

Newtown Primary School

Clifton Road, Exeter, Devon EX1 2BP

Inspection dates

7–8 December 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	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leadership and staffing turbulence has led to a decline in pupils' achievement.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough. In some year groups, pupils are not routinely set challenging tasks that enable them to achieve at greater depth.
- The quality of teaching across the school is variable, However, it is improving because of the work of the acting headteacher.
- Staff have not been provided with meaningful opportunities to develop expertise and share practice.
- Pupils in some year groups are not making sufficient progress, including disadvantaged pupils and those who are most able.
- Teacher assessment is not fully accurate. This limits the ability of staff to monitor pupils' progress and intervene where necessary to help pupils catch up.
- Expectations of children in Reception are not high enough. This means that some children do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Some pupils across the school do not show consistently positive attitudes to learning.

The school has the following strengths

- The acting headteacher has made a positive difference in a short space of time. She knows what needs improvement and is leading the school with determination and purpose.
- The acting headteacher is well supported by governors and external advisers. They, too, know the improvements that need to be made and are helping the acting headteacher to take action.
- Pupils are producing a higher standard of work in Years 5 and 6 across the curriculum.
- Attendance is improving overall and for different groups of pupils. It is broadly in line with the national average.
- A range of support meets pupils' social and emotional needs. They are well looked after.
- Pupils are well behaved and enjoy their school experience. They are polite, personable and cheerful.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - leaders continue to increase the quality and consistency of teaching across the school
 - leaders hold staff to account fully for the progress that pupils make
 - the new headteacher continues to receive the support necessary to establish the positive changes that have already been implemented.
- Raise achievement across the school, including in the Reception Year, and improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that:
 - teachers have the highest expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - teachers plan activities that routinely challenge pupils to achieve at greater depth
 - teacher assessment is accurate
 - pupils' good behaviour provides a foundation on which to build positive attitudes to learning
 - teachers take advantage of opportunities to share practice and develop expertise.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The school has faced challenging circumstances caused by changes in leadership and staffing instability. This has led to a decline in the quality of teaching and lower standards of achievement.
- Until recently, the leadership of teaching did not provide enough opportunities for staff to share best practice and develop their expertise. Furthermore, the management of staff performance was not sufficiently tied to pupils' progress. Consequently, the quality of teaching varies across the school.
- The curriculum is implemented with varying success across the school. In lower year groups pupils have limited opportunities to develop their skills and understanding fully. In upper key stage 2, however, pupils have many opportunities to produce extended pieces of writing for different purposes and audiences. This successfully takes place across the curriculum in subjects such as science and topic.
- The new acting headteacher, who has only been in post since September, is leading the school with purpose and determination. She is already deeply invested in the school because she cares about it and wants the best for the pupils. One parent who responded to the online Parent View survey said, 'The new acting head seems great.'
- Leaders have a very clear and objective understanding of the school's weaknesses. They are clear about the priorities for improvement. Leaders have set out how they are overcoming weaknesses in detailed strategic plans that are focused on impact.
- The acting headteacher is now monitoring staff performance more robustly. She has created more opportunities for staff to reflect on and share practice. Nevertheless, teaching is still variable because changes are recent.
- Leaders are nurturing a school culture that embraces inclusivity and celebrates diversity. Many pupils attending the school are from other countries and arrive speaking little or no English. Staff work hard, and successfully, to make them feel welcome. As a result, these pupils are soon integrated into the school community. This is reflected in the rapid progress that they make.
- Additional funding is well used to support pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. The special educational needs coordinator knows the pupils well and provides support tailored to individual need. This support is reviewed termly to check that it is making a positive difference. As a result, pupils make progress. However, monitoring of academic progress is not as sharp as it could be. This prevents staff from maximising the progress that pupils can make because gaps in achievement are not necessarily spotted quickly enough.
- Disadvantaged pupils are being well supported to make better progress. The acting headteacher has a clear vision for how additional funding should be used. Strategies put in place are helping these pupils to catch up with their peers, but there is still a way to go. This is because these changes are relatively recent and disadvantaged pupils have not achieved well historically.
- Additional sports premium funding is used effectively to increase pupils' participation in

sports competitions and extra-curricular activities. It is also used well to support staff professional development so that they are better able to teach physical education.

