

# Porters Grange Primary School and Nursery

Lancaster Gardens, Southend-on-Sea, Essex SS1 2NS

**Inspection dates** 28–29 April 2015

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	<b>Inadequate</b>	<b>4</b>
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Early years provision		Requires improvement	3

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that has serious weaknesses.

- Until very recently, staffing changes at all levels and weaknesses in teaching have resulted in too many pupils from all abilities and backgrounds underachieving.
- Standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6 fell after the previous inspection and were too low in 2014.
- Not enough of the pupils who left the school in 2014 made expected progress in reading and mathematics during their time in Years 3 to 6.
- Leaders have not used additional government funding effectively to make sure disadvantaged pupils achieve well.
- Teachers do not consistently give pupils good, interesting opportunities to acquire knowledge quickly or practise newly learnt skills.
- Teachers do not always make the best use of teaching assistants to speed up pupils' learning.
- In spite of recent improvements in behaviour around the school, pupils often become distracted when lesson activities do not interest or challenge them. This disrupts their learning and affects their progress.
- In some classes pupils show little pride in their work, which is often messy.
- Teachers' marking does not always help pupils to understand what they need to do to improve their work.
- Attendance, although improving, remains below average.

### The school has the following strengths

- Since September 2014, the executive headteacher and the two heads of school, supported by the new governors, have taken decisive action to improve the school. This is reflected in improved teaching and progress in reading, writing and mathematics in most year groups.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe is good.
- Children in the early years enjoy relatively better teaching and learning than the older pupils. As a result, they are making better progress, although it still requires improvement.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 25 lessons or parts of lessons, including three seen jointly with the heads of school. Teachers in all year groups were observed.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' work in books and on classroom displays. They listened to pupils reading and attended assemblies.
- Inspectors met with all leaders in the school and a group of governors. Brief discussions were held with two local authority representatives.
- The inspection team met with groups of pupils and talked to them during lessons, in the playground, in the dining hall, and as they moved around the school. Pupils took inspectors on a 'curriculum tour' of the school.
- The 18 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, were taken into account, and inspectors spoke informally with parents at the start of the day.
- Questionnaire returns completed by 28 members of staff were taken into consideration.
- Many school documents were reviewed. These included development plans, policies, records of monitoring, safeguarding and planning records, information for families, and governing body documents.

## Inspection team

Ruth Dollner, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Christine Redpath

Additional Inspector

Mark Jones

Additional Inspector

## Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

### Information about this school

- Porters Grange is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The executive headteacher, appointed in November 2013 as advisory executive headteacher to support the leadership of the school, now works at the school for a minimum of one and a half day a week as operational executive headteacher. She is also the permanent headteacher at West Leigh Junior School. In September 2014 two heads of school were appointed from other positions in the school. Two assistant headteachers were appointed in January 2015 along with a literacy subject leader.
- Prior to the formation of the current leadership team the school went through a period of turbulence. There were numerous changes of staff and members of the governing body.
- The early years consists of two part-time Nursery classes and three full-time Reception classes.
- Almost half the pupils are White British. Over a third speak English as an additional language, which is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged and supported by the pupil premium is well above average. This is additional government funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or in local authority care.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and raise achievement by:
  - showing consistently high expectations through setting challenging tasks for pupils of all abilities in reading, writing and mathematics and insisting that work is well presented
  - providing good guidance in lessons and in books so that pupils are clear about what they are meant to do and how to succeed
  - making full use of teaching assistants to speed up pupils' learning
  - ensuring that pupils practise and apply their knowledge of number facts to solving problems in mathematics lessons and across the curriculum
  - ensuring that pupils practise and apply their skills in decoding phonics (the sounds that letters make) and spelling in writing across the curriculum.
- Strengthen leadership and management and increase the rate of school improvement by:
  - further developing the skills and expertise of all leaders in order to build on the recent improvements in teaching and pupils' progress
  - making sure that the new governing body challenges and supports the school's leaders effectively
  - carrying out the strategies identified by leaders to improve attendance and reduce persistent absenteeism effectively
  - making sure that teachers track the progress of children in the Nursery effectively.

