

Fowlmere Primary School

The Butts, Fowlmere, Royston, Hertfordshire SG8 7SL

Inspection dates 18–19 November 2015

Overall effectiveness **Requires improvement**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Require improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- From their starting points, too few pupils make good progress in writing. The quality of their writing is not consistently good. Pupils’ spelling and the presentation of their work are common weaknesses across the school.
- The gaps in achievement between boys and girls in the early years are not closing quickly enough. Boys’ progress in developing basic writing skills is too slow.
- The curriculum is too narrow for some pupils with special educational needs and teaching does not always match their needs.
- Some of the teaching of writing does not challenge the most-able pupils because it does not build on their higher starting points.
- Senior leaders do not have a secure grasp of the quality of teaching because their checks are too limited. Teachers and teaching assistants do not receive enough feedback about how to improve their work.
- The standard of work in some subjects in the wider curriculum, such as science, is not high enough. Expectations of what pupils should be able to do are sometimes too low.
- Some of the staff at the school do not share the headteacher’s vision for improvement and consequently staff morale is low.

The school has the following strengths

- Teaching, learning and assessment in mathematics have improved, as have pupils’ outcomes. There is a strong reading culture in the school.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and they enjoy their lessons. Pupils say they feel safe and they attend regularly.
- The gaps in achievement between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in the school are closing quickly.
- The curriculum promotes pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding well.
- The governing body holds the school to account and governors fulfil their roles diligently.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - all staff share the leaders' and governors' vision for improvement and that all staff are clear about their part in school improvement
 - leaders have an accurate view of the quality of teaching over time and use this information to improve it by sharing good practice and addressing training needs
 - teachers and teaching assistants receive the regular and helpful guidance they need to improve.

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by making sure that teachers:
 - have consistently high expectations of what pupils can achieve in all of their lessons
 - do all they can to develop pupils' writing skills by improving their spelling, handwriting and the presentation of their work
 - challenge all groups of pupils to achieve their best, particularly the more-able pupils.

- Ensure that all disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs have access to a broad and balanced curriculum and that teaching matches their needs.

- Improve outcomes in the early years, particularly for boys, by making sure that:
 - the teaching of phonics links reading to writing so that children's skills in both areas develop equally well
 - staff provide boys with better and more regular opportunities to develop their writing skills.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- Some of the relationships between staff and senior leaders are strained. A small but significant proportion of staff do not understand their role in school improvement. They are not confident in some of the recent changes that have been made. However, all of the staff recognise that the expectations of senior leaders are rightly much higher.
- Senior leaders do not do enough to check the quality of teaching over time. They track achievement information carefully but do not regularly look at the quality of work in books to check that pupils are making good progress. When middle leaders have conducted detailed reviews of pupils' work, they have not always shared the outcomes with staff and therefore this work has no impact on improving teaching and learning.
- Leaders provide too little guidance to some teachers and most teaching assistants about how to improve their work. This limits the opportunities they have to improve teaching or to share good practice.
- Leaders have revised systems to manage the performance of teachers. Targets for teachers are now linked to school priorities. However, senior leaders and governors recognise that their efforts to ensure that teachers are appropriately rewarded for the impact of their work are not yet fully in place.
- Leadership of the provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is not wholly effective because it fails to check that all pupils receive their entitlement to a broad and balanced curriculum. Senior leaders have recognised that the school's support for pupils with special educational needs and some who were falling behind was not wholly effective. They have introduced one-to-one or small-group teaching. They are currently checking the effectiveness of this support.
- The leaders of the early years have conducted an audit to determine their effectiveness and to set priorities for improvement. This is a sensible step. However, they have not done enough to check that boys are making good progress in developing their early writing skills.
- Senior leaders have demonstrated they are able to make successful improvements; teaching, learning and assessment in mathematics have improved as a result of leaders' actions. The leader for mathematics has ensured that teachers understand what must be done to meet the requirements of the new National Curriculum. Teaching focuses on the mastery of skills and the more-able pupils make good progress in mathematics.
- Leaders recognise that pupils' progress in writing is not good enough. They have recently introduced a new approach to the teaching of writing across the school. It is too soon to see the impact of this structured approach, but pupils have more opportunities to plan their writing and teachers assess their work more regularly.
- The curriculum for most pupils is broad and balanced. However, the quality of work in subjects such as science is not high enough and leaders do not check this well enough.
- Pupil premium funding is used to good effect. Disadvantaged pupils make good progress as a result of the effective support they receive and because senior leaders have raised the profile of this group of pupils. Leaders identify pupils at risk of falling behind; the additional support and targeted teaching they put in place is effective in helping them to catch up.
- Primary physical education and sport funding is used well to increase the number of sporting activities on offer to pupils. Consequently, pupils' participation in sporting activities has increased.
- A varied programme of visits, religious education lessons and community events make a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Regular assemblies and charitable events promote pupils' understanding of modern British values. Pupils understand democracy and they demonstrate tolerance and respect for others. Pupils' positive attitudes to each other and to differences between groups of people demonstrate that they are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The governing body has a thorough understanding of the school's strengths and what needs to improve. Governors receive detailed information about the quality of teaching and achievement.
 - Governors visit the school regularly to see things first hand and they spend time talking to pupils about their experiences and looking at their books. They check the school's progress against the priorities in the improvement plans. Governors ask the important 'so what' questions to test the impact of the actions leaders take.