Governance of the school

- Governors have been proactive in seeking external support to assist leaders. This is because they understand the issues facing the school and have been quick to identify declining achievement. They have been resolute in taking decisive action, which is why the local authority is heavily involved with the school.
- Governors know the school well. There is no complacency or unwillingness to face up to the school's weaknesses. They take a measured, calm and sensible approach to improvement, working closely with the acting headteacher and the local authority to make sustainable improvements.
- Governors are highly committed to the school. They take their responsibilities seriously and ensure that they provide an appropriate balance of support and challenge to leaders. Recent full governing body minutes highlight the sharp, perceptive questions governors are asking about achievement. In return, governors receive detailed, comprehensive answers about the progress of different groups of pupils from the acting headteacher.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities. They know all the pupils well, such is the small size of the school, and are vigilant for any signs of upset or distress. All staff have been appropriately trained in child protection and know the procedures for recording referrals. They record low-level concerns in class logs and refer more-serious concerns to the acting headteacher, who is the designated safeguarding lead. She is sensibly proactive about taking advice from the local authority and working with external agencies to resolve cases appropriately.
- The checks to ensure that staff are suitable to work with children are comprehensive, detailed and up to date. They are well managed and overseen by administrative staff.
- The school site has been risk-assessed to ensure that pupils are safe. All reasonable measures have been taken to prevent unauthorised access. Visitors are carefully vetted and provided with identity lanyards when on the school site.
- Pupils feel safe in school. Pupils who spoke with the lead inspector had no hesitation in naming members of staff they would confide in if they had any worries. They also have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe online. When the lead inspector asked pupils what advice they would offer younger pupils about staying safe online, they came up with many good suggestions. For example, they said that personal details should not be shared with strangers online.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching across the school is variable. Frequent staffing changes beyond

leaders' control have disrupted continuity, staff training and consistency of practice. This has limited the ability of staff to develop their expertise meaningfully and learn from each other.

- Teachers do not have high-enough expectations of what pupils, particularly the most able, can achieve. The planning and management of some activities are not sufficiently tuned to the needs of pupils. As a result, they lose interest or become restless. The teaching in the Year 5 and 6 classes is an exception. In these classes, more is expected of pupils. Work is appropriately pitched to stretch different groups of pupils and they respond well to this.
- Pupils, although generally well behaved, do not model highly positive attitudes to learning across the school. Their behaviour is compliant, they listen to teachers' instructions and focus on the task in hand. Nevertheless, they do not have a 'thirst' for learning. They do not possess a curiosity for exploring new ideas and grappling with them intellectually.
- Teacher assessment is not consistently accurate across the school. Although suitable 'machinery' is in place for recording and monitoring pupils' progress, the information submitted by teachers is not always reliable. Teachers have not had enough opportunities to moderate and refine their judgements. The acting headteacher has set about creating opportunities for this purpose next term.
- Teachers use their subject knowledge well to explain tasks, pose questions and introduce new concepts in a clear, illustrative way. They combine this expertise with positive behaviour management to generate interesting class discussions in which some pupils, but not all, contribute.
- Staff have successfully created learning environments which act as a resource and have a positive impact on learning. Displays in classrooms are up to date, relevant to current topics and present information in a dynamic, colourful way. One pupil who spoke with the lead inspector said, 'Learning walls help a lot.' He described how he learnt about using the passive voice in his writing from a learning wall.
- Teaching assistants successfully work with pupils who have particular needs and require extra assistance. They ask questions that help pupils to reflect on their learning in an effort to consolidate their understanding. One pupil who spoke with the lead inspector said that staff 'explain in a deeper way but don't give you the answer'.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- This is a school in which all pupils are well known by staff and treated as individuals with a high level of respect. A number of different nationalities are represented at the school. The school embraces the wide range of backgrounds, cultures and traditions embodied by its pupils. This is because staff recognise that the community is enriched as a result of their presence. One pupil who spoke with the lead inspector said, 'It's a small school with a big heart.' One parent who responded to Parent View said, 'The school emphasises community, being kind to others and good behaviour. As a result, the children feel happy and secure.'

