

Wheatfields Primary School

Nene Way, St Ives, Cambridgeshire PE27 3WF

Inspection dates

7–8 March 2017

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	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The pace of improvement since the last inspection has, until recently, not been rapid enough. Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 was too low in 2016, given pupils' starting points.
- Leaders do not monitor all aspects of provision with enough rigour to ensure that policies such as the marking policy are applied consistently.
- Senior leaders support and challenge teachers to improve, but have been unsuccessful in securing good teaching across the school. Consequently, while pupils' progress is improving quickly in the current year, it is still uneven.
- Teachers' expectations of pupils' work are not always high enough. Work is sometimes too hard or too easy for pupils.
- Leaders are making increasingly good use of information on pupils' progress to identify potential underachievement, but are still not focused sharply enough on how well different ability groups are performing.
- The evaluation of the effectiveness of additional support for disadvantaged pupils is not rigorous enough.
- Middle leaders have begun to improve provision, but do not yet play a big enough part in developing teaching.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher, other senior leaders and the governing body have responded quickly to the fall in attainment in 2016. They are doing the right things to improve pupils' progress, but it is too soon to see the sustained impact of their recent initiatives.
- Children get off to a good start in the early years. They are taught well and make good progress.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well and make good progress.
- Pupils behave well and feel safe. They keenly take responsibility and develop important values such as tolerance, respect and kindness.
- The school has a good partnership with parents, most of whom are highly positive about its work.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that guidance, support and challenge to teachers are more effective in bringing about improvement and in securing the consistent application of school policies
 - giving middle leaders more opportunity to play a larger part in supporting the senior leadership team to improve the quality of teaching and outcomes for pupils
 - making sharper use of data to check the progress of different ability groups
 - evaluating the effectiveness of pupil premium spending more rigorously.
- Improve the quality of teaching and pupils' progress in key stages 1 and 2 by:
 - ensuring that teachers plan work that is not too hard or too easy for pupils, especially middle-attaining pupils and the most able
 - ensuring that teachers always expect enough of their pupils.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

- Leaders and managers have not secured sufficient school improvement since the last inspection. Until recently, the pace of change has been too slow. It has been adversely affected by staffing turnover and absence that have been beyond the school's control.
- Systems for tracking pupils' progress are becoming increasingly helpful in identifying potential underachievement as staff become more confident about assessing learning accurately. However, it is not yet used to full effect to track the progress of all significant groups. For example, although national data in 2016 showed that by the end of Year 6 middle-attaining pupils had made less progress than others, this group is not identified as a focus in the analysis of school data.
- The senior leadership team monitors provision thoroughly, but its impact on securing the needed improvements and ensuring consistency is not strong enough. For example, monitoring has not picked up on variations in how well teachers follow the school's marking policy.
- Middle leaders, such as those in charge of subjects, have too little impact on improving provision. They are keen and enthusiastic, but some are new to their roles and they do not play a big enough part in securing improvement in their subject areas. They have too few opportunities to be involved in checking the provision for themselves.
- The school's use of the pupil premium has not been successful in helping disadvantaged pupils to attain as well as other pupils nationally. Leaders do not do enough to evaluate the impact of the pupil premium on outcomes for these pupils. Consequently, they cannot be certain which initiatives are proving successful and which need adapting. A start has been made to improving this, and the school recently had an external review of its use of the pupil premium. For this reason, a further review is not recommended.
- In the past six months, the senior leadership team has responded well to the sharp fall in attainment seen in national assessments in 2016. Their plans for improvement are well considered and are focused on the right priorities.
- Leaders are working tirelessly to ensure that weaknesses are tackled more quickly than in the past. They have already ensured that both teaching and pupils' progress have improved in the current year. For example, the judicious deployment of staff has already had a good impact on early years provision and the teaching of phonics.
- Special educational needs provision is well led and managed. Leaders have a good handle on provision and can talk confidently about how funding is being used to secure good progress for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Leaders make good use of local authority support and external consultants to improve provision. While some of this support is recent, its good effect is seen already, for example in the improved progress of younger pupils in phonics.
- The curriculum is broad, and is enhanced by a good number of clubs and visits. There is a good focus on supporting creativity through art and music. Leaders have improved the curriculum so that it includes more opportunities for pupils to write purposefully in

different subjects. This has improved pupils' attitudes towards writing and is helping them to make better progress than in the past.

- The school strongly supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their understanding of British values. Pupils are kind and considerate, and show a mature understanding for their age of the importance of rules. This, together with the culture of respect and tolerance which underpins all of the school's work, prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain.
- The school sports fund has been used well to develop physical education. Funding has helped to improve teachers' skills and to provide pupils with access to a greater number of sports. Pupils are especially positive about the opportunities that they now have to take part in competitive team sport. The school's success in this area is demonstrated by the school sports silver award that it achieved in July 2016.
- Most parents are pleased with the work of the school. They especially like the nurturing atmosphere that is strongly evident in all aspects of the school's work, typically making comments such as, 'Wheatfields is like a family' and 'I really feel that the headteacher and staff care about my child'.

