

Knowle Primary School

Ringmore Way, Plymouth PL5 3QG

Inspection dates

12–13 July 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders have not acted quickly enough to raise attainment in reading, writing and mathematics. Consequently, too few pupils meet the academic standards that are expected for their age.
- Leaders do not adequately check the progress pupils make over time. Leaders' monitoring of teaching and learning is not sufficiently focused on improving outcomes for all groups of pupils.
- The quality of teaching is too variable. There is evidence of improvement since the last inspection but not all teaching results in pupils catching up quickly enough.
- Teachers do not always plan work at the right level. Some pupils find it hard to access tasks that are too difficult for them, while other pupils can find tasks repetitive or too easy. Consequently, pupils' progress is uneven.
- The most able pupils do not receive work that builds on what they already know. Some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities do not get work in whole-class lessons that is matched to their needs.
- There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to apply their skills in mathematics and writing across the curriculum. For some pupils, spelling is a weakness; this is hindering their ability to produce high-quality writing.
- Governors have not yet been fully effective in holding leaders to account for raising standards across the school.
- Some pupils do not attend school regularly enough. Exclusion rates for pupils remain too high and are well above the national average.
- A much smaller proportion of children than average leave the early years with skills and knowledge in line with the expected standard for their age.

The school has the following strengths

- The school's work to promote high expectations of behaviour is effective. This results in a whole-school culture where pupils display strong attitudes to learning and behave well.
- Pupils' knowledge of phonics has improved in the early years and key stage 1. Current work to raise standards in reading and writing is bringing about improvement in pupils' progress.
- Teaching in Years 2 and 6 ensures that pupils make swifter progress towards the end of each key stage.
- Systems to promote safety, personal development and welfare are good. Consequently, a supportive and caring atmosphere pervades the school which ensures that pupils are well nurtured, and feel safe and secure.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the impact of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - all leaders monitor learning more rigorously, so that no group of pupils falls behind
 - the achievement of all groups of pupils is at least in line with the standards expected nationally
 - rates of attendance increase and exclusions are reduced so that they are at least in line with national averages
 - writing and mathematical skills are applied consistently across the curriculum.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
 - teachers accurately assess what pupils can and cannot do to inform planning so that activities precisely meet the needs of all groups of pupils, especially the most able and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities
 - teachers question pupils effectively in order to assess, probe and deepen their learning
 - spelling is improved and extended pieces of writing across a wide range of curriculum subjects are high in quality
 - pupils receive greater opportunities to apply their understanding of number in mathematics so that they problem-solve and reason confidently.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- Leaders have not acted quickly enough to raise attainment in reading, writing and mathematics. Too few pupils meet the academic standards that are expected for their age. As a result, some pupils are not well prepared for secondary school because their basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics are not secure.
- Leaders keep detailed information about pupils' progress. However, they do not analyse this sufficiently so that they know precisely how well pupils are doing. There is insufficient emphasis on measuring current pupil achievement against the standards expected nationally. Consequently, pupils' books show that teachers' expectations are not uniformly high and pupil progress is too variable.
- Leaders' checks on teaching and learning do not have a sharp enough focus on improving outcomes for all groups of pupils, particularly the most able and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders do not pick up weaknesses quickly enough or communicate them to teachers in a timely way. Consequently, teachers do not have sufficient opportunity to adapt or change their practice so that pupils' progress quickens.
- Until recently, not all subject leaders have monitored the quality of teaching or the progress of groups of pupils sufficiently across the school. Their action plans do not yet adequately identify what has to be changed to improve academic standards in their subjects. Nonetheless, the external leadership training that subject leaders are receiving is beginning to bring about improvement and develop their roles further.
- The current work of leaders is tackling the legacy of low achievement. Recent training and support, with another school, to target specific aspects of teaching in writing and mathematics is helping teachers to plan work more specifically to fill gaps in pupils' learning. As a result, pupils are making better progress this year from low starting points, and a greater proportion of pupils are catching up towards the standard of work that is expected for their age.
- The dedication of the headteacher has transformed the school's culture. Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes and behaviour; they talk enthusiastically about all aspects of school. However, while the school thrives pastorally, academic standards remain too low.
- Leaders actively track the impact of the additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils. They frequently report the impact of teaching and learning to governors and how this is making a difference to raising pupil achievement. As a result, the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and others in the school is steadily closing.
- Sport premium funding is used to good effect and results in higher engagement of pupils in a wide array of sports for all groups of pupils. Lessons co-led by specialists provide plenty of opportunity for teachers to teach alongside; consequently, this has improved teachers' skills. There is a very strong focus on participation in competitive sport. Teaching programmes ensure that pupils actively engage in activities that promote improving self-esteem, team building, collaboration and keeping fit and healthy. Pupils are particularly positive about their lessons with Plymouth Argyle Football Club in this respect.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted successfully through a well-planned enrichment programme across the year for all ages. The school's work to promote fundamental British values is wide-ranging. For example, the school's parliament is elected every year and school ministers carry out specific roles across the school. Planned work for all pupils ensures that they learn about reasoning, empathy, democracy and fairness.
- The local authority has been successful in brokering additional support for the school. The school has formed a strong partnership with another local school. Together, leaders work in partnership to monitor and evaluate the school's work, which is leading to improvements in teaching. However, the local authority has not been fully effective in holding the school to account for raising standards rapidly.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors are not yet fully successful in holding the school to account for ensuring that achievement is consistently good. While governors make productive visits to the school they have not successfully challenged the school to tackle prior underperformance of pupils. Consequently, outcomes have declined in the early years and key stage 2 this year.
 - The pupil premium funding is effectively tracked and managed by governors. As a result, disadvantaged pupils make progress in line with their peers and the attainment gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils is gradually closing.