An external review of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management

### requires improvement

- The school has been through a number of changes and difficulties that have had a negative impact on its effectiveness. It is emerging from a period where the quality of leadership of teaching and learning had been insufficient to prevent a decline in standards. It is now better placed to improve than at any time since the previous inspection, indicating a good capacity to continue to improve. Even so, leadership has not yet been successful in promoting good teaching and achievement across the school.
- The executive headteacher recruited a strong leadership team between September 2014 and January 2015. This consists of two heads of school, two assistant headteachers who are responsible for mathematics and for the early years, and a literacy subject leader. A special needs coordinator has been appointed more recently. Under the direction of the executive headteacher, the leadership team set about tackling weaknesses in teaching in order to raise achievement. Rigorous checks on teachers' performance revealed a significant amount of inadequate teaching. Setting targets for improvement where teaching was weak gave rise to several staff leaving the school and being replaced.
- The leadership team collectively provide strong leadership of teaching. Teachers receive effective support and challenge, with regular checks on their planning, their teaching and their pupils' progress. Leaders' drive to eradicate poor teaching has led to improvements in teaching and achievement in most classes since September, but not yet in all of them. Year 2 pupils moving into Key Stage 2 and Year 6 pupils who are leaving the school in the summer are making stronger progress than pupils did last year and are achieving standards that are closer to national averages. This is a direct result of the work the leadership team have done to improve teaching.
- The local authority has supported leaders well this academic year, in reviewing pupils' education and standards, and has helped them to identify the priorities for improvement. The local authority also helped to recruit the highly skilled and knowledgeable governors who were recently appointed.
- Leaders' spending of the pupil premium funding did not benefit disadvantaged pupils enough in 2014. Their attainment was well below that of other pupils. This demonstrates that the school was unable to offer equal opportunities to these pupils. Leaders have now taken action to ensure that this is now an improving picture. Gaps in attainment have narrowed in Year 6, but in other year groups the progress of disadvantaged pupils remains too variable to close the gaps.
- Leaders have ensured that the school meets all safeguarding requirements and its work to keep pupils safe is good.
- The heads of school have successfully established an atmosphere in which teaching can flourish and pupils are expected to behave well. The majority of staff are happy to work at the school and feel well supported by leaders. Staff care about their pupils and want them to do well.
- The assistant headteacher who is responsible for mathematics and the literacy subject leader have been instrumental in improving the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics since their appointments. The mathematics leader demonstrates good practice to other teachers and supports them with planning. He has a clear understanding of what needs to happen to improve the teaching of mathematics further and his actions so far have eradicated most of the inadequate teaching in mathematics that existed prior to his appointment. The subject leader responsible for English has had a good impact on the progress pupils make in reading at Key Stage 2 through developing group reading activities which are well taught by teachers and teaching assistants.
- The assistant headteacher responsible for phonics has ensured that it is taught regularly and that teachers and teaching assistants effectively teach the sounds that letters and groups of letters make. School data show that pupils in Reception and Key Stage 1 are making better progress in phonics than in previous years. She recognises that staff are not always effective in showing pupils how to apply these skills in reading and writing and is taking action and providing training to address this.
- The curriculum has a suitable focus on developing key skills and effectively promotes pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development through assemblies, teaching about different religions, charity events and

their learning of other languages. British values such as democracy and the rule of law are explored through visits to House of Commons and the work of the school council, which gives all pupils the opportunity to raise issues that concern them. Pupils understand the difference between right and wrong and the consequences if 'people don't show respect'. The curriculum prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain.

- The heads of school have implemented new assessment arrangements in line with the new national curriculum. All teachers are using the system.
- National sports funding has been spent well. It has been used to access specialist sports' teaching and has provided the school football team with a kit. Governors and leaders are reviewing further spending to ensure that teachers improve their confidence in teaching sports. Pupils enjoy a range of sports and understand the impact of this on their physical development.
- The assistant headteacher responsible for the early years has ensured that the quality of teaching is improving and that all areas of learning are planned for, both inside and outside the classrooms. She has identified priorities for further improvement and is working to ensure that tracking and assessment systems help teachers to plan more effectively for children's 'next steps' in learning.
- The new special needs coordinator has a clear view of priorities for improvement but has not been in post long enough to take effective action to improve teaching and achievement for these pupils. Nevertheless, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are well cared for and their improving progress reflects the school's commitment to tackling discrimination.
- The new leadership team has established better relationships with parents. The majority of parents who spoke to inspectors were positive about the school and feel that it is improving because of the changes leaders have made. Some shared concerns about the number of teachers who have left and the unsettling effect this has had on their children. A small minority of those who completed Parent View said they would not recommend the school to another parent.
- The current leadership team has started to apply the well-thought-out policy for improving attendance and reducing the amount of persistent absenteeism, with some impact already. Attendance has improved but it is still below average. Persistent absenteeism has been reduced but it is still above average.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Since the previous inspection the governing body has not been effective in holding the school to account or driving through improvements. Governors have not ensured that the school provides value for money. Following a review of the governing body it was reconstituted in March 2015.
  - The new governing body has acted swiftly to improve the way it challenges and supports the work of the school. Three new highly skilled and experienced governors, including a new Chair, have been recruited. They understand what needs to be done to move the school forward. They are creating new systems and structures to ensure that they are effective, and their meeting records show that they are already holding the school to account for finances and for standards. They have planned further training for governors and appointed a governor responsible for overseeing the school's arrangements to safeguard children.
  - Governors are aware that pupil premium funding has not been spent wisely in the past and are keen to support leaders in reviewing the use of this funding. They have made suggestions on how the sports funding can be used to have more impact on pupils' physical development and healthy lifestyles.
  - Governors know where strengths in teaching lie and where further improvements are needed. They are currently reviewing performance management procedures and holding the school to account to ensure that underperformance is tackled and teachers' pay relates to their performance.

