

Moorlands Primary School

Church End Lane, Tilehurst, Reading RG30 4UN

Inspection dates 24–25 May 2016

Overall effectiveness **Good**

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The executive headteacher and the school's leaders have ensured that the areas for improvement from the previous inspection have been successfully tackled.
- The federation with a local primary school has strengthened leadership and led to better outcomes for pupils.
- Pupils achieve well and make good progress from their lower than average starting points. In 2015, pupils' achievement was broadly in line with the national average in key stage 2. It was significantly above average in key stage 1.
- The school's approach to teaching phonics (the sounds that letters make) is effective. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected level in the phonics screening test has risen and is now above average.
- Leaders' rigorous monitoring of agreed approaches to teaching ensures that they are consistently applied and lead to better progress for all pupils, especially in mathematics and writing.
- Gaps are closing between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and others in early years, in both key stages and in phonics.
- Leaders have successfully improved attitudes to learning and the vast majority of pupils aspire to achieve highly.
- Pupils' behaviour has improved and is now good. Pupils who have specific needs are effectively catered for by additional, specially trained, staff.
- Attendance has improved and gaps are closing between the attendance of different groups, including disadvantaged pupils.
- The early years setting is well led. There have been a significant number of recent changes that have improved children's learning and development.
- Governors have a detailed overview of where strengths and weaknesses lie. They use this to challenge leaders to focus their attention where it is most needed and make the rapid changes necessary.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- A small number of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, do not make the rapid progress of which they are capable in reading in lower key stage 2.
- Pupils' learning in modern foreign languages is not as strong as in other non-core subjects because it is not as rigorously monitored and evaluated.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' learning in modern foreign languages by developing the rigour with which it is monitored so that this aspect of leadership is as effective as it is in other non-core subjects.
- Ensure that all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, make the very rapid progress of which they are capable in reading, especially in Year 3.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The executive headteacher, ably supported by effective leaders and a committed and determined staff, has successfully improved the school. The school now provides a very supportive and stimulating environment, which enables pupils to develop academically and emotionally. Staff, pupils and the vast majority of parents recognise how much the school has changed for the better. One parent said that there had been 'dramatic improvements' since the executive headteacher took up her role.
- The school's leaders have promoted positive attitudes to learning very effectively. This has been instrumental in improving the school and changing the culture so there is a greater focus on learning and achieving. Pupils' behaviour has improved as a by-product of this, as have pupils' outcomes.
- The school has systematically and determinedly developed leadership at all levels, especially middle leaders (responsible for the year groups and coordinating core subjects). They now make a substantial contribution to moving the school forward. Middle and senior leaders have been successfully trained in gathering and interpreting evidence on the impact of the changes they make. As a consequence, leaders precisely identify where next to focus their work. The rigour with which leaders monitor and evaluate teaching, learning and assessment has helped to improve its quality.
- The school's federation with a local good primary school has strengthened leadership and improved outcomes for pupils. This has been well supported by additional well-focused training for leaders from the local authority. Strong leaders from the federated school have joined this school. In addition, the two schools have collaborated well to ensure teachers' assessments are accurate and to train staff in how to implement changes to the national curriculum.
- The new approach to assessing pupils' learning ensures that pupils' knowledge across a wide range of key indicators is properly secure before they are moved onto the next level. As a result, leaders have a high degree of confidence in the accuracy of teachers' assessments. Leaders use teachers' assessments to good effect to track each pupil's progress very carefully and identify pupils who are being left behind. They also use assessments to determine precisely where there are gaps in pupils' learning. Pupils needing extra help to meet their challenging end-of-year targets receive well-planned support both within class and through extra one-to-one guidance with a dedicated teacher.
- Middle leaders provide well-focused support for subject leaders. In turn, subject leaders assist teachers in how best to develop pupils' knowledge in the subjects they manage. Subject leaders sensibly follow this up by monitoring and evaluating the impact of their support on pupils' learning. This has led to better teaching in, for example, science and art. However, the monitoring and evaluation of modern foreign languages is less developed and pupils' learning is consequently less strong.
- The local authority has, more recently, provided effective support for the school, including training for governors and assistance with developing numeracy and literacy. The local authority has also provided well-focused and successful support for senior staff to help them to monitor the impact of changes rigorously. This is a strong aspect of leadership in the school.
- The broad and balanced curriculum effectively enables pupils to acquire knowledge, skills and understanding across a range of humanities, arts and science subjects. Teachers have successfully developed pupils' ability to use practical experiments to test scientific hypotheses and to critique works of art. This has especially supported the most able. The school's leaders carefully track learning in numeracy and literacy across non-core subjects and this has assisted pupils in gaining confidence and fluency by practising these key skills in different contexts.
- Designated leaders rigorously check that each disadvantaged pupil receives the package of support needed to surmount any barriers to their success, including emotional and behavioural support. Leaders promote and closely monitor the progress this group of pupils makes in writing, reading and mathematics. Where necessary, senior leaders intervene to improve progress by teaching small groups of disadvantaged pupils. This has led to disadvantaged pupils making the same strong progress as others in most subjects and year groups, except for a minority of pupils in Year 3, most notably in reading.
- Leaders have effectively reinforced the importance of treating everyone respectfully and tolerantly. To support this, the school's leaders and governors have used robust sanctions where pupils have been repeatedly intolerant and openly prejudiced. As a result, pupils are clear that the British values presented so well in colourful displays around school need to be adhered to by all.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural learning is developed well. Assemblies are overtly used to strengthen pupils' ability to make the right choices as well as providing opportunities for spiritual

