

Plumpton Primary School

Southdowns, Plumpton Green, Lewes, East Sussex, BN7 3EB

Inspection dates 06–07 May 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
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

- Teaching is not yet consistently good. Teachers do not always expect enough of the pupils in their class, particularly the most able.
- Too often teachers allow pupils to work slowly and they do not get as much work done as they could. At times, they do not expect pupils to grapple with more difficult work. This means the pace of learning is not always quick enough to overcome a legacy of previous underachievement.
- The achievement of pupils requires improvement. Progress has not been consistently good across year groups, particularly in English grammar, punctuation and spelling. Progress in writing is also not yet as rapid as in reading and mathematics.
- Although pupils are keen to find improvements to make in their work, teachers do not always insist pupils implement the same improvements in their next pieces of work.
- Teachers do not always make the most of opportunities to watch others teaching and identify for themselves what they can do to develop the very best practice.
- Parents are concerned about the long-term, permanent leadership of the school. The governors and local authority have not yet resolved this issue. While the current arrangements provide good leadership in the interim, the uncertainty does not help ensure improvements are more rapid.

The school has the following strengths

- Good leadership has brought about the effective improvements in teaching, the behaviour of pupils and the early years provision. Although teaching is not yet consistently good, it is improving quickly. Achievement in reading and mathematics is also improving quickly.
- Pupils behave well. They show considerable care for one another and their school environment.
- Pupils feel safe and have a strong understanding of how to keep themselves safe.
- The early years provision is a strength of the school. Good leadership ensures children make an excellent start to their education and are well prepared for Year 1.
- The role of middle leaders has been developed well. They understand clearly what needs to improve within their areas of responsibility and take action to make sure these things happen.
- Governors have made sure they are very well informed about the school, so that they can challenge and support it where improvements need to happen. They ensure all the requirements for keeping pupils safe are robust and understood by adults working at the school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited 13 lessons, observing the learning of pupils, talking to them about their work, and looking at the progress they have made in their books this year. About half of these observations were carried out together with senior leaders.
- During the inspection, the inspector met with senior and middle leaders, a group of pupils, members of the governing body and with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector reviewed a wide range of documents provided by the school, including: analysis of teachers' records of pupils' progress and attainment; logs about behaviour and safety; minutes from meetings, including those of the governing body; the headteacher's reports to governors; and ongoing plans to bring about improvements.
- The views of parents were considered primarily through the 50 responses to the online survey for Ofsted, Parent View. The inspector also spoke informally to parents before school and considered correspondence sent to him during the inspection. Staff also expressed their views through the 10 responses to a survey for adults working at the school.