## The behaviour and safety of pupils

## requires improvement

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Sometimes, teaching does not inspire pupils to develop a sufficiently deep love of learning or great enjoyment of life at school. In lessons pupils generally relate well to each other and to staff but often, when tasks set are either too easy or too difficult for them, they become distracted and this sometimes has a negative impact on learning.

- Pupils in some classes sometimes show little pride in their work. Handwriting is often poor and the presentation of work is messy. This is often left unchallenged by teachers.
- Behaviour around the school and in the lunch hall has improved since September due to the efforts of the leadership team in making sure that the behaviour policy is implemented consistently across the school. Older pupils told inspectors that they felt behaviour has improved over the past year.
- Pupils understand and accept the new rewards and sanctions systems and value the incentives for good behaviour and attendance. They value the 'Porters points' system for rewarding behaviour.
- Pupils are polite, friendly and welcoming to visitors and happy to talk to them about their experiences of school life.

## Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Until the current leadership team were appointed there were inconsistencies in the monitoring and promoting of this aspect of the school's work. This was swiftly addressed by one of the new heads of school.
- The head of school responsible for ensuring that pupils are safe has ensured tight procedures on all aspects of safeguarding. She has developed and implemented policies to ensure children with medical needs are well cared for and that the accident book is kept up to date and monitored. Bullying logs show that the number of bullying incidents has been reduced.
- Systems for keeping pupils safe are effective and training on all aspects of safeguarding is regularly offered to staff to ensure consistency of approach across the school. New members of staff routinely receive health and safety training.
- Pupils say that they feel safe at school and that they have an adult they can go to if they have any worries or concerns.
- Pupils learn about staying safe on the internet during ICT (information and communication technology) lessons and they understand the dangers of cyber bullying. An 'internet safety day' gives pupils good guidance.

## The quality of teaching

### is inadequate

- Inadequate teaching since the previous inspection led to pupils' underachievement. While senior leaders tackled inadequate teaching, pupils' learning suffered. Discontinuity of staffing, staff absences, poor assessment practices and weak teaching all contributed. Leaders have recruited some effective new teachers and there have been clear improvements in teaching since September 2014, but work in lessons and books show that overall, the quality is still not yet good enough to help pupils catch up quickly the ground they have lost in previous years.
- Not all teachers show high expectations for pupils' progress. While all staff have implemented and understand the new assessment guidance, some do not yet use this information consistently well to enable them to set suitably challenging work, particularly for the most able pupils. Similarly, the least able pupils sometimes struggle with the same task as other pupils. For example, in Years 1, 3 and 5 all pupils are often given exactly the same writing tasks, or a 'frame' or worksheet for writing on. The most able pupils show that they do not need this level of support and the least able writers are not confident to complete it and achieve very little. The variety and depth of writing tasks are limited.
- Mathematics books in some classes show a similar picture. Pupils all work on the same tasks, the only difference being the amount of work completed. In some classes in Years 1 to 5, pupils' knowledge of basic number facts is insecure. There is often very little mathematics work in their books. Pupils are not practising skills sufficiently well to develop deeper understanding of mathematics or to apply their number skills to solving problems, either in mathematics lessons or in other subjects.

- Teaching does not always inspire pupils or capture their interest. This, coupled with the setting of tasks that are not at the right level of difficulty, leads to pupils losing interest and becoming distracted in some classes, particularly in Years 3, 4 and 5.
- Teachers and teaching assistants teach phonics regularly. They teach the individual sounds that letters or groups of letters make very well. However, not all teachers and teaching assistants show pupils how to blend these sounds together to read or how to use the sounds to help them with spelling when they are writing. Because of this, pupils do not apply these skills automatically when they come to difficulty in reading or struggle with spellings in their writing.
- Some teachers use teaching assistants well in lessons to help pupils make good progress. For example, in a Year 1 mathematics lesson, teaching assistants asked skilful questions to individuals to make sure they understood and to explain further what the teacher was saying. In Year 4 teaching assistants skilfully lead group reading sessions, which help pupils make good progress in their reading. However, sometimes teachers do not plan the work of teaching assistants well enough. They are left without a clear role in lessons and spend time watching teachers teach rather than helping pupils to learn.
- Leaders have allocated effective new teaching staff to the year groups where stability and improvements were most urgent. This has been an important factor in improving pupils' current progress and the teaching of mathematics, reading and writing. Consistently good teaching in Year 6 and some other classes is leading to good progress, but the rest is not good enough to help pupils reach standards that are average or above by the time they leave the school.
- Leaders have ensured that all teachers have implemented a marking policy. Marking has improved but it still has a limited impact on pupils' progress. In Key Stage 1 the comments teachers write in books are often too complicated for pupils who are at the early stages of reading to understand. In Key Stage 2 the comments do not always help pupils understand what they need to do next. Pupils are not always given time to respond to marking before they move onto the next task.

