

Picknalls First School

Oldfields Road, Uttoxeter, ST14 7QL

Inspection dates 4–5 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Inadequate	4
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 school that requires special measures.

- The school's leaders did not make a well-considered assessment of risk before allowing a volunteer to work with children in the classroom.
- A risk assessment had not been suitably undertaken nor advice sought from the local authority before allowing the volunteer into school.
- As a result of weaknesses in relation to keeping pupils safe, and despite the school's many strengths, both leadership and the school's work to keep pupils safe are judged to be inadequate.
- Occasionally teachers do not fully challenge pupils, particularly the most able, to make as much progress as they could.
- Teachers do not always use marking effectively to help pupils to learn from their mistakes and improve their work.
- Pupils do not do quite as well in writing as they do in reading and mathematics because their spelling is not as accurate as it should be.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher has worked closely and successfully with governors and other senior leaders to improve teaching and achievement since the last inspection.
- Senior leaders provide good support to middle leaders, and comprehensive guidance and training, so they are effective in their roles. Improvements in teaching have ensured that pupils achieve well.
- Pupils are making good progress. Teachers ask questions skilfully to check pupils' understanding during lessons and resolve any confusion.
- Teaching assistants provide effective support for individuals and small groups of pupils.
- Teaching is consistently good. Teachers' enthusiasm is reflected in pupils' excitement about learning.
- Good teaching ensures that children in the early years make good progress. Adults keep parents well informed about their children's progress. Caring relationships help children to settle quickly and feel secure.
- The school is a happy, caring and welcoming community. Pupils enjoy school and behave well.
- Most parents who completed the online questionnaire say their children are making good progress and enjoy coming to school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 15 lessons or part lessons, including five lessons observed jointly with the headteacher.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, administrative staff, senior leaders, teachers, parents and pupils. Discussions were also held with the Chair of the Governing Body and three other governors. The lead inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of 89 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and spoke with individual parents prior to the start of the school day. Inspectors also took account of 28 staff questionnaire responses.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and a range of policies and documents. These included the school improvement plan and self-evaluation document, information about pupils' progress and attainment, attendance and safeguarding policies and procedures, and records of governing body meetings.
- Inspectors looked at samples of pupils' work provided by the school and work in lessons, and also listened to pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 read.
- Inspectors were aware during the inspection that serious allegations of a child protection nature were being investigated by the appropriate authorities. While Ofsted does not have the power to investigate allegations of this kind, actions taken by the setting in response to the allegation were considered alongside the other evidence available at the time of inspection to inform inspectors' judgements.

Inspection team

David Edwards, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Kathryn Hanson	Additional Inspector
Suha Ahmad	Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Information about this school

- Picknalls First School is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is below average. The pupil premium is additional government funding to support pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is slightly above the national average.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The early years comprises a part-time Nursery and two full-time Reception classes.
- There has been a review of responsibilities and restructuring of the senior leadership team during this academic year.
- There is a breakfast club and an after-school club on the school site. Both are privately run and are inspected separately.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership, management and safety by ensuring that school leaders always undertake appropriate risk assessments of the suitability of volunteers to work in the school.
- Improve the quality of teaching further and accelerate progress in English by ensuring that:
 - work in lessons consistently challenges all groups of pupils, particularly the most able, so that they engage in their learning and make faster progress
 - teachers check that pupils respond to the advice that they give them when they mark their work
 - spelling skills are taught more effectively and pupils consistently apply the skills they learn in phonic lessons to their writing tasks.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are inadequate

- Despite many strengths, leadership and management are inadequate because safeguarding procedures are not effective. The school does not follow safer recruitment practices rigorously enough. A new volunteer was allowed to work in the school without leaders taking careful and thorough steps to risk assess and consider the suitability of this decision. In addition, governors had not ensured that all members of staff have read part one of *Keeping children safe in education*, as they are required to do. This was rectified during the course of the inspection.
- The headteacher has a clear vision for school improvement, which is shared by governors and staff at all levels. Her success in bringing many improvements is reflected in staff morale, which is high. All staff who responded to the staff questionnaire said that they knew what the school leaders were striving to achieve. The school may appoint newly qualified teachers.
- The headteacher has raised the expectations of middle leaders, such as those in charge of subjects, who are now more accountable for the progress pupils make. They have an accurate view of the quality of teaching and learning within their areas of responsibility.
- Senior and middle leaders collect a wealth of information about pupils' attainment and progress to check how well individual pupils are learning. They use this information to ensure that pupils stay on track to achieve the standards they should.
- Subject expertise is shared well with other member schools in the Uttoxeter First Education Partnership. This is improving the quality of teaching. Closer links between the member schools have enabled leaders to introduce greater consistency in the way subjects are taught. The schools have worked very closely to introduce and refine the new assessment systems related to the introduction of the new National Curriculum from September 2014.
- The headteacher and senior leaders provide effective leadership for teaching. As a result, both teaching and pupils' achievement have improved significantly since the previous inspection. Staff apply the behaviour policy consistently well throughout the school, and this helps to create an environment in which good behaviour can flourish.
- Leaders and other staff are committed to ensuring equal opportunities for all pupils. Leaders use the pupil premium funding effectively to improve the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. They are successfully narrowing the gap in attainment between disadvantaged pupils, other pupils in school and all pupils nationally. Disadvantaged pupils receive extra support to help them to learn more effectively and to accelerate their progress. Any incidents of discrimination are tackled robustly.
- The local authority swiftly provided support to the school following the last inspection. Its representatives helped in developing and judging the quality of teaching and learning in English and mathematics. This in turn has helped all staff to make accurate judgements about pupils' attainment and progress.
- Leaders check the quality of teaching regularly, and set teachers challenging targets that include improving pupils' progress. The headteacher has eradicated weaker teaching following the previous school inspection.
- Teachers and support staff share leaders' commitment to securing further improvements. Leaders know what the school does well and which aspects need improvement. They have used progress information well to accelerate improvements, including in teaching and achievement.
- Leaders have made appropriate use of primary physical education and sport premium funding to improve pupils' achievement and participation in sport. They have employed specialist coaches who assist staff in developing their expertise in teaching sport and games. A number of new activities have been introduced and pupils have many opportunities to take part in competitive sport. The school and its pupils are rightly