Inspection team

Andrew Saunders, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average size for a primary school. There are currently four classes, each with a mix of age groups. Children in the early years provision attend school full time.
- Almost all pupils are White British.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is average overall. However, in some year groups it is much higher than average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is below average. There are too few of these pupils to comment with any validity on their attainment as a group at the end of each key stage.
- Since the previous inspection an executive headteacher has been appointed on a temporary basis. She is also the headteacher of the local secondary school. There is also a head of school appointed on a temporary basis, deployed from the local authority.
- There has been some turbulence in staffing, including changes during this academic year.
- In 2014 the school met the current floor standards. These are the minimum expectations for the attainment and progress pupils make by the end of Key Stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics, as set out by the government.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Identify and share best practice in teaching so that teaching is never less than good and more teaching is outstanding, by ensuring that:
 - the most able pupils are challenged to the full extent of their capability in each lesson
 - teachers understand in more detail what pupils should be learning and use this to plan the tasks pupils do more appropriately
 - all adults expect pupils to work with a greater sense of urgency and in more depth.
- Increase the pace and consistency of progress pupils make, particularly in developing their writing and English grammar, punctuation and spelling, by:
 - ensuring pupils are given the time to respond more frequently to marking and the feedback teachers give them
 - making sure teachers encourage pupils to carry forward the improvements they have identified, in all their work.
- Make sure that the governors work closely with the local authority to secure the permanent and long-term leadership of the school.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Since taking on the role, the executive headteacher has ensured senior leaders and governors have an accurate view about the performance of the school. Together they have established a clear vision for bringing about improvements. The responsibility for these improvements is well shared with the middle leaders, who make sure that the actions which have been agreed are carried out. There is a strong sense of teamwork among teachers and leaders.
- Plans to bring about and continue improvements are well organised, and frequently evaluated to make sure that they are focused on the most important issues. Middle leaders are now an effective part in developing and carrying out these plans. However, some of the initiatives have not yet had sufficient time to have an impact on pupils' progress and attainment.
- Senior leaders have implemented systems to keep track of the information about how well pupils are learning. They use this to have discussions with teachers and to hold them to account for improving the achievement of the pupils in their class. It has been particularly effective towards improving standards in reading and mathematics.
- The executive headteacher has made sure that all staff understand their roles and responsibilities. Inadequate teaching has been eliminated, and teaching is increasingly effective. The executive headteacher and head of school have worked closely together to ensure that they check the quality of teaching, and give teachers helpful, clear feedback so that they know what they need to improve.
- Leaders have also gathered a wide range of information about the quality of teaching and middle leaders are now contributing to this evidence. Alongside the data about pupils' performance, this has been used to guide senior leaders' decisions when considering additional pay awards. Consequently, good practice has been promoted and underperformance tackled.
- Staff benefit from helpful training and support to develop their practice. However, changes in personnel have meant that some of the benefit of this has been lost. Teachers do not always have enough urgency about implementing some of the improvements.
- The senior leaders have introduced a coherent, well-organised curriculum into the school so that teachers know what they need to teach at each stage of pupils' education, in each subject. This has helped teachers become more confident with what they are teaching. The curriculum gives pupils opportunities to develop their reading, writing and mathematics skills across a wide range of contexts. While pupils understand the importance of these skills they do not always appreciate the urgency of making improvements. Pupils say that the topics they learn about are now much more interesting. Homework helps pupils to reinforce the skills they have been covering. Effective links with the secondary school mean that pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. For example, teachers from this school regularly work with the most able pupils to help them develop skills at a higher level.
- The school places a good emphasis on British values, giving pupils lots of opportunities to take part in discussions or to elect their peers to positions of responsibility. The curriculum enables pupils to learn about other cultures and religious beliefs and to understand the diversity of modern Britain. Leaders make sure that equality is promoted and any discrimination is tackled.
- The extra funding to enhance the achievement of disadvantaged pupils is used carefully. Leaders and governors keep a close check on the impact this funding has and make changes to ensure each pupil who is eligible makes the best progress they can. They provide these pupils with additional support from adults who take an interest in their academic and personal development.
- The funding to promote sports and physical education is also used well to provide an expert sports coach. Teachers observe and help to teach these sessions so that their own skills and understanding of physical education have improved. Pupils say that they thoroughly enjoy taking part in these sessions and in competing against pupils from other schools.
- Support for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is effective because the particular needs of these pupils are well known. Leaders make sure that teachers understand how they can help these pupils to make good progress, for example by giving them resources which support their learning.
- Parents say that they appreciate the improvements that have been taking place. They feel better informed, particularly about the changes in staffing and how well their children are doing. However, some parents remain concerned about the long-term provision of leadership. The inspector agreed that this needs to be resolved to ensure improvements continue.
- The school has been well supported by the local authority's advisor. The partnership with the local secondary school and another primary school has been very beneficial for staff training, developing the curriculum and improving leadership. This partnership is well established and is set to continue.

