

# Hannah Ball School

Philip Road, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire HP13 7JS

## Inspection dates

6–7 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	Requires improvement
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

- Over time, standards have declined. Turbulence in the number of teaching staff has contributed to pupils' low attainment and progress.
- The quality of teaching is variable throughout the school. Although improvements have been made, weaknesses remain, particularly in how effectively reading is taught. Pupils do not read widely or often enough.
- The large proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) do not make rapid progress. Consequently, they do not catch up quickly from their low starting points.
- While pupils' attendance is broadly average, and persistent absence is reducing over time, a small minority of pupils do not come to school as regularly as they should.
- The most able pupils are not challenged sufficiently by their work. As a result, very few pupils reach the higher standards of attainment by the end of key stage 2.
- Progress is accelerating in some year groups and some subjects. However, not enough pupils are currently working at the expected standards in reading, mathematics and writing.
- Leaders, some of who are new in post, do not check the impact of their work carefully enough. They are not held closely enough to account for improving standards.
- In the past, governors have not challenged leaders sufficiently about the standards that pupils achieve. While governors' work has recently been strengthened, their impact in the past has been more limited.

### The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher, with support from the Buckinghamshire Learning Trust, has well-considered plans to improve the school. Where these plans have started to be implemented, progress is apparent.
- Pupils' behaviour, attendance and attitudes to learning are improving. They are responding positively to raised expectations.
- The teaching of phonics has improved over time. The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1, has increased to above the national average.
- Safeguarding has a high priority. Leaders' work to keep pupils safe is rigorous.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, particularly for pupils who speak English as an additional language, and the most able, by:
  - ensuring that all pupils read more widely and often, to experience the pleasure of reading and to develop their literacy skills
  - making sure that teachers use accurate assessments of pupils' skills to plan work that meets their learning needs more precisely.
- Strengthen the quality of leadership and management, so that:
  - persistent absence reduces further
  - all leaders sharply evaluate the impact of their actions to raise standards
  - governors are more effective in challenging and holding leaders to account for the standards that pupils achieve.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- After the last inspection, the school went through a period of decline and standards fell. Since her arrival in 2015, and particularly in the last few months, the headteacher has halted this decline and the school is improving. The headteacher is successfully instigating change and this is beginning to make a difference. However, recent developments are not yet embedded and, as a result, teaching and learning, behaviour and outcomes are not yet good.
- Leaders do not ensure that pupils who join the school part way through a year, or key stage, make rapid enough progress. This is particularly true for pupils who speak English as an additional language. Consequently, these pupils do not catch up quickly enough to perform well in national assessments and be ready for the demands of secondary school.
- Middle leadership is underdeveloped. Subject leaders are not fully held to account for the standards pupils achieve in their subjects. Plans to address this through leadership support from Buckinghamshire Learning Trust and another local school are well judged but at a very early stage. Recently, Buckinghamshire Learning Trust has intensified its support for the school. It has provided useful guidance for newly qualified teachers to improve the effectiveness of mathematics teaching.
- The headteacher has set about improving the school methodically over the last two years. This has led to better teaching and learning, particularly in the early years and key stage 1. Leaders have eradicated the weakest teaching. As a result, staff are moving forward with a high level of commitment to ensuring that pupils make greater progress.
- Leaders have wisely reviewed the curriculum to develop opportunities for pupils to learn across a wide range of subjects. By introducing interesting books for pupils to read and arranging more trips, for example, leaders are enriching pupils' learning experiences. However, in some subjects, such as science, standards remain too low.
- Many leaders are relatively new to their posts. This term, the headteacher has established a more cohesive leadership team, which is making strides in bringing about change where it is needed. Leaders know there is more to do to ensure that the quality of teaching is consistently strong, particularly in key stage 2.
- The recently appointed special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) is receiving helpful training to support her in her role. Leaders have ensured that there are useful plans in place for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, so that their needs are well met.
- The headteacher is determined to engage parents and carers more fully in the life of the school. Her work to communicate more successfully is beginning to take hold. For example, attendance at the recent Christmas arts afternoon was better than in previous years.
- The school makes sure that pupils develop values which are helping them to prepare well for life in modern Britain. For example, a successful community day enhanced pupils' understanding of such values as respect for others. Work for older pupils on the

importance of preventing radicalisation is complementing pupils' growing understanding of British values. Parents are positive about this aspect of the school's work. One parent commented: 'I am encouraged by the initiatives that are being embedded into the school, such as pupils' well-being, tolerance and an acceptance of all faiths and beliefs.'

- The primary physical education and sport premium is used well to improve pupils' engagement in physical activity. Pupils now have playground leaders, who are making a positive difference to their behaviour and play at lunchtime. Funding provides more opportunities for pupils to attend tournaments and to access sports clubs and activities than has been the case in the past.
- The headteacher has a crystal-clear vision of where improvement is still required. Consequently, school improvement planning is accurate and sets a focused roadmap for improvement. Most pupils, parents and staff are positive about the changes that have been made and recognise the signs of improvement.