proud of their sporting success.

- Teachers prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain. For instance, lessons and assemblies successfully encourage pupils to accept and respect differences between people, cultures and beliefs. Discussions in class give pupils regular opportunities to speak publicly, so that they grow in self-esteem. Pupils develop the confidence to reflect and to make sensible choices about their learning. Pupils learn about the principles of democracy by voting for the school council representatives.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has supported the school well since the last inspection. Following an external review of governance, governors now have the skills and knowledge to hold leaders to account for the school's performance. However, their procedures to ensure that safeguarding policies are implemented in full, are not rigorous enough.
 - Governors have an accurate view of pupils' achievement compared to other schools nationally because they have attended relevant and helpful training. In addition, the headteacher provides regular feedback and information at governors' meetings. This enhances their understanding about the quality of teaching and helps them to ask pertinent and searching questions. They have good procedures to check teachers' performance. They know, for example, that teachers have targets linked to pupils' progress and attainment, as well as to whole-school developments. They receive information about staff pay and promotion, and understand what is done to support and reward teachers' practices.
 - Governors know how the pupil premium is used and how it is making a difference to disadvantaged pupils' achievement. They also closely monitor the spending of the sports funding grant, so that they can judge its impact.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are inadequate

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils say that behaviour is typically good around the school, in the playground, in the dining hall and in lessons. Pupils typically work hard and try to do their best. Clear rules and a system of rewards and sanctions make sure that pupils know how to behave well.
- Pupils show great respect for each other and are extremely polite to adults and visitors. They are eager to talk about all the good things in their school. They are proud to be members of their school community and say that it is a friendly place where newcomers are welcomed and everyone is happy.
- Pupils show great maturity for their age and take on responsibilities willingly. The work of the well-trained pupil play leaders helps to ensure that playtimes are enjoyable and pupil relations are harmonious.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and show a willingness to concentrate, work hard and persevere when work is challenging. They collaborate well when asked to work together in pairs or small groups and are able to work independently during tasks when required to do so.
- Attendance is above average. The school continues to work hard to make sure that everyone understands the importance of regular attendance in supporting academic progress.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe is inadequate. No risk assessment was undertaken prior to allowing a volunteer to work in a classroom, albeit under supervision.
- Pupils play safely during break times and treat their environment with respect. They say there is almost no bullying. However, if it occurs they know who to talk to and they are confident that adults will listen to them and any problems will be resolved quickly.
- Pupils understand that their behaviour affects others and that they should always try to be kind and considerate. Pupils who have social and emotional difficulties are helped to manage their behaviour, by

well-trained teaching assistants and other staff, and through their work in 'nurture groups'. These activities help pupils to develop self-awareness, confidence and their personal and social skills.

- Most parents who responded to the 'Parent View' questionnaire and those who spoke with inspectors consider their children to be happy, well taught and making good progress.
- Leaders arrange regular events for parents and pupils to increase awareness of internet safety. As a result, pupils know some of the steps they can take to keep themselves safe when using the internet or when using mobile phones.