■ The governance of the school:

- Since the previous inspection, governors have made sure that they have had support and training to evaluate their effectiveness. They have responded well to this external advice and have improved the impact of their support and challenge to the school. They understand clearly the strengths and weaknesses of the school, particularly the quality of teaching and what data show about the school's performance. They make sure that they gather plenty of information on which to base their discussions and questions. Governors check that the information they receive from senior leaders makes sense in the light of their own observations and other evidence.
- Governors check that all the requirements about keeping pupils safe are in place and kept up to date. They make sure that all the adults who work with pupils have undergone the appropriate checks before they start work at the school. The governors ensure that the health and safety of all pupils and adults is given a high priority.
- The governing body has appropriate arrangements in place to manage the finances of the school well. They check that any decisions about how the finances are used take into account the best value-for-money and that the performance management of staff improves the quality of teaching.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good because they are keen to produce high quality work and to help each other learn effectively. Pupils say that behaviour has improved considerably and is now consistently good.
- Pupils take pride over their books and there has been a strong focus on improving handwriting. Most pupils take great care over their presentation. However, they are not always determined to implement all the improvements they have identified in their next pieces of work, which is why behaviour is not outstanding.
- The school's approach to managing behaviour is used consistently across the school and pupils say it is fair. They understand the sanctions that will apply if they do not live up to the high expectations of the adults, but similarly know the benefits to their learning when they are cooperative. Very few pupils need any reminders about their behaviour and on the few occasions they do, they respond quickly and appropriately.
- During free time, or when pupils have to move around the school, they are sensible and mature. They are considerate of the needs of others and think carefully about what they say or do. They particularly like taking part in the many extra activities they can participate in, such as the school choir, the orchestra and a range of sports. The football team has been particularly successful this year.
- Parents make a very positive contribution and act as good role models for pupils by keeping the gardens and grounds very well tended. This makes the school a very pleasant place to learn and develop. Pupils greatly appreciate the many things they can do, particularly during their free time. Pupils like being at school. Their attendance has improved and is average.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils appreciate the many ways the school keep them safe. They say there are plenty of adults they can talk to if they are worried about anything at school or at home.
- Pupils have a good understanding of what might constitute bullying and what they can, and should, do to make sure it does not happen at their school. They say it is very rare, but if it did happen, they are confident it would be dealt with quickly and effectively. They say that the small, family atmosphere of the school means that pupils do not use unkind words, but rather look for ways to encourage one another.
- Pupils learn about how to keep safe when cycling, or when using the internet. From a young age they are taught to think carefully about situations they might find themselves in and learn to make safe decisions.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching is not yet consistently good. While much of the teaching currently in the school has improved considerably, some of these improvements are very recent and have not yet had sufficient time to make a difference to pupils' progress. Teachers do not have enough opportunities to observe the best practice in the school or further afield, in order to identify the most successful ways of making sure pupils make rapid progress. When they do share ideas, teachers do not always implement these as quickly or consistently as

they need to.