- Pupils who have social, behavioural and emotional needs are well supported in different ways. For example, counselling is available to pupils who need it. Pupils are taught how to manage relationships and transitions in their lives through tutor time and the assembly programme. Some older pupils take on a supervisory role at breaktimes to ensure that younger pupils play safely. They are on hand to help out if younger pupils look to them for assistance.
- Staff nurture pupils' individuality. They are encouraged to express their opinions and feelings, and to be spirited and confident. Pupils enjoy their school experience; they feel safe and comfortable around each other and know that staff have their best interests at heart. However, a few of the pupils who spoke with the lead inspector said that they did not think that bullying was always resolved quickly or effectively. A minority of the parents who responded to Parent View also agree with this view.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The attendance of pupils overall and for different groups has improved. Attendance for all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged or have SEN and/or disabilities, is now in line with average.
- Pupils are friendly, courteous and welcoming to visitors. They get on well with each other and treat staff with respect. Inspectors observed pupils playing nicely together at breaktimes and moving safely around the school site.
- The school's behaviour system ensures that pupils understand boundaries. The balance between sanctions and incentives is appropriate. As a result, there have been no exclusions from school.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- In 2017, the overall attainment and progress of pupils who left the school was below average in writing and mathematics. In reading, achievement was in line with the national average. In 2016, pupils' progress was in line with average in all three subjects.
- The achievement of disadvantaged pupils leaving the school is generally below average and that of their peers over time across different subjects. Leaders are now tracking disadvantaged pupils' achievement more closely and taking suitable action to help them catch up. However, although gaps in achievement between disadvantaged pupils and their peers are closing, they are still too wide.
- The attainment of pupils at the end of key stage 1 has been below average in all their subjects for the last two years. The number of pupils achieving the expected standard in the national phonics screening check has also been below average over time.
- The work in pupils' books indicates that the progress of current pupils across the school is variable. Pupils of different abilities in upper key stage 2 are making strong progress. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and they are challenged to produce their best work. It is of high quality across the curriculum and well presented. This is because pupils take pride in their work. In other year groups, pupils do not make the

same strong progress because tasks do not demand enough of them. The quality of work is not good enough and is not well presented.

- Pupils who speak English as an additional language make strong progress from, in some cases, low starting points. They commit to improving their work because they have a strong work ethic and want to do well.
- Pupils' reading skills develop well as they move up through the school. Their achievement at the end of key stage 2 shows that they make more-rapid progress from key stage 1 than they do in mathematics and writing.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Plans to improve provision are not sharp enough. Although the Reception teacher knows the strengths and weaknesses of provision, priorities and actions for improvement are not specific enough. They are also insufficiently tied in with the wider school development plan.
- Expectations of what children can achieve are not high enough. Provision enables children to make progress but they are not pushed to make the progress of which they are capable.
- Children's work shows that the different areas of their learning are regularly assessed. This means that the Reception teacher knows the children well. She uses this understanding to provide them with a broad experience of learning. Nevertheless, assessments do not play enough of a role in challenging children, particularly the most able, to make more-rapid progress.
- The Reception teacher has a confident grasp of the early years curriculum and how to teach it. This is because she keeps up to date with training and takes advantage of local moderation opportunities. She plans stimulating activities for children that consolidate different aspects of their development. Children are encouraged to practise writing at an early stage, alongside other activities that develop their imagination, curiosity and desire to explore. Consequently, children are ready to start Year 1.
- Children are well behaved. They learn how to cooperate with each other and form trusting relationships. The Reception teacher insists on high standards of behaviour, so that children listen attentively to their teacher and each other. They also learn to take turns and share.
- Parents are very involved with their child's education because staff are accessible and welcome their involvement. The Reception teacher has worked hard, and successfully, to increase parental engagement so that an active partnership exists between school and home.

School details

Unique reference number	113083
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10042752

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	171
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jill Mather
Acting Headteacher	Sally Herbert
Telephone number	01392255540
Website	www.newtownprimaryschool.co.uk/
Email address	admin@newtown.devon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	26–27 February 2014

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- Newtown Primary School is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- The acting headteacher took up post in September 2017. Governors are currently advertising for the substantive post.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is above average.
- The proportion of pupils whose first language is not, or believed not to be, English is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and receive support is above

the national average. The proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is well above average.

- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Until July 2017, the school had a speech, language and communication centre on site, which has since closed.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in lessons. Some observations were conducted jointly with the acting headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the acting headteacher, representatives of the governing body, the school improvement partner, the special educational needs coordinator and the Reception teacher.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation. These included the school's self-evaluation and school development plan, governing body minutes, attendance records and safeguarding records.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work and observed their conduct around the school and at breaktimes.
- A group of pupils spoke with the lead inspector.
- The lead inspector took account of 36 responses to the online Parent View survey.

Inspection team

Steve Smith, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Simon Mower	Ofsted Inspector
Paula Marsh	Ofsted Inspector

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