### The achievement of pupils

### is inadequate

- Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 in all subjects have been below average and have declined since the previous inspection. In 2014 pupils left the school over a year behind pupils nationally in writing and mathematics and over two terms behind pupils nationally in their reading and spelling, grammar and punctuation skills. Almost half failed to reach the expected standard (Level 4) in reading, writing and mathematics. Far fewer pupils reached the higher levels (Level 5 or above).
- Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 has also been well below average since the last inspection. The school's results in the Year 1 screening of pupils' knowledge of phonics were well below average in 2014. Leaders have ensured that the teaching of phonics now has a high priority and the proportion of Year 1 pupils on track to reach the required standard in this year's screening check is close to what was typical nationally in 2014.
- Many children who left the Reception classes in September 2014 started Year 1 with skills and knowledge that were below those typically expected for their age because of the inadequate teaching they experienced in the Reception Year. The children currently in the early years have made better progress overall and are on track to reach average attainment.
- Year 2 pupils are making better progress this year because of some good teaching in some classes. This means that attainment is beginning to rise. However, progress across Year 2 is variable because the quality of teaching varies so much. In particular, less-able writers have made inadequate progress since September because of inadequate teaching. Leaders have identified this issue and are adapting the way these pupils are taught and supported.
- In 2014 Year 6 pupils made slow progress in reading and mathematics across Key Stage 2. The proportions of pupils who made nationally expected progress in reading and mathematics and exceeded



expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics were well below those seen nationally. This picture is improving in the current Year 6. The proportion of pupils who are set to make nationally expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics is in line with national averages. Attainment is improving but is still not on track to exceed national averages in 2015.

- In 2014, disadvantaged pupils left the school more than five terms behind their classmates in reading and writing, and three terms behind in mathematics. They were over five terms behind all pupils nationally in all three subject areas. Because of good teaching in the current Year 6 the gaps have narrowed significantly. These pupils are making progress in line with their classmates and standards are improving. However, the achievement of disadvantaged pupils still varies across the school. Gaps are narrowing but attainment remains below average.
- While some of the most able pupils do well, in common with all other groups in the school, they underachieve overall and in most year groups. Teaching has not been good enough to deepen these pupils' knowledge and skills systematically, to set them harder work, or to enable more of them to work at suitably challenging levels. Because of good teaching, the most able pupils in Year 6 are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are currently making similar progress to their classmates across the school. Until September 2014 weak arrangements for identifying their needs and checking their progress meant that these groups of pupils did not get the right support quickly enough, but this has now been resolved.

### The early years provision

### requires improvement

- On entry to Reception children's skills and understanding are broadly typical for their age in most areas of development except reading and number work. In these areas, their skills and knowledge are well below those typically seen. In 2014 the proportion of children who achieved a good overall level of development at the end of the Reception Year was well below the national average.
- The assistant headteacher who became responsible for the early years in January 2015 provides good leadership. Improvements to teaching and to the learning environment have led to children making better progress. The proportion of reception children on track to achieve a good level of development in 2015 is much closer to national averages. This means that children are being increasingly well prepared for their time in Year 1.
- The school has not tracked the progress that nursery children make from their various starting points effectively. Leaders are taking action to address this by making sure that Nursery staff adopt the effective systems already used to track the progress of Reception children.
- Teaching requires improvement. Children enjoy some interesting indoor and outdoor activities and resources, but adults do not always direct them to explore the more challenging activities, particularly those that relate to early writing and mathematical skills. Staff in the Reception classes demonstrate good subject knowledge of phonics and carefully track children's progress through the 'phonic phases'. However, they do not ensure that children apply their new phonics learning to build up their skills in reading and writing activities.
- Warm relationships between adults and children help to ensure that children feel safe and well cared for. Disabled children and those who have special educational needs receive excellent care.
- Pupils generally behave well. Adults usually deal with minor conflicts swiftly, but occasionally adults who are engaged in activities with groups of children show a lack of awareness about what the other children are doing. Some conflicts go unnoticed by adults and are left unresolved.
- Parents are encouraged to contribute to their children's learning and send in activities that are undertaken at home. They also inform the 'learning journeys', which were introduced in January to chart children's progress.



## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	132792
<b>Local authority</b>	Southend-on-Sea
<b>Inspection number</b>	462047

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	440
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Graham Lane
<b>Headteacher</b>	Cheryl Woolf (executive headteacher)
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	9 May 2013
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