- Teaching of reading has been effective. Similarly, a focus on the teaching of mathematics has been a successful in bringing about improvements. While teachers have had training in teaching writing and English grammar, punctuation and spelling more effectively, this has not yet had as much impact as in other areas.
- There are some occasions when teachers allow pupils to work at a leisurely pace and there is a lack of urgency about making more rapid progress or working hard to understand complex ideas.
- Teachers usually make sure that the tasks they have prepared for each class are appropriately difficult. They manage the mix of ages in each class very well, so that pupils gain experiences and skills which are appropriate for their age. However, there are occasions when the most able pupils are not challenged enough and they find some of the work too easy. Teachers are not always aware of how this slows the progress of these pupils because the pupils get on with their work without any fuss.
- Teachers and leaders have agreed an approach to marking pupils' work and this is being implemented well. Pupils are increasingly making the changes that teachers have indicated need to happen, but are not always given enough time to do so. Occasionally, pupils simply acknowledge that they have read the comments and are not encouraged to take action. This means they continue to make similar mistakes for longer than necessary.
- Pupils are increasingly looking for improvements themselves, or helping each other to identify ways to make their work better. However, teachers do not often enough insist that they use what they have learnt as a result in their next pieces of work.
- Teaching assistants are kept well informed about what pupils need to learn. Where teaching is good, they are used particularly effectively to support pupils' learning. Teachers and other adults ask appropriate questions to check how well pupils understand what they are doing. They are increasingly using this to adapt how the learning proceeds, but this is not yet always evident.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are well supported, through the individual support they get and through the quality of teaching day by day. Teaching assistants are well informed about the needs of particular pupils they support and understand how to support without doing too much for these pupils. This ensures these pupils play a full part in the learning and other additional activities.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 in English grammar, punctuation and spelling and in mathematics declined in 2014, to below average. Standards in reading and writing were around the national average, with a slight improvement in writing from previous standards. However, this has relied heavily on pupils making accelerated progress in Years 5 and 6, to overcome previous underachievement.
- The most able pupils make the expected progress, but do not often enough make accelerated progress because they are not given enough opportunities to do more challenging work. More recently, they have been taught by teachers from the secondary school. This has given them more experience of working at the very highest levels but the impact is not yet evident in the summary data.
- Attainment at the end of Year 2 has improved from low standards in 2013. In 2014, standards in reading and mathematics were close to the national average. Standards in writing were still below average.
- Progress across the school has been inconsistent, particularly in English grammar, punctuation and spelling and mathematics. Although progress in Years 3 and 4 has begun to accelerate, particularly in reading and mathematics, this is recent and these pupils still have ground to make up.
- Teachers' records and the work in pupils' books show that pupils currently in Year 2 have made further improvements and all pupils are working at levels which are at least in line with those expected for their age. The school's analysis shows that the progress of these pupils has accelerated this year. Pupils currently in Year 6 are already working at standards which are average and have made much more rapid progress this year.
- Most disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress because they are supported effectively. Many overcome the issues they face and need less support as they get older. The school meets the needs of these pupils well.
- Disadvantaged pupils make similar progress to other pupils in the school; their achievement also requires improvement in some aspects. However, there are too few pupils for any analysis of the gap between them and other pupils to be statistically meaningful.

The early years provision

is good

- Effective teaching, good use of the environment and the well-structured activities mean that children learn well and make good progress in the early years provision.
- When children join the school they have skills and knowledge which are often below those which might be expected for their age, particularly in speaking and listening, reading and writing. Teachers make sure that they have lots of opportunities to develop their skills, particularly within their play and when following individual interests. Consequently, children develop skills and knowledge which are often more advanced than those expected for their age. They make good progress, and the progress of some children is rapid.
- Children are encouraged to get resources for themselves and make the most of these to pursue their curiosity. For example, children created their own books because they wanted to write their own adventure story, while other children fetched and mixed their own paints to create the colours they wanted. This demonstrates their eagerness to learn and explore the world around them.
- There is good leadership of early years. Leaders make sure that there are appropriate policies, procedures and training in place to ensure children in the early years provision are kept safe. Adults understand the particular needs of this age group and ensure that they get appropriate opportunities to learn and develop. The role models provided by the older pupils in the same class help children in Reception to settle quickly and understand what is expected of them. Their behaviour is good. Adults have high aspirations for the children, who often live up to these expectations. They learn to be cooperative and how to think carefully about the decisions they make, to keep themselves safe. The well-organised environment, particularly outdoors, helps ensure they are safe.
- Parents say that they are delighted with the way their children take to school and enjoy their learning. Many said that they particularly appreciate the school's efforts to help them understand in more detail how children of this age learn and develop. This helps them to support their children well at home. They also appreciate how quickly the school picks up on any concerns about children's development and acts to address these.

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	114410
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	462446

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	100
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Janice McBrown
Headteacher	Lesley Young
Date of previous school inspection	15–16 May 2013
Telephone number	01273 890338
Fax number	01273 891147
Email address	secretary@plumpton.e-sussex.sch.uk

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