- The governing body holds the headteacher to account for the progress of pupils. Governors ask detailed questions about why some pupils may be falling behind and what the school is doing to address this. They check that pupil premium funding is used to good effect.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school’s policy is detailed and provides information about how to spot signs of possible harm to children and the procedures to follow where staff have concerns. Staff have been trained at an appropriate level and are clear about the school’s systems to help keep pupils safe. The school holds an accurate and up-to-date record to confirm that the important pre-employment checks have been made on new staff, to ensure they are suitable to work with children.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- The teaching of writing is not consistently effective. New whole-school approaches to the teaching of writing are helpful in improving how pupils structure writing for different purposes. However, teachers do not focus well enough on improving pupils’ spelling and handwriting skills. Leaders are aware that some pupils may have too few opportunities to write at length and have plans to tackle this.
- For some pupils with special educational needs, targets for improvement focus on too narrow a range of skills. This limits their access to a broad and balanced curriculum and their wider needs are not fully met. Teachers and leaders do not check these pupils’ progress well enough to move their learning on.
- Teachers’ expectations in subjects such as science are sometimes too low and consequently the standard of pupils’ work is not consistently high. Leaders have focused their efforts on improving outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics. They know too little about the standard of work in other subjects.
- Leaders’ efforts to improve the quality of teaching in mathematics are reaping rewards. The teaching of mathematics has improved. As a result of effective training, teachers ensure that they meet the requirements of the new National Curriculum. Pupils have good opportunities to master their skills and to apply their knowledge of number to solving problems. Leaders check that pupils are making good progress in mathematics.
- Pupils have good opportunities to read and they enjoy reading. There is a strong culture of reading in the school. Leaders have recently introduced a new reading programme for some of the boys in Key Stage 2 to stimulate their interest and to help them catch up.
- Teachers usually target their questions to ensure that pupils understand the concepts being taught and to adapt lessons if necessary. Some of their questions are helpful in challenging the most-able pupils but this is not consistently the case, particularly in writing lessons when some of the most-able pupils do not make good progress from their high starting points.
- Teachers provide regular feedback to pupils about what they do well and what needs to improve. Pupils’ individual learning targets are also helpful in showing them how they can make progress. However, teachers do not consistently set high enough expectations for the presentation of pupils’ work or deal with spelling mistakes.
- Teaching assistants have recently been redeployed to work with pupils in small groups, to help them catch up. They have good relationships with pupils and have been trained to teach these sessions well. Pupils say they enjoy working in these small groups and value the support they receive.
- Lesson usually run smoothly, and relationships in classrooms are positive and respectful. Most pupils try hard and are motivated to ask and answer questions. They occasionally drift off task and need to be reminded to focus on their work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school’s work to promote pupils’ personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils enjoy school. They talk very positively about their teachers and the support they receive from other adults. They enjoy opportunities to study a range of subjects in the wider curriculum.
- Many pupils take on a wide range of additional responsibilities, including as class monitors, school councillors, house captains and eco-warriors. They take these responsibilities seriously and carry them out diligently.
- Pupils feel safe in the school and most of their parents agree that pupils are safe. Pupils can identify risks,

including when using the unfenced school field, and they know the safety procedures leaders have put in place, including close supervision on the periphery of the field. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe when using the internet.