reflection. Stories from different religions and cultures are celebrated and pupils are taught how these stories echo the school's own 'diamond rules'. Pupils have adopted these rules as guiding principles and, as a result, pupils cherish the school's own values and respect other cultures and religions.

- Pupils benefit from an array of after-school clubs as well as educational visits that broaden their horizons. Sports premium funding has been effectively used to strengthen teachers' skills and increase participation through after-school tournaments that develop pupils' sporting prowess as well as their social skills.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors have a very detailed knowledge of how well the school is doing. They have received helpful training on how to interpret information on pupils' attainment and progress from the local authority. They consequently make a significant contribution by interpreting and analysing information on pupils' current progress in order to evaluate the impact of changes made. Governors have gained crucial insights from their analysis of pupils' progress. They use these effectively to challenge leaders about the pace and focus of their actions. Their challenges are well heeded by leaders because the foundations for them are firm.
 - Governors have been well trained by the local authority and benefit from carefully selected good practice from their shared governance with Park Lane. They use and interpret published information effectively to make secure judgments about the impact of additional funding on narrowing gaps between disadvantaged pupils and others and to challenge leaders as to whether most-able pupils are fulfilling their potential.
 - Governors also make good use of current information on pupils' progress to evaluate the quality of teaching and satisfy themselves that the school's approach to managing staff performance is robust enough.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The executive headteacher, working closely with governors, has developed this area well. Designated leaders work doggedly to ensure that each pupil receives the external support they need, including support from social services.
- Leaders and governors have responded very effectively to pupils' mental health needs and have ensured that trained staff are available to work therapeutically with pupils. This has helped to keep children safe because pupils are taught to share and reflect on some of their more negative feelings and learn how to manage them better.
- The executive headteacher works closely to ensure all staff undergo the required safeguarding checks. She scrupulously follows guidance from Ofsted and other authorities if any issues arise. Leaders show an unswerving vigilance when carrying out their safeguarding duties.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teaching has improved since the last inspection and is now good. Pupils are provided with helpful guidance about the attitudes and approaches which are most conducive to effective learning. Pupils use this well across all their lessons. As a result, there is a high degree of consistency across the school in the quality of pupils' responses to teachers' questions, the discussions pupils have in pairs and small groups, and pupils' ability to learn from their mistakes.
- Pupils write well, confidently applying their grammatical knowledge to ensure their writing has a powerful impact. Teachers use examples of writing, both from pupils and professional writers, to good effect. They pose probing questions to pupils about the exemplar writing to ensure they understand how writers create layers of meaning through the language they use. Pupils use this well in their own writing, for instance one pupil compared a mystery visitor at a carnival to the Pied Piper, thus suggesting an underlying sense of threat.
- Teachers use assessment to support pupils' learning very well. This is particularly effective in mathematics where the tests that pupils do at the start of a unit of work enable teachers to identify pupils' starting points and where there are gaps in their learning. Teachers use this information well to ensure gaps are filled, through the use of additional equipment and computer programmes.
- Effective teaching in mathematics has enabled pupils to become more fluent in their understanding of the different methods they can employ to solve a problem. Pupils have the expertise, confidence and mathematical language to analyse and evaluate which methods work best. They share this knowledge confidently with their peers and this enables pupils to learn well from each other.
- Pupils spoken to during the inspection commented on how much they learn from the mistakes they make, especially in mathematics. This enables pupils to improve their work as they go along. Teachers use