Governance of the school

- Under the strong leadership of a relatively new chair of governors, the governing body is becoming increasingly effective in the challenge and support that it brings to other school leaders.
- Governors are kept well informed about most aspects of the school's work, although reporting to them on the use of the pupil premium is not sufficiently detailed to allow thorough checks on the effectiveness and impact of spending.
- Governors understand the strengths and areas for development needed in teaching and progress. They know that progress is not yet consistently strong across the school and they understand how this is being addressed.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school carries out thorough pre-employment checks on staff. Leaders ensure that staff undertake regular training so that their knowledge of child protection procedures is up to date. Staff and governors have a good understanding of the need to protect pupils from radicalisation.
- Leaders ensure that vulnerable pupils are well supported and the recording of any safeguarding concerns is meticulous. Leaders work closely with external agencies when needed. Staff are vigilant about spotting and reporting potential concerns so that they can minimise risk.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- While the quality of teaching and learning is improving, the quality remains too variable. Consequently, pupils do not make consistently good progress across the school.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not consistently high enough. They sometimes accept work that is not the pupils' best and do not pick up on this so that it improves more quickly.
- When planning work, at times teachers do not ensure that it is pitched at the right level for all pupils, especially middle-attaining pupils and the most able. Consequently, work is sometimes too hard or too easy for these pupils.
- There are some strengths in teaching across the school. Teachers establish good relationships with the pupils and plan work that is fun and engaging. They link subjects together so that work is purposeful. For example, in Year 5 pupils were motivated to write because they were preparing for a debate about deforestation, which was linked to their topic of rainforests.
- The teaching of phonics has been greatly improved in the current year. Pupils who did not do well enough in the national phonics screening at the end of Year 1 have been given good support to help them to catch up. They are beginning to read and write more confidently.
- Teachers provide good support to pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. They plan work that is tailored to individual needs, ensuring that pupils' skills can improve quickly.
- Staff recognise the improvements in teaching and learning that have been made by leaders. They feel that they are being supported well. School leaders know that the quality of teaching is still inconsistent, and this is why it is an area for continued improvement in their school improvement planning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Leaders have created a supportive and safe environment for pupils to learn. Consequently, pupils have good attitudes towards learning and are keen to do well. They are proud of their achievements, although teachers do not routinely encourage them to present their work neatly enough or use accurate punctuation and grammar.
- The school focuses well on teaching social skills. Pupils show respect and care for others and listen carefully, most of the time, to their classmates' opinions. Pupils are taught good manners. Lunchtimes are a friendly and sociable time when pupils happily talk about what they have been doing in class in the morning. Pupils like being able to attend a 'good manners tea party' each half term to celebrate their excellent manners and conduct.

- Parents say that their children are safe and happy at school. The pupils confirm this. Pupils have a good understanding of the dangers that they may face in later life and what steps they need to take to avoid them. They talk clearly about the dangers of the internet and how they can stay safe, for example when using social media.
- School records show that there is little bullying. Pupils are very clear that, when it does happen, it is tackled quickly. As one pupil commented, 'Sometimes we fall out, but the teachers quickly sort it out for us.'
- Pupils are proud of their school. They happily take responsibility for aspects of the school's work. School councillors take their roles very seriously and give the other pupils a good voice in school life.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The school's 'golden rules' and behaviour policy set high expectations for behaviour that are clearly defined and understood by pupils. They feel that teachers and other staff apply rules fairly so that, as one commented, 'We know where we stand.'
- Pupils are polite and courteous. They work happily, cooperatively and enthusiastically in lessons. They work hard most of the time, but occasionally become inattentive or lose concentration when work is too easy for them or when they have to sit listening to explanations that they already understand at the start of lessons.
- Parents, pupils and staff all indicate that behaviour is good. School records show that incidents of poor behaviour are rare, and that when they do occur they are dealt with very effectively.
- The school has successfully improved attendance in the current year, and it is now slightly above average. The judicious use of the pupil premium to start a 'forest school' has been an important factor in this. This is a good example of one way that the pupil premium helps to support pupils' social development, as opposed to their academic development. Pupils are keen to come to school, because they do not want to miss 'forest school'.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Outcomes for pupils require improvement, because progress is not consistently good across the school.
- Although there is already an improving picture in the current year, pupils' attainment was too low in national testing in 2016. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standards or greater depth at the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics was well below average for most ability groups.
- In Year 6 assessments, pupils' progress from the end of Year 2 in writing placed the school in the bottom 10% of all schools nationally in 2016.
- There is an improved picture in the current year, and pupils' progress has picked up as

teaching has improved. Nonetheless, not all groups are yet making good progress.

