pupils, particularly about the quantity of work they will complete in the time they have available
 - learning moves on more quickly and that there is a sense of urgency, particularly for the most-able pupils
 - teachers expect pupils to grapple with their work for themselves, before receiving help from adults.
- Increase the rate and consistency of the progress pupils make, particularly in their English grammar, punctuation and spelling, by:
 - expecting pupils to make more effort to spell accurately and to make corrections where these are identified, in all their writing
 - making sure that teachers use the information they have about the progress pupils are making to plan even more ambitious tasks for pupils of all abilities.
- Ensure that middle leaders take more responsibility for bringing about rapid improvements within their areas of responsibility by:
 - providing the best possible role models in their teaching
 - sharing in more detail the analysis of data and identifying the actions to which this leads
 - checking that all teachers take rapid action on the feedback they have received.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management

require improvement

- Leaders have not yet ensured that teaching is consistently good or that all teachers expect enough of the pupils in their classes. This means that progress is variable, and too slow at times, particularly in Years 3 and 6. Progress in English grammar, punctuation and spelling has not improved as quickly as in mathematics. This has also constrained progress in writing.
- The leadership team has recently been restructured and many of the middle leaders are new to their roles. This means that they are not yet effective because they have had only limited time to address the key improvements required within their areas of responsibility. Not all middle leaders are consistent in providing the best role models to ensure progress is rapid. In some cases, middle leaders are not yet confident in using the data available to them to identify improvements that need to happen.
- The executive headteacher and senior leaders have an accurate understanding about the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The key issues identified at the previous inspection have been addressed. Pupils are given clear guidance about how to improve their work, teachers adapt lessons as pupils' learning develops and most activities are appropriately challenging for the different abilities of pupils. The management of behaviour has also improved greatly. Parents and pupils say that inappropriate behaviour is now very rare. Changes in staffing mean that improvements in the overall quality of teaching have been more difficult to achieve.
- Senior leaders and governors have developed a clear vision for the school, with well-structured plans to bring this about. Plans are now more ambitious. They have established robust systems which give them the information they need to keep track of the impact the improvements have on the learning of pupils.
- The data about pupils' attainment and progress are increasingly shared with teachers, who are held to account for the progress pupils make in their class. Senior leaders make sure that they gather a broad range of information to inform the performance management process. Feedback to teachers is helpful but not all teachers make these improvements as quickly as they need to.
- Middle leaders and teachers work together to plan interesting topics on which to base the learning of the pupils. The trips, visits and visitors add further excitement to the curriculum and provide interesting contexts for pupils to practise their reading, writing and mathematical skills. They learn about British values, the beliefs and lifestyles of other people, and to be tolerant of views which may differ from their own. The school makes sure that pupils have equal opportunities and understand how they can make a positive contribution so that they are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The executive headteacher and governors use the pupil premium grant well to provide additional adult support for disadvantaged pupils, as well as resources to support their learning and access to the experiences other pupils may have. This has improved the achievement of these pupils.
- Leaders use the primary sports and physical education funding to pay for expert coaching across the federation. This has improved the quality of physical education and the range of sports pupils get to try out and means this aspect of the curriculum is popular with pupils. They also appreciate the opportunities they have to compete against other schools and are proud of the successes they have had.
- Senior leaders make sure that information about pupils' progress is regularly shared with parents. The school provides opportunities for parents to work alongside their children and this helps parents to know how well their children are doing. It also helps parents to understand the way the school approaches aspects of the curriculum, such as calculations in mathematics.
- The development of the federation with the infant school has been a high priority over the past 18 months. Closer links mean that pupils are very well prepared for joining the school. These links also greatly enhance the safety of pupils because they make the best use of the expertise available in the school. The school's arrangements for safeguarding are very detailed and well thought out.
- The local authority has provided the school with a good level of support to develop leadership, tackle key issues and improve the knowledge of governors. The school has worked closely with the advisors and leaders are becoming more confident in taking action for themselves so that the level of support required is reducing.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are increasingly effective. They have commissioned an external audit of their skills and understanding of the performance of the school. They have made appropriate changes as a consequence, undertaken training and continue to reflect on how they can improve the impact of their work. They are well informed, understand data about the school's performance, and use the information they have to ask challenging questions and follow these up more quickly. They make sure that they gather plenty of information for themselves to check that what the school leaders say is accurate.