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Senior leaders and governors ensure that training is up to date and reviewed regularly so that a clear culture of safeguarding practice is embedded across the school. Staff have been trained to protect pupils from radicalisation and extremism through the government's 'Prevent' programme. Staff who work as designated safeguarding leads are relentless in their aim to ensure that their wide-ranging support for pupils is timely and keeps pupils safe from harm or potential harm. They work very closely with a wide range of agencies and are persistent about following up referrals to assure themselves that everything is being done in a coordinated way and that support is swift.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment **requires improvement**

- Teaching is not bringing about outcomes that are good enough. While there is some strong teaching across the school it remains too variable. This is demonstrated in uneven progress and results in pupils in some years making less progress than is expected for their age.
- Not all teaching captures pupils' interest because it is not well matched to their learning needs. The most able pupils complete activities that are too easy for them before they tackle work that is appropriately challenging. This hinders pupils' ability to apply their knowledge and understanding across a wider range of subjects and limits the quality and level of learning outcomes that pupils achieve.
- Teaching does not always deepen pupils' understanding sufficiently for them to make strong progress and achieve well. Teacher questioning does not sufficiently probe and deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding. Too often, initial answers are accepted by teachers, and consequently ideas are not developed fully; this has an impact on the progress pupils make.
- Lower-attaining pupils are moved through tasks too quickly and they do not get enough opportunity to practise and consolidate their learning. Occasionally, activities are left unfinished because pupils are not given enough time to complete them or expectations in lessons are not consistently high. Consequently, pupils are not catching up rapidly enough and this hampers their progress.
- Access to activities in whole-class learning time for pupils with special education needs and/or disabilities is not consistently secure. For example, sometimes pupils find it difficult to access tasks because they are not well matched to their needs or they do not have appropriate learning resources to support them. Conversely, small-group interventions result in pupils making strong progress because activities are precisely matched to their learning needs. However, because whole-class provision is variable this contributes to pupils in some classes making less than expected progress.
- Pupils do not have sufficient opportunity to respond to comments about their work. This restricts opportunities for pupils to learn from their mistakes or edit and improve their work.
- The teaching of spelling is weak overall. Deficiencies in spelling have not been fully tackled. Consequently, this is hindering pupils' ability to produce high-quality writing.
- Opportunities for pupils to apply their knowledge and understanding of mathematics to problem solving are too limited in some year groups. This is holding back pupils' ability to reason, apply their mathematical understanding to wider concepts and work at a greater depth. Conversely, in Year 2, high-quality mathematics provision enables many pupils to apply their learning, master given concepts and apply their mathematical thinking. Nevertheless, the teaching of basic mathematical skills in number is enabling a greater fluency, for example in recalling multiplication facts and using standard methods in calculation.
- Teaching assistants provide a range of effective support, for example in small groups or individual interventions. However, there are occasions where pupils are over-reliant on this support, resulting in them losing focus when they are working independently. Consequently, pupil progress stalls within lessons and this limits pupils' understanding.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare **is good**

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. The approach of senior leaders and those responsible for pupil welfare and support is fundamental in ensuring that pupils' emotional needs are fully met. Leaders' monitoring to ensure that procedures are followed is consistently strong.
- Pupils' attendance levels overall are just below average and improving. A small number of pupils do not attend school regularly enough. Leaders' monitoring of this group of pupils is meticulous and external

agency support is used effectively, resulting in attendance levels gradually rising.

