

Lipson Vale Primary School

Bernice Terrace, Lipson, Plymouth, PL4 7HW

Inspection dates 10–11 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Inspirational leadership by the headteacher has set high expectations and galvanised the staff team in a relentless pursuit of excellence. He is ably supported by his deputy headteacher.
- The quality of teaching is typically good. Good subject knowledge has led to considerable gains in pupils' progress, particularly in writing.
- Governors share leaders' ambition and vision for the school. They have a good understanding of the quality of teaching and have made some innovative, long-term decisions which have been successful in improving standards of achievement.
- Pupils eligible for the pupil premium make good progress and are catching up with others in the school.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs achieve well because adults quickly identify their needs and work effectively with other agencies to provide effective support.
- Attendance has improved and is now in line with the national average. Pupils come to school smart in their uniforms and ready to learn. They behave well and speak about their school with pride.
- Staff, parents and pupils are proud of the school and its nurturing ethos. The school's warm and inclusive culture provides a safe environment where pupils develop a 'can do' attitude.
- The vibrant curriculum provides an outstanding contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils enthuse about their learning. Music is a strength of the school.
- Support staff are trained well and their skilful use of questioning is effective in helping pupils to improve their work.
- The school engages well with parents. Responses to the questionnaire and to inspectors from parents were overwhelmingly positive. Parents particularly appreciate the rich experiences and trips on offer that support their children's learning.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Success in reaching the targets set in subject plans for improvement are not easily measured. This makes it difficult for middle leaders to check for themselves the difference that their actions are making.
- Not all teachers carry out the school's agreed presentation policy for pupils' work with the same success. Not all work is presented well.
- A lower proportion of girls achieve the higher levels in mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 25 lessons, five of which were jointly observed with senior leaders.
- Inspectors held meetings and discussions with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, teachers, pupils and three members of the governing body. A telephone discussion took place with representatives from the local authority and the local Teaching School Alliance.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documents including the school’s information on pupils’ performance and progress, self-evaluation records, safeguarding policies and documents relating to the management of teachers’ performance.
- Inspectors conducted focused learning walks, looking at the curriculum provision and at social, moral, spiritual and cultural development.
- Inspectors took account of discussions with parents, and the views of 33 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. Questionnaire responses from 68 members of staff were also analysed.
- Inspectors spoke informally with pupils around the school and during break times, observed behaviour during playtimes and lunchtimes and listened to some pupils read.

Inspection team

Tracy Hannon, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Mark Anderson	Additional Inspector
Adam Morris	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Lipson Vale Primary School is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. A small proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is above average. This is additional government funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above the national average.
- Children in the early years are taught in two classes on a full-time basis.
- After the previous inspection, the school enlisted the support of a National Leader in Education from the Plymouth Teaching School Alliance. The local authority in partnership with the Alliance has deemed that support is no longer necessary.
- There has been a high level of pupil mobility in Year 6 with one fifth of the cohort joining the school in the last 12 months.
- The school runs a breakfast club which is managed by the governing body and was evaluated as part of this inspection.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set 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?