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- Governors make sure that there is a strong emphasis on keeping pupils safe. They are very well informed about the statutory requirements, and they ensure that the school makes the necessary checks about adults employed to work with pupils. They also ensure that all adults working at the school understand their responsibilities towards keeping pupils safe and that they are well trained and confident to take action over any concerns that arise.
- The governors have a good understanding of how the finances of the school are used and check that this provides good value for money. They are aware of the quality of teaching. Governors work closely with senior leaders to ensure that information about the performance of teachers and the achievement of pupils is taken into account when considering any additional pay awards. This encourages best practice and increasingly tackles underperformance.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils enjoy school and their attendance is slightly above average.
- Pupils are eager to do the work teachers have prepared for them and are enthusiastic about what they are learning. Pupils readily make the improvements that teachers have identified in a 'bubble' when they are given the time to do so, and are keen to help each other improve. However, they are not always as determined to spell accurately, or to make corrections to their spellings.
- Pupils say that behaviour has improved a great deal. The new systems for managing behaviour work very well. The 'good to be green' system is well understood by pupils. Pupils say everyone knows what is expected of them and the rewards help them to think carefully about what they are doing or saying. The number of yellow or red cards given out has reduced dramatically.
- Pupils' behaviour during their free time is excellent. They play very happily and include others in their games and social circles so that no one feels left out. They enthusiastically help to keep the school tidy and well organised, checking that each area meets the standards displayed on the 'gemba' posters, showing the perfect state it should be in.
- Younger pupils find the transition to the junior school easy because they already spend a considerable amount of time at the school. They also have links with older pupils who support them in their reading, for example. Leaders have made sure that the same approaches are used in both schools to encourage good behaviour. Parents say that they have noticed how much behaviour has improved.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils have an excellent understanding about the dangers they may face, and how to make safe choices. For example, they are well trained about road safety or how to stay safe when they are using the internet at school or at home. They show considerable insight and concern for one another and frequently take care of others.
- Older pupils were concerned that a few pupils found it difficult to play positively during break times. Consequently, they asked permission to set up the 'inclusion squad'. These are older pupils who deliberately choose to play with those who find social situations more difficult, to learn how to play positively. They have an impressive impact on the pupils who previously found it a challenge to maintain good behaviour.
- Pupils have an excellent understanding of the different forms bullying could take. Their care and concern for one another mean that bullying is very rare at the school. Pupils say that if it does ever happen, they know what to do about it and that it would be sorted out quickly. A group of pupils, of their own choice, offer a service for any pupils who may have fallen out, to resolve friendship issues. This is further evidence of their maturity.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teachers do not always expect enough of pupils, particularly in Year 3 and Year 6. Too often teachers allow pupils to work at a leisurely pace, or to work at tasks which do not stretch them as much as they are capable of, particularly the most able pupils. At times some adults give pupils help too quickly which stops pupils from grappling with challenges for themselves.
- There are some occasions when teachers make the required improvements to pupils' work themselves, and do not expect pupils to follow up on these examples. For example, some teachers and other adults correct spellings but do not expect pupils to do so themselves. Most teachers have taken on board the

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school's approach to marking and the quality of marking has improved. These teachers provide more precise advice about what pupils need to do. They make sure that pupils have the time to respond to these comments and to reflect about what they have learnt.

- Most teachers set clear targets for pupils to work towards, and pupils understand how these help them to improve what they are doing. Where teaching is strong, pupils use these targets to focus their efforts, for example when they are writing in subjects other than English. However, these targets are not always clear and some teachers do not always make sure that pupils have enough time to reflect about how they have been successful in reaching their targets. Improvements in teaching of mathematics mean pupils develop greater confidence with their calculations and in using these skills to solve more complex problems.
- Teaching of reading has improved. Teachers and teaching assistants make sure that they use the same approach to phonics (linking letters and the sounds they make) across the federation and that the sounds they use are copied accurately by pupils.
- This is not always the case, however, and there is a lack of urgency in some phonics sessions. Some teachers and teaching assistants do not always expect pupils to work quickly, particular with sounds they have covered previously. This slows their progress in developing reading and writing skills and means that older pupils are not always confident spelling more complex words.
- The support for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is good. Teaching assistants who work with particular pupils are very well informed about their needs and ensure that they do as much as possible for themselves. This enables them to develop helpful skills and participate fully in the life of the school.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Progress is not consistently good. When pupils join the school in Year 3, their standards are average, although in some year groups there is a wide range of abilities and skills. While most pupils make the expected progress in mathematics, their progress in reading, writing and particularly in English grammar, punctuation and spelling is not as strong. Too few pupils make accelerated progress, particularly those who start from lower levels of attainment. Work in their books and discussions with pupils show that this is typical.
- Standards were previously below average. They have been rising steadily and in 2014, standards were average at the end of Year 6. However, standards in English grammar, punctuation and spelling were below average.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress compared with other pupils nationally because of the well-focused and caring support they get. Overall the school meets their needs well. However, their progress in English grammar, punctuation and spelling is similar to other pupils in the school and is not as strong as their progress in other subjects.
- Disadvantaged pupils make the expected progress and some make better progress. They often make up ground compared to other pupils across the school. Where there are gaps in their performance compared to other pupils, these are closing. In 2014, the specific needs of some disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 meant that their attainment was considerably below that of other pupils in the school, by about two years. However, pupils currently in the school are performing at similar standards to other pupils. This also means they are on a par with pupils nationally, except in their grammar, punctuation and spelling where they are about a year behind.
- The most-able pupils make the progress that is expected for their age. However, there are occasions when they are not challenged as deeply as they could be and they are not able to get on with their work. At times these pupils are expected to sit through explanations about things they are already confident of doing. This limits how much time they have to get on with their work.

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	109923
Local authority	West Berkshire
Inspection number	449262

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	285
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jonathan Taylor
Headteacher	Petrina Winsor
Date of previous school inspection	14–15 May 2015
Telephone number	01635866700
Fax number	01635874499
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