technology effectively to share pupils' classwork with their peers, while they work on it. As a result, pupils often use other pupils' work as a model for their own and endeavour to produce work to the same high standards as their classmates.

- Phonics sessions develop pupils' reading skills well, especially in early years and Year 1. Teachers and assistants make good use of different ways of recapping sounds that have been previously taught before new sounds are introduced. Occasionally, there are missed opportunities for pupils to apply their learning in writing. This is affecting some pupils' progress in reading in lower key stage 2 classes.
- Most-able pupils are well served because teachers plan learning that provides an opportunity for all pupils to extend their skills. In addition, where necessary, most-able pupils are provided with extra challenges. For example, in science, pupils are taught how to use investigations to test out hypotheses; the most able applied this knowledge independently in a range of experiments. Similarly, in art, pupils are taught how to critique famous art works from different viewpoints and most-able pupils applied their critical appreciation skills to their own artistic endeavours.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

are good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils follow the teachers' instructions carefully, and are eager to further their knowledge and skills by working hard on the tasks teachers set. To reinforce high expectations, teachers rightly ask pupils to repeat activities which they, at first, do not complete to the school's high standards. As a result, pupils take pride in their school, their contribution to it and their learning.
- Pupils are actively taught the frame of mind that will help them to be resilient learners. Pupils told inspectors how this helps them to persevere when they are struggling and when they make mistakes. Pupils consequently relish the challenge of the harder tasks they are set, following the school's success in developing positive approaches.
- Pupils who find it difficult to build positive relationships with others benefit from working with specially trained assistants who help them to overcome their barriers to their learning. One parent commented that they were grateful to the school for supporting their son in developing his social skills, which has done 'wonders for him and boosted his confidence'.
- Attendance has improved. Gaps between the attendance of different groups have narrowed, especially between disadvantaged pupils and others. Despite improvements overall, attendance is just below average. It has been affected by factors beyond the school's control. For instance, some pupils have moved out of the area but want to remain at the school. However, the distance they have to travel means their attendance is erratic.
- Leaders have developed the school's ethos and identity and it is now more positive. Parents value how welcoming the school is, with one parent commenting that 'nothing was too much' for the school's leaders.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. The school has successfully implemented a tight framework of 'diamond rules' which is adhered to well because of the way teachers consistently reinforce it. The rules are sensibly underpinned by a system of sanctions and rewards.
- There are a few pupils whose behaviour is challenging. The school has developed successful programmes, led by specialists, including a dedicated play therapist, which enable pupils to learn how best to manage their emotions.
- There have been a number of short-term exclusions since the start of the academic year. This is because, despite extensive additional support, there are rare occasions when a small number of pupils are not able to manage their own behaviour well enough. Governors and leaders have not shied away from using the full range of sanctions available to support these pupils in making better choices.
- The vast majority of pupils spoken to by inspectors, and who contributed to the surveys, said they felt safe at the school. Pupils indicated that there was occasionally a small amount of bullying and that on rare occasions a couple of pupils showed extremes of behaviour. However, pupils were keen to highlight that staff dealt with these situations very well, providing pupils with a strong sense of security.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Due to effective teaching, pupils from much lower than average starting points make strong, and in some cases very strong, progress. As a result, in 2015, pupils achieved significantly above average in key stage 1 assessments and in line with the national average in key stage 2 national tests. In addition, 2015 published performance information shows gaps narrowing between disadvantaged pupils and others nationally in early years and in key stages 1 and 2.