- Ensure that learning moves on rapidly by making sure that:
 - teachers check the understanding of the most able girls in mathematics more frequently so that their learning does not stall
 - all teachers expect a high standard of presentation in pupils' work.
- Improve the effectiveness of middle leaders by:
 - using all the information they have about their subjects to provide appropriate measures by which they can check the success of their actions
 - responding quickly to what the information tells them about how well pupils are doing.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Uncompromising leadership by the headteacher has established a culture of high aspiration and a 'can do' attitude. He is ably supported by the deputy headteacher and senior leaders, who share his vision and determination to help pupils to achieve their very best.
 - Teaching and achievement are improving strongly. The headteacher's and deputy headteacher's regular and forensic checking up on progress are driving up standards. Teachers are skilled in analysing information about pupils' progress and are adept at responding quickly to tackle any gaps in their learning.
 - Achievement across the school is improving because dedicated middle leaders provide highly effective support in developing teachers' subject knowledge. Leaders accurately identify the key actions needed and plan support for teachers well. However, not all middle leaders use appropriate measures to adjust plans and target resources to respond rapidly to the regular pupil progress checks. For example, attainment in mathematics is currently improving at the same rate for boys and girls. Historically, the most able boys have achieved at higher rates than the girls so there is a great need for the most able girls in mathematics to 'catch up'.
 - There is a strong commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity. The school works creatively to ensure nothing stops pupils from learning. Pupils are provided with opportunities for academic, sporting and musical excellence. The well-attended breakfast club supports pupils in having a positive start to the day.
 - The curriculum prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain. Pupils speak about how assemblies help them to 'think about how we show respect and understand why beliefs are important'. They say that watching 'BBC Newsround' helps them to keep up to date with current affairs. Regular visitors from the local community ensure that pupils have access to a range of different cultures and religions. Homework activities are well designed by the teachers to develop pupils' thinking skills and make a purposeful contribution to their achievement.
 - The curriculum is planned carefully to ensure that pupils have a broad and exciting range of experiences to hook their interest. It promotes a love of learning and sparks curiosity that has resulted in improved achievement. Pupils' conversations capture the love of learning inspired by the school. During the inspection, a Year 3 class had a visit from a local zoo. Many of the pupils spent their playtime discussing what they had discovered. A small group of pupils were enraptured in conversation considering what it must be like for a gecko to have to lick its own eyes because it cannot blink.
 - Pupil premium funding is used effectively to promote the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. Pupils are supported individually and through small groups and make good progress as a result.
 - Leaders make good use of the sports premium funding to invest in quality sports coaches and link with other schools for sports festivals. The school has an aim for everyone to be active. Effective use of funding has resulted in wider opportunities for pupils to take part in a range of sporting activities. This has led to an increased uptake in sports in school time and in pupils' own time. For example, a significant number of pupils recently took part in the Plymouth half marathon.
 - The school collaborates well with other schools. After the previous inspection, school leaders made excellent use of the support from the Teaching School Alliance to improve the quality of teaching. Local authority reports provided a sharp focus on the key priorities which set the momentum of improvement rolling. Governors and senior leaders are highly positive about the impact of the support provided and its success is born out in the much improved outcomes for pupils.
 - The school's arrangements for safeguarding meet statutory requirements. All staff make sure pupils are completely safe in school.
- **The governance of the school:**
- The effective governing body is a strength of the school.
 - Governors challenge the headteacher strenuously from a position of knowledge as they have a firm understanding of assessment information. They know how the school compares with other schools locally and nationally and speak intelligently about the progress of specific groups and the impact of actions to address gaps in achievement.
 - Governors make long-term decisions based upon national research. For example, when deploying the additional pupil premium funding, governors drew upon highly valued national research and statistics. More recently, governors have made the decision to deploy a member of staff on a part-time basis in the local pre-school to enable a closer working relationship to support children's 'readiness for school'.
 - Governors' oversight of safeguarding is systematic, thorough and meets all statutory requirements.

- Governors have a clear understanding of the quality of teaching in the school and support the headteacher to strengthen this through their challenging questions. They reward good teaching but equally have followed appropriate procedures to tackle poor teaching.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. There is a warm and nurturing ethos that permeates the school and a sense of the very highest of expectations. Inspectors observed children cooperating well in all classes. The motto 'Working together we achieve more' is an expectation for all and results in a school culture where there is an appetite for learning and improvement.
- Parents support the school in its high expectations of the uniform. Pupils come to school smart and ready to learn. They show great curiosity and positive attitudes towards their learning. Pupils work hard on their homework and apply their skills well in lessons.
- In the majority of lessons, adults plan activities which challenge pupils and motivate them to do their best. The very oldest children in the school display exceptionally good behaviour in lessons and around the school. Behaviour is not yet outstanding, because, on occasions, not all pupils take the greatest pride in the presentation of their work.
- Pupils speak positively about the range of residential visits and clubs available at school. They recognise how activities such as 'Junior Ten Tors', an endurance march across Dartmoor, helps them to learn about team work and how to overcome challenges.
- Pupils behave well at play and lunchtimes and make good use of the many different spaces available. The school has ensured that there is space for active playtimes as well as quieter places for those who wish to sit and talk or to read a book.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Staff are checked prior to their appointment to ensure that they are suitable to work with children and governors regularly check that safeguarding procedures are robust. Leaders are assiduous in dealing with concerns about safeguarding.
- Pupils told inspectors that they 'love school' and 'like all the staff'. They spoke positively about being able to talk to any member of staff if they have worries.
- Pupils report that occasionally there are incidents of poor behaviour but adults deal with such incidents 'quickly and fairly'. Pupils are clear about different forms of bullying and spoke at length about what they learn from assemblies about tolerance and respect for others.
- Leaders engage in considerable work with families of pupils who miss a lot of school and are unrelenting in following procedures to ensure that all is done to encourage the very highest levels of attendance. As a result, attendance figures show an improving trend. Attendance is now in line with that nationally.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teachers have high expectations of learning and behaviour. Relationships are particularly strong. Teachers typically plan lessons which capture the interest of pupils and in the majority of lessons pupils are engrossed in their learning. Conversations between staff and pupils exude mutual respect and a love of learning.
- Teaching assistants make a strong contribution to pupils' learning. They work closely with teachers to support pupils in meeting their challenging targets. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress from their different starting points because adults refine tasks well to ensure that pupils experience success.
- All teachers provide clear oral and written feedback to pupils. This supports good progress. Older pupils, in particular, are very clear about their targets and their progress towards them. Occasionally, teachers do not have high enough expectations of the presentation of pupils' work. Consequently, some pupils do not always achieve their very best.
- The teaching of literacy is good and this is reflected in the significant improvement in attainment in writing across the school. Support from the Teaching School Alliance aided by a knowledgeable English leader has resulted in teachers' strong subject knowledge in phonics (the sounds that letters represent) and writing in particular. This has led to pupils receiving high quality teaching and making good progress. The wealth of opportunities to write across all areas of the curriculum has provided pupils with the chance to practise

and apply their writing skills.