The quality of teaching is good

- Good quality teaching ensures that most pupils make good progress in their learning. Pupils who spoke with inspectors said that their school is good because teachers help them to learn about new things.
- Teachers inspire pupils to find out more because they take care to plan and provide lessons that interest and engage pupils. For example, Year 4 pupils were thoroughly engaged in trying to complete a times tables test accurately in the fastest possible time.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are supported well. Teachers ensure that pupils who are finding tasks difficult to understand are given the extra help they need to be successful.
- Teaching assistants are well deployed and provide effective support for pupils. They work closely with teachers so that they are clear about the aims of the activities in which they provide support and about pupils' individual needs.
- The teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) is generally effective. Children in the Reception Year quickly learn how to use phonics to help them to read and write. Teaching in the Year 1 and Year 2 classes builds well on this good start, so that pupils become confident readers. In the 2014 national phonic screening check more pupils achieved the expected standard than in other schools nationally.
- Teachers give pupils many opportunities to use and practise mathematical skills to investigate and solve problems. Teachers make sure that pupils know and understand key mathematical vocabulary, appropriately reinforced by the use of practical equipment and resources.
- The teaching of writing enables pupils to reach broadly average levels of attainment. Teachers plan interesting and enjoyable activities for pupils to write. Pupils have a wide range of opportunities to write at length. However, pupils' writing work shows that spelling is weak in some year groups. The school has been focusing on more effective teaching of spelling, but pupils are not consistently using the skills they have been taught in phonics lessons to improve their spelling when writing.
- Teachers have a good knowledge of the subjects they teach. They ask effective questions to ascertain pupils' understanding during lessons and to clarify any misconceptions.
- Teachers give pupils useful guidance on how to improve their work through marking. However, they do not check to make sure pupils respond to the advice teachers give, so mistakes go uncorrected and pupils do not always learn from their errors.

The achievement of pupils is good

- All groups of pupils make good progress. The proportion of children in the early years reaching a good level of development was above national averages in 2014. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education by the end of Year 2.
- Attainment at the end of Year 2 was below average in 2013. In 2014, however, attainment in reading and

mathematics improved to broadly in line with national averages. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels also increased to broadly average, despite many pupils having additional needs.

- The Year 2 assessments for 2015 show that attainment is again likely to be broadly average, but the proportion of pupils reaching the higher level (Level 3) in reading, writing and mathematics is significantly above the 2014 national average. This ensures that pupils are well placed to continue learning effectively in Key Stage 2 and that the improvements in attainment in 2014 have been maintained and built upon. Current school data, supported by scrutiny of work in pupils' books confirms that pupils are making good progress in all year groups. By the time pupils leave the school at the end of Year 4, they are well prepared for their next stage of education.
- Pupils develop the basic knowledge and skills needed to succeed in mathematics. The school has worked hard to ensure that pupils develop good calculation skills and they are able to use and apply these skills to solve mathematical problems.
- Pupils make good progress in reading. Pupils say they have many opportunities to read both fact and fiction books. They talk enthusiastically about the types of books they prefer to read. The more consistent approach to the teaching of phonics supports pupils' reading development well. The results of the Year 1 screening check in 2014 were above the national average.
- An increased focus on writing from the Reception Year through to Year 2 has improved pupils' writing skills. Pupils have good opportunities to undertake extended writing tasks and to use and enhance their writing skills in other subjects. However, weaknesses in spelling in some classes detract from the quality of pupils' writing so that their progress is not quite as fast as it is in reading and mathematics. Pupils are not consistently applying the skills they are taught in phonic lessons when undertaking writing tasks.
- Effective teaching ensures that disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress. Skilled teaching assistants provide well-planned support and guidance, both during lessons and to small groups, which equips these pupils with the skills and attitudes to achieve well.
- Higher expectations mean that the most able pupils are making more rapid progress than in past years and are achieving well. In 2015, the proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels has increased in reading, writing and mathematics. However, the activities in a few lessons are not consistently challenging enough to ensure that the most able pupils achieve their full potential.
- In 2014, the attainment of disadvantaged pupils in Year 2 was behind that of their classmates in reading and writing and particularly in mathematics. However, this group included a high proportion of pupils with additional needs and school information shows that they made good gains in learning. Current school information indicates that disadvantaged pupils are making better progress than previously, so that gaps in attainment are narrowing in all three subjects, in every year group. In mathematics, their attainment is higher than that of their classmates. This demonstrates the effectiveness of the school's commitment to equality of opportunity.

The early years provision

is good

- Children make good progress and are well prepared for their move to Year 1. The early years leader has a good understanding of what is working well and what needs to be improved further.
- Staff know children well and make accurate assessments of their skills and knowledge. They use this information well to guide the planning of activities that motivate and engage children in their learning. As a result, all groups of children, including the most able, achieve well. Staff record information about children's achievements meticulously in their 'Learning Journeys'. These provide a comprehensive record of the good progress children have made in the activities they have been engaged in.
- Good liaison with parents and other early years settings ensures that children settle quickly when they start school. Children develop good attitudes to school and learning. They involve themselves in activities for extended periods of time. They are happy to share and cooperate well with each other. Children

confidently make choices when playing and sustain high levels of concentration.

- Effective teaching makes imaginative use of resources inside and in the outdoor spaces to support children's learning. Children have many opportunities to practise their skills, for example, developing their knowledge and understanding of the world through learning about the birth and growth of chicks. They were excited at the opportunity to handle live chicks and investigate how they grow.
- Adults ensure that children are kept safe and take every opportunity to talk with them, encouraging them and building their confidence to extend their learning. They use questions and discussions effectively to move children's learning forward. Well-established routines and high expectations ensure that children are very clear about what is expected of them. They behave well and want to learn.

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	124142
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	462558

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

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	320
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tim Fuller
Headteacher	Anne Tapp
Date of previous school inspection	10 July 2013
Telephone number	01889 256416
Email address	headteacher@picknalls.staffs.sch.uk

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