- There is an improving trend in the achievement of pupils currently within the school who have benefited most from recent improvements. For example, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the phonics screening check has steadily improved and is now above average, as are key stage 1 results.
- Progress for pupils who left in 2015 was not quite as strong as that made by key stage 1 pupils. This was because the older pupils had a legacy of poor progress and, despite additional support, this remained a barrier for some.
- Successful approaches to teaching writing and mathematics have led to an above-average proportion of pupils attaining level 4 and making expected progress in these subjects. However, pupils' achievement in reading in key stage 2 tests and examinations in 2015 was affected by a small number of pupils with special educational needs or disability who were also disadvantaged. This group of pupils were supported and had additional help but nevertheless fell short of achieving level 4 and above in reading.
- Published performance information for 2015, showed the most able made progress in line with other pupils with similar starting points. However, some did not make the rapid progress of which they were capable. Consequently, a below-average proportion achieved level 5 in reading, writing and mathematics combined. Effective approaches to teaching English grammar, punctuation and spelling led to an above-average proportion of pupils reaching level 5 in this test in 2015.
- The most able pupils currently in school are given demanding tasks and teachers' expectations of what they can achieve are high, especially in writing and mathematics but also in non-core subjects such as science and art. As a result, in most subjects and year groups, the most able pupils make rapid progress and achieve highly.
- The school has introduced a new approach to teaching phonics. It is successful and has led to better outcomes in the phonics screening test and gaps narrowing between the proportion of disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected phonics standard and others, both in school and nationally. The school's predictions show that, this year, the proportion reaching the expected standard in the check will rise further and the gap between disadvantaged pupils and others in school will close altogether.
- Pupils' current progress in reading is mostly as strong as it is in writing and mathematics. However, the progress of a small number of pupils in the lower key stage 2 classes, most notably in Year 3, is not quite as strong as in other classes. Although the school has identified this and has employed an additional teacher to work with Year 3 pupils, it recognises that more needs to be done to accelerate progress at this important juncture in pupils' reading development.
- The progress pupils with special educational needs or disability make is at least average, and a number make the very strong progress that others in the school make. The special educational needs coordinator determinedly tracks the progress of each individual pupil to ensure they fully cover the learning necessary to meet the raised expectations of the new curriculum. The school successfully supports the long-term progress of pupils with special needs or disability because they are not moved on before they demonstrate they have secure knowledge, skills and understanding.
- Leaders at all levels place a relentless focus on improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, not least by carefully tracking their progress in designated meetings and ensuring that they have access to staffed homework clubs. Consequently, gaps continue to narrow in terms of the proportion of disadvantaged pupils reaching their targets and this group mostly make at least rapid progress similar to others in school. However, the school has identified reading in Year 3 as a focus, because some disadvantaged pupils are not making the rapid progress of which they are capable.
- Pupils leave the school with the knowledge, skills and understanding, as well as the drive and commitment, to make a good start at secondary school. They are well supported in this by leaders' determined efforts to transfer important information about pupils' learning needs to partner secondary transition schools.