- The teaching of reading is good. Improvements in the teaching of phonics and the impact of additional support for those pupils at risk of underachievement are improving pupils' reading skills.
- The teaching of mathematics is typically good. Staff training in the new mathematics curriculum has been effective in raising achievement. Pupils' books reveal they have many opportunities to develop their reasoning skills and solve problems across all aspects of number, shape and measures. This is leading to good progress for all pupils in mathematics, although in some year groups there is a need for the most able girls to make rapid progress in order to catch up with the boys. Additional support for this small group of girls is effective in improving their rates of progress and, therefore, overcoming previous gaps in knowledge and understanding.
- High quality music teaching both within and beyond the school day is allowing pupils to develop their talents. The passion and high expectations for excellence on the part of the teacher provide pupils with challenge and an awareness of the resilience and practice needed to 'be the best you can be'.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Progress in reading is strong. Decisive action to improve the quality of teaching in phonics has been effective. Current Year 1 pupils are on track to exceed the expected standard nationally which is an improvement on last year. Carefully targeted intervention has meant that the vast majority of pupils who did not achieve the expected level in phonics last year are on track to pass this year.
- Since the last inspection, pupils' attainment at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 has improved.
- Year 6 test results in 2014, combining reading, writing and mathematics were in line with the national average. Attainment in mathematics was above the national average, reading below the national average and writing in line with the national average. This represented a significant improvement from previous years and was a result of good progress. Progress measures were in line with the national average in reading and writing and above the national average in mathematics.
- The gap in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and others in the school in 2014 was similar to the gap between disadvantaged pupils in the school and others nationally; this was three terms behind in mathematics and reading and two terms behind in writing.
- Current attainment in Year 6 is expected to be lower than last year. These results represent good progress from individual starting points.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress from their different starting points. They are ably supported through the effective deployment of teaching assistants and receive activities that are matched closely to their needs, which help them to grow in confidence and ability.
- The most able pupils in Year 2 exceeded national averages in reading and writing but were below average in mathematics. 2014 Year 6 results show that the most able pupils achieved better than those nationally at the very highest Level 6 in mathematics and writing. Current work in books and teachers' assessment information shows that the most able pupils are making good progress. There is still some work to be done to tackle the legacy of most able girls not achieving at the same rate as the most able boys in mathematics.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language make similar good progress to other groups in the school. This is because the school works effectively to provide timely support.

The early years provision

is good

- Children make a good start in the stimulating and well-organised Reception classes. The equipment is in good condition and rigorous risk assessments ensure that children are safe. Children are exceptionally well cared for, and as a result, quickly develop in confidence and social skills.
- Adults provide high quality support which ensures that all children make good progress. Indications are that the proportion achieving a good level of development in 2015 will be above the national average.
- Wide-ranging support helps disabled children and those who have special educational needs. This ensures they make good progress in line with other children in the class.
- Children start school with weaker skills in phonics and writing than in other areas of learning. Teaching staff ensure that there are many activities for children to practise their writing skills and identify sounds and, as a result, children make good progress. The use of the indoor and outside areas is purposefully

planned. Inspectors observed a group of boys and girls totally absorbed in writing on their flip boards as 'mechanics' and serving in the 'shop'.

- The new early years leader has been effective in improving the quality of teaching. He has planned and carried out an effective training programme. There is a consistency of approach and good teaching across both Reception classes. Careful checking of children's needs and adapting tasks to meet them have led to an increased rate of progress this year compared to previously. Leadership is not outstanding because the new leader has not yet fully developed effective systems for ensuring rapid progress is made for the majority of pupils across the two classes.
- Parents are encouraged to play an active part in their children's learning. Parents told inspectors that staff are approachable and they welcome the home visits and clear communication between school and home.
- Staff have clear expectations and behaviour is good as a result. High quality interactions between children and adults and carefully matched activities ensure that children are highly engaged in their learning. As a result, children make good progress and are well prepared for Year 1.

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	113298
Local authority	Plymouth
Inspection number	462472

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	402
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jill Straw
Headteacher	Diggory Vowles
Date of previous school inspection	12 June 2013
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