- Pupils are taught how to keep safe in a range of contexts that are appropriate to their age and stage of development. For example, older pupils have a clear understanding of how to keep safe when using the internet or mobile phones.
- A wide range of activities are on offer to support pupils' personal development and welfare in lessons; for example, joint pupil and parent workshops on 'Prevent' and safeguarding, and workshops on healthy eating and drug awareness. This is preparing pupils to be reflective about and responsible for their actions as good citizens.
- Pupils are polite and courteous in lessons and they are keen to learn. They are proud of their school. Pupils say they enjoy learning in and outside the classroom and really value the genuine interest staff have in their progress and learning. This results in pupils feeling very valued and further motivates them to be good learners.
- Staff provide kind and nurturing support. Learning mentors have a key role in the school. Their timely emotional support enables pupils to develop self-esteem, allowing them to become more confident and self-assured in their learning.
- Pupils who attend the breakfast club and 'Sunshine Club' enjoy the activities on offer and benefit from a healthy breakfast. Consequently, they have a positive start to the day and are ready to learn.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Since the previous inspection there has been a significant culture shift in pupil attitudes to learning. Pupils are respectful to one another and of school equipment. They have a clear understanding of right and wrong. The vast majority of pupils consistently meet the high expectations set out in the school's positive behaviour management system. Leaders' unwavering value of praising positive learning behaviours shines through in all aspects of the school's work.
- Pupils conduct themselves well around school. Older pupils told inspectors that they are very proud of their new school building. A hard-working atmosphere pervades the school and this is respected by pupils and staff alike. Classrooms and the communal areas are calm places to learn. Consequently no time is wasted and learning time is maximised.
- Pupils told inspectors that incidents of racism and bullying are extremely rare. They are confident that if there are any incidents, staff tackle them quickly and fairly. They demonstrate a thorough understanding of right and wrong and know that using racist, homophobic and offensive language is not acceptable.
- Exclusions remain high. Challenging behaviour is well managed and the consistently high expectations of behaviour are fully understood by pupils and staff. As a result, records scrutinised by inspectors confirm that exclusions are reducing rapidly.
- On rare occasions, there are times when pupils are not sufficiently motivated or challenged with their work and some low-level off-task behaviour occurs. This results in the pupils' rates of progress slowing, or an overreliance on other adults, and they do not achieve as well as they should.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Historical weak teaching has resulted in pupils' underachievement in reading, writing and mathematics. Leaders are taking action to reverse prior underachievement, and consequently progress is improving. However, the legacy of underachievement can still be seen in low attainment at the end of Year 6. Pupils achieved significantly less well than other pupils nationally in 2016. Basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics are not secure, resulting in too few pupils being well prepared for secondary school.
- Across key stage 2 rates of progress are uneven in writing and mathematics. Teachers are assessing what pupils can and cannot do in order to tackle gaps in pupils' understanding, but pupils are not yet catching up sufficiently quickly so that they meet the standards that are expected nationally.
- At the end of key stage 1, attainment is rising because pupils receive consistently strong teaching and most pupils make good progress from their starting points, including the most able.
- In Year 1 outcomes in phonics are strong and have been above the national average for the last two years. This is as a result of improvements made by leaders in the quality of phonics teaching in the early years and key stage 1. Consequently, a greater proportion of pupils across the school read more frequently, demonstrating increasing fluency and understanding in their reading. Progress in writing and mathematics is less secure because not all work on offer builds on what pupils can already do and this results in progress for some pupils that is stalling, particularly in the case of the most able pupils.
- Most Reception children enter the school with low levels of knowledge and skills, particularly in personal, social and emotional development, communication, literacy and mathematics. Published outcomes at the

end of Reception have been below national levels for the last three years. While pupils make rapid progress during their time in Reception, too few children leave Reception with the key skills they need to be ready for Year 1 work. More needs to be done to enable children to catch up even more quickly.

- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make variable progress. Interventions focus on specific learning targets and pupils experience success in this respect. However, pupils do not receive work that is precisely matched to their needs in whole-class teaching and misconceptions can go unnoticed. Therefore, overall their progress is too slow. Where pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make very good progress, this is because their classwork is closely tailored to their needs and misconceptions are followed up quickly.
- Disadvantaged pupils are making better progress than their peers in a number of year groups. This is resulting in the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils closing quickly. However, this progress is not consistent across all year groups, especially in mathematics, resulting in too few disadvantaged pupils reaching standards that are expected for their age.
- The school's specific focus on developing writing this year is resulting in pupils having more stamina and control over longer pieces of writing. However, their weak spelling prevents some pupils from producing high-quality work.
- Leaders' determined efforts to raise pupil achievement is having a positive impact on pupils' learning. However, final outcomes at the end of Year 6 remain too low. There is more to do to ensure that pupils leave the school with secure attainment that prepares them well for the challenges of secondary school.

Early years provision

requires improvement

- The early years leader has a good understanding of how children learn. Her leadership actions are bringing about considerable improvements in the early years. She is determined in her aim to ensure that every child is well prepared for the next stage of their education. However, while many pupils make rapid progress, too few children leave Reception with the key skills that are expected for their age. More needs to be done to enable children to catch up even more quickly.
- Children's spoken language skills are not yet developed sufficiently well. Effective modelling of speaking and listening skills and additional speech and language lessons are used to accelerate children's skills. However, this is not yet resulting in enough children talking clearly in sentences, or extending and connecting their ideas when talking to others.
- Transition arrangements are improved this year. Nursery-age children benefit from extended 'stay and play' sessions. Children in Reception also enjoy these sessions, preparing for them as part of their learning. For example, children wrote to the nursery on site to invite them to play. One child enthusiastically showed the inspector his invitation and explained that he was excited about their visit.
- Communication with parents and carers is effective. An increased focus on reading at home is resulting in more children practising their reading more regularly and gaining a love of reading. The early years leader is focused on developing home-school reading partnerships even further so that the proportion of children who read regularly continues to increase. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the start their children receive in school. Many parents told inspectors that the early years team go the 'extra mile' to help their children.
- The school's recent focus on developing phonics is enabling more children to read simple texts and apply their knowledge of phonics to write simple sentences. A wide range of experiences are on offer for children to develop their early writing skills, and letter formation is improving. For example, in an outside jumping game, children were encouraged to identify key words and then write them on the playground with large chalks. Nevertheless, too few pupils can write sentences independently at the standard that is expected for their age.
- Activities planned do not always provide sufficient opportunity for children to develop sustained concentration and extend their play further. Additional adults do not yet consistently make use of opportunities to support and deepen children's understanding and thinking during their play.
- Early years is a nurturing environment, and staff have very strong relationships with children. This means that children form positive relationships with adults and other children in Reception; they feel safe and enjoy school.
- Safeguarding arrangements are effective. Caring and helpful support by staff ensures that children are well looked after.

School details

Unique reference number	113277
Local authority	Plymouth
Inspection number	10002428

This inspection 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	304
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev David Bailey
Headteacher	Judy Milford
Telephone number	01752 365 264
Website	www.knowle-plymouth.co.uk
Email address	Knowle.primary.school@plymouth.gov.uk
Date of previous inspection	7–8 November 2013

Information about this school

- This is a larger than average primary school.
- It has 14 single-age classes, which includes two Reception classes for children in the early years.
- The school hosts a pre-school class, called Stepping Stones, which is managed privately and inspected separately.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding is well above the national average. This is additional government funding to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children looked after.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who join the school at times other than the start of the early years, or leave before they transfer to secondary school, is well above average.
- The school manages a breakfast club for pupils and the 'Sunshine Club', a separate early morning club for those who benefit from a nurturing start to the school day.
- The school met the government floor standards in 2015, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress at the end of Year 6.
- The school meets the requirements on the publication of specific information on its website.
- Knowle Primary School works in close partnership with Shakespeare Primary School in Plymouth.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed lessons or part-lessons, some of which were joint observations with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and wider leadership team, staff, governors and a representative of the local authority.
- A wide range of documentation was scrutinised during the inspection including the school's evaluation of its own performance, the school development plan and data relating to pupils' attainment and progress. Inspectors also checked the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding arrangements and attendance information.
- An inspector talked with a group of pupils to seek their views about the school. An inspector also undertook a learning walk around the school with a group of pupils. The views of other pupils were gathered during lessons, playtimes and lunchtimes. Inspectors listened to pupils read.
- The 11 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, were taken into account. Inspectors considered comments provided by text message and also spoke to parents informally at the start of the day.

Inspection team

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