- Pupils know what bullying is but they say that it very rarely happens in school. They are confident that an adult will help them if they have any concerns.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Lessons usually run smoothly but positive attitudes to learning are not universal and pupils need reminders to stay on task.
- Pupils cooperate well with another and enjoy helping each other with their work. They work well in small groups and listen to each other's views and ideas.
- Pupils value their school. As a result, attendance is above average and very few pupils miss school. Pupils spoke freely to the inspector and gave their views confidently. They are polite and friendly.
- Records show no serious incidents of poor behaviour. However, pupils say, and some staff agree, that pupils do not always show the same respect for supply teachers or support staff as they do for their teachers and school leaders.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. Pupils have good opportunities to develop their social skills, including during 'family lunch' arrangements. Pupils now sit in mixed-year groups and older pupils serve food to younger ones. This makes eating at lunchtime a sociable occasion and helps pupils to get on together. Visits to places of historical interest and links to the village community help to develop pupils' cultural awareness.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Pupils' current progress varies between subjects. Evidence in pupils' books shows that progress in mathematics is good and improving but pupils make slower progress in writing from their starting points. This is because teaching does not focus well enough on developing basic skills such as spelling.
- The teaching of writing is not always effective in ensuring good progress for the most-able pupils. Teachers' questions do not challenge pupils to think hard and some of the expectations for their work are not high enough. The proportion of pupils who attained the higher level 5 in the English grammar, punctuation and spelling national assessment in 2015 was below average.
- The presentation of pupils' work and their handwriting is inconsistent.
- The progress of a small minority of pupils who have special educational needs is too slow because teaching does not take account of their needs well enough when it focuses in a narrow set of priorities for improvement. However, this is not the case for all pupils who have special educational needs and some of them are making good progress as a result of effective support.
- Most pupils achieve the expected level in phonics in Key Stage 1 but there are persistent gaps between the achievement of boys and girls. This is because boys do not do as well in the early years and are still catching up when they reach Key Stage 1.
- Progress in other subjects such as science does not match that in mathematics because teachers' expectations are too low and leaders have concentrated their efforts on improving outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school has successfully closed the gaps in achievement for disadvantaged pupils as a result of careful monitoring and targeted teaching. Leaders ensure that pupils who are in danger of falling behind are identified quickly and the barriers to their learning are considered carefully. Teachers and leaders then plan how they can help pupils to catch up. This is proving to be effective.
- Pupils now have more opportunities to apply their skills in mathematics across the curriculum. Teachers' expectations, and consequently outcomes, for each year group have risen in line with the expectations of the National Curriculum.

Early years provision

requires improvement

- Boys do not do as well as girls in the early years. There is a noticeable difference between the activities that boys and girls choose. This in itself is not unusual but can limit the opportunities boys have to develop their reading and, particularly, their writing skills. Boys do not regularly choose to begin writing and this hinders their better progress. Leaders in the early years are not doing enough to address this quickly.
- Nevertheless, leaders plan some activities to captivate children's interest and they do this successfully, for instance a bike workshop which captures boys' attention.
- Phonics lessons are effective in helping children learn the sounds they need to read unfamiliar words. However, the important links to writing are not always evident and this is particularly the case for boys, which affects their progress in this key skill.
- Learning journeys record adults' careful and regular assessments of children and they include some photographs of children at work. However, examples of children's mark-making and early writing are less common, which hinders children's understanding of the importance of this key skill.
- Leaders have conducted an audit to determine priorities for improvement but they have not planned the necessary improvements to encourage boys' writing.
- Children in the early years are well cared for and are happy at school. They are confident in the classroom and outside area. Children engage well with activities and work happily with their teachers and other adults. They focus on their tasks and on their play.
- Children make good progress in developing their social and personal skills. They work and play cooperatively together. Their language skills are also developing well. Adults' sensitive and well-targeted questions encourage children to talk about their work and play.

School details

Unique reference number	110607
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10001562

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	99
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Cathy Joubert
Headteacher	Mrs Heather Mepham
Telephone number	01763 208203
Website	www.fowlmere.cambs.sch.uk
Email address	head@fowlmere.cambs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	14 September 2010

Information about this school

- Fowlmere Primary School is much smaller than the average primary school. Children in the early years attend one Reception class full time. There are three other mixed-aged classes.
- The proportion of pupils supported through pupil premium funding is well below average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be, or have been, eligible for free school meals at any time in the last six years, and children in the care of the local authority.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language are below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- One of Her Majesty's Inspectors conducted a short inspection of the school, which converted to a section 5 inspection at the end of the first day of inspection.
- The inspector observed teaching, learning and assessment in all classrooms. She listened to pupils read and looked at the work in pupils' books.
- The inspector attended an assembly and observed pupils' behaviour in classrooms, around the school and at playtimes. She met with a group of pupils and talked to other pupils informally.
- The inspector took account of 44 responses to Ofsted's online parent survey, Parent View, and 16 responses to a staff questionnaire, which were completed confidentially.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, assistant headteacher, other leaders, teachers and a group of teaching assistants. She met with the Chair of the Governing Body and other governors. She met with two representatives of the local authority.
- The inspector observed the work of the school and looked at a number of documents including assessment information, school improvement plans, self-evaluation, behaviour and attendance records and information relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Michelle Winter, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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