Early years provision

is good

- The early years provision has developed rapidly under the guidance of the new early years leader. Provision is effective in both the Nursery and Reception classes. This is because children get the support they need from the moment they join the setting. Consequently, children make strides in their learning, behave very well and develop positive relationships with adults and their peers. They leave very well prepared for the challenges of Year 1.
- Children are given every opportunity to develop their skills and knowledge. They do this through formal well-planned phonics and numeracy sessions and by answering the probing questions they are posed by teachers and assistants. Consequently, children make good progress from starting points that are lower than might be expected. In 2014 and 2015, an above-average proportion reached a good level of development.
- Close liaison with pre-school providers, and visits to parents, mean teachers and assistants have as much information as possible before children start at the setting. They use this information very well to ensure a smooth transition, to check that the school's baseline assessments are accurate and to make sure the right approaches are put in place to meet each child's needs.
- The early years leader has ensured the outside play area very effectively enhances children's learning. Teachers and assistants direct and guide children so they get the most from the equipment, which includes a shelter which children make good use of for reading and mark making.
- Assistants make good use of the question prompts attached to equipment to help them frame questions that enable children to gain new knowledge and skills. This has led to a general improvement in the impact of assistants' questioning on children's learning. For example, children were looking for insects in the 'bug-pit' and found a slug. The assistant asked them to explain why the slug was slimy. The question prompted the children to think hard and one of them worked out that the slime was an aid to movement.
- Current information indicates that there are some gaps between boys and girls, with boys' achievement in reading and writing being lower than girls'. Leaders have well-focused plans in place to ensure boys catch up, and recently boys' progress has accelerated.
- The topics covered engage and motivate children very well, and are carefully chosen to appeal to boys as well as girls. Topics such as 'super heroes' provide opportunities for children to learn about the world around them, through, for example, role play and visits from professionals working in the emergency services. Children are often provided with role models from real life to develop their aspirations. This approach dovetails with those found in key stages 1 and 2 and therefore helps children make a good start in Year 1.
- The environment is safe and conducive to pupils discovering through play. There are rigorous procedures in place, which the leader carefully monitors. Children move between activities within the setting, including to phonics sessions in ability groups, in a very orderly and calm manner.

School details

Unique reference number	109799
Local authority	Reading
Inspection number	10012250

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	469
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair	Mr Mike Wall
Executive Headteacher	Ms Nicola Browne
Telephone number	01189375505
Website	www.moorlandsprimaryschool.com
Email address	admin@moorlands.reading.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	12–13 February 2014

Information about this school

- Moorlands Primary School is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Two thirds of the pupils are White British, with the rest coming from a wide range of other ethnic heritages. The proportion of pupils for whom English is not their first language is just below average.
- Children in the early years attend on a part-time basis in the Nursery, either in the morning or afternoon on two and a half days per week. Children in the two Reception classes attend full time.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium funding (those eligible for free school meals and those in local authority care) is higher than average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the school with special education needs or disability is above the national average. The proportion with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is below average.
- The school is in a 'hard' federation with the nearby Park Lane School. The two schools share the executive headteacher and governing body but have separate senior leadership teams.
- The executive headteacher is a local leader of education.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning during 28 part lessons. They visited each class at least once. Shorter visits were made to observe the teaching of phonics, pupils' behaviour and to see the provision made for pupils who have special educational needs. Pupils were also observed in assembly, at break times and around the school.
- The team met formally with a group of pupils, and spoke to many others informally. Pupils in Year 3 were heard to read.
- Inspectors examined a variety of documentation, particularly that related to the school's own evaluations, pupils' progress and how the school keeps them safe, including the safety checks made on staff.
- The team held meetings with a group of staff, a group of subject leaders, senior leaders and with several members of the governing body. An inspector also met with a representative of the local authority. Inspectors spoke to parents informally at the start and end of the day.
- The team took note of 14 replies to the online survey, Parent View, and studied the nine written comments that parents made online. The results of 31 returns from a survey of staff opinion were considered, as well as 21 responses from the pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

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