- Teachers' expectations are sometimes too low for the most-able pupils. There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to deepen their understanding so that they can make consistently good progress from their higher starting points.
- There was a big difference between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils in the school and other pupils nationally in 2016. Year 6 test results in 2016 showed that not all disadvantaged pupils, including the most able, had achieved well enough from the end of Year 2. Recent changes in provision following a pupil premium review are helping to improve progress in the current year and there are early signs that disadvantaged pupils are making better progress than in the past.
- Some aspects of outcomes for pupils are good. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. Teachers focus well on both their social and academic development. Consequently, these pupils acquire new skills quickly.
- While attainment in phonics was below average in the national screening check at the end of Year 1 in 2016, having been above average in previous years, the school has taken effective steps to tackle this. School data and observations in lessons show that last year's attainment has already been exceeded, reflecting pupils' good current progress.
- Improved phonics skills are helping to improve the reading of younger pupils. They enjoy reading and are keen to do well. The less able are beginning to use their knowledge of letter sounds to read unknown words. The most-able pupils in Year 2 talked confidently about favourite authors and read with good expression.
- Pupils produce good-quality artwork. Their work is celebrated in displays around school. For example, in Year 4 the well-crafted oil paintings of Whitby show a good range of skills, and pupils are very proud of them.

Early years provision

Good

- Most children start in the Reception classes with a level of development typical for their age. They make good progress from their starting points due to effective teaching and a well-planned curriculum that supports children's learning well.
- In 2016, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the end of Reception was above the national average, which meant that they were well prepared for entry into Year 1.
- Teaching helps children to develop new skills quickly. They work in a well-organised environment, with teaching that takes good account of differing needs. The most able are challenged well, most of the time, through judicious questioning. Children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities work on activities that are interesting and engaging, and move on quickly in their learning.
- Adults work well as a team when planning work. They make good use of the outdoor area to support learning in the different areas of the curriculum. When children are working in groups or independently, adults carefully check learning so that they know what to teach next. Just occasionally, adults do not intervene quickly enough when

children have grasped a skill and are ready to move on. When this happens, the pace of learning slows.

- Teaching ensures that children make a good start in learning to read and write. A consistent, structured programme of phonics teaching across the Reception classes ensures that children have regular opportunities to practise and improve their reading and writing.
- Adults have high expectations and focus strongly on teaching children about the importance of good behaviour and staying safe. As a result, children behave well and work well together.
- Child protection and safeguarding arrangements are thorough. The care and concern shown by staff are key elements in enabling children to be happy, feel safe and be ready to learn.
- Provision is well led and managed. Although new to the role, the leader has quickly come to grips with what is going well and what needs improving. She monitors provision carefully and is already making changes in the light of this. For example, she has recognised that more needs to be done to ensure a smoother transition when children move to Year 1 at the end of the year.
- The early years pupil premium is used appropriately to support disadvantaged children, although, as elsewhere in the school, its impact is not evaluated sharply enough.
- Parents are very positive about the early years provision. They like the new online assessment system, because it gives them good information about how well their child is doing and allows them to contribute to their learning.

School details

Unique reference number	131197
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10023380

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	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	407
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Maureen Clarke
Headteacher	Theresa Thornton
Telephone number	01480 466919
Website	www.wheatfields.eschools.co.uk
Email address	office@wheatfields.cambs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	22–23 November 2012

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- This is a larger-than-average sized primary school with 14 classes. Children in the early years are taught in two Reception classes.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is below average.
- The school met the government's current floor standards which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics

by the end of Year 6.

- There have been several changes of staff in the last year, and at the time of the inspection the school had six temporary teachers.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed pupils' learning in lessons, many of which were observed jointly with the headteacher, deputy headteacher or assistant headteacher/special educational needs coordinator. In addition, the inspectors made some short visits to observe learning at other times.
- Discussions were held with pupils, staff, a representative from the local authority, an external consultant and members of the governing body.
- The inspectors took account of the views of 184 parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors also talked with parents at the start of the school day.
- The inspectors listened to pupils read, and looked at their work and school documents, including: the school's own information about pupils' learning and progress; planning and monitoring documents; the school development plan; records relating to behaviour and attendance; safeguarding information; and health and safety documentation.
- The inspectors analysed responses to inspection questionnaires from 41 members of staff and 39 pupils.

Inspection team

Mike Capper, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Caroline Skingsley	Ofsted Inspector
Nick Templeton	Ofsted Inspector
Stephen Cloke	Ofsted Inspector
Jeremy Rowe	Ofsted Inspector

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