### **Governance of the school**

- In the past, governors have not offered a sufficient level of challenge to leaders about the standards that pupils achieve. This has limited the impact of their work. Recent changes in the membership of the governing body have improved the quality of governance. Governors now know and understand their responsibilities clearly. They have an accurate view of the school's effectiveness, and are determined to play their part in supporting the headteacher to improve the school rapidly. Consequently, they have started to take a more active role in improving the school's provision.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders' checks on the suitability of new staff to work in the school are appropriate and thorough. Staff's knowledge of child protection procedures, including how to ensure that pupils are not vulnerable to radicalisation and extremism, is up to date. This helps them to be effective in their safeguarding role.
- Staff make appropriate referrals when they have concerns about pupils. They are confident that leaders follow these up promptly and efficiently.
- Leaders are tenacious in their work with external agencies to ensure that pupils are protected from harm. This includes working closely with families, staff and external services to ensure that the most vulnerable pupils receive effective support.
- Leaders have made sure that pupils have a developing understanding of how to stay safe when using the internet. This has been strongly promoted through the school.
- The majority of pupils say they feel safe in school and know that their concerns are taken seriously. Pupils are increasingly able to express their worries, for instance by using the worry boxes placed around the school.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Requires improvement

- Over time, teaching has not been good enough. As a result, some pupils have not developed their basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics well enough, and are working below the standard expected for their age.
- Teachers, including those in the early years, do not always make the best use of pupils' assessment information when planning future work. As a result, tasks and activities do not offer an appropriate level of challenge to build pupils' skills and understanding. Sometimes, tasks are too easy, particularly for the most able.
- The teaching of reading, particularly at key stage 2, requires improvement. Pupils say that they do not often read to an adult. They describe how they would like to visit the library and make better use of the school's reading materials. Homework is not used well enough to help improve pupils' reading skills.
- Leaders' efforts to improve the school have been hampered by frequent changes to staffing, which pupils have found unsettling. Some classes have had several different teachers over the last two years and some arrangements remain on a temporary basis. This has led to variability in the quality of teaching and learning. Nevertheless, because of leaders' thorough planning, all who join the staff, whether on a temporary basis or not, are clear about the headteacher's expectations and aspirations for the pupils of Hannah Ball School.
- Pupils' learning is improving as a result of leaders having successfully tackled the poor behaviour of some pupils. Most lessons are free from disruption, enabling pupils to concentrate better on their work. However, too much learning time is lost during changes from one part of the lesson to another, such as moving from the carpet to the tables.
- Mathematics and writing are taught effectively. In mathematics, teachers use questioning well to promote pupils' mathematical thinking and reasoning. Teachers' appropriate emphasis on using mathematical language helps pupils to make secure progress. In writing lessons, teachers provide clear instructions that ensure pupils understand the purpose of their tasks. Consequently, pupils listen well, and develop their writing skills purposefully, writing in a range of styles, such as composing a letter or creating a fairy tale.
- Teaching assistants are deployed effectively and make valuable contributions in lessons by supporting individuals and small groups of pupils. As a result, many pupils, including those who have SEN and/or disabilities, benefit from their support and make better progress.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

## Requires improvement

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- While most parents acknowledge that behaviour is improving, some remain anxious about pupils' behaviour overall, particularly incidents of bullying. Pupils say that there is

still some bullying in school, although it is dealt with well by staff. Inspectors found that pupils know how to report bullying and can talk to staff about their concerns. The number of bullying incidents is reducing over time, because of leaders' effective work.

- All pupils we talked to told us that teachers keep them safe. More pupils say that they feel safer than has been the case in the past. However, some pupils remain worried about the behaviour of others.
- Pupils are starting to demonstrate the school's values because staff are promoting them well throughout the curriculum, in assemblies and in personal, social and health education. The school council supports the promotion of the school's values effectively, through their frequent meetings with the headteacher. This has brought about a reduction in bullying incidents over time. Pupils are polite, friendly and respectful to adults, and their behaviour towards their peers is improving.
- A series of community days has promoted cultural understanding well. Pupils are starting to appreciate and celebrate the differences between them and those around them, and with people in the wider world.
- There is a high degree of care afforded to pupils, including the most vulnerable. The headteacher works tirelessly to ensure that all pupils are kept safe. For example, new safety fences and gates around the school's site help pupils to feel more secure.
- Pupils are encouraged to have healthy lifestyles. For example, new outdoor play equipment means they can stay active and learn about safety and risk. Improved school meals have resulted in pupils making healthier food choices. Pupils, particularly the disadvantaged, benefit from attending breakfast and after-school clubs.

## **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Some pupils do not behave well enough in lessons, particularly when work is not well matched to their starting points. When work is too easy, some pupils can become distracted and lose concentration. Mostly, pupils listen and try their best and learning flows uninterrupted.
- The behaviour of most pupils is improving rapidly. The number of fixed-term exclusions has fallen when compared to last year. However, leaders have not looked closely at patterns in poor behaviour, so their actions to prevent issues arising again are not always swift enough.
- Pupils' attendance is broadly average. However, a minority of pupils do not come to school regularly enough. Leaders have sharpened their focus on improving attendance this year, and use regular mentions in newsletters, as well as reward stickers and awards for pupils who have good or improving attendance, to highlight this. Furthermore, the school is beginning to forge stronger links with local religious leaders, to help stress the importance of regular attendance at school. Some of this work is at an early stage.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Requires improvement

- Pupils' progress in reading at key stage 2, is not accelerating as much as their progress in mathematics and writing. In 2017, unvalidated published performance information shows that too few pupils achieved the standard expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of both key stage 1 and key stage 2.
- Too few of the most able pupils exceed the standard expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils are given work which is too easy and does not challenge them sufficiently. Consequently, the most able pupils do not achieve as well they should.
- Leaders and teachers have not focused closely enough on the science curriculum. As a result, too few pupils achieve the standards expected for their age in science.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language, and those who have SEN and/or disabilities make steady progress in reading, writing and mathematics. The extra support they receive makes a positive difference to their learning. However, their progress is not sufficiently rapid to help them catch up with their peers.
- Standards are rising, particularly in key stage 1, from low starting points. Most pupils make increasingly rapid progress in mathematics. Extra teaching in small groups also ensures that teaching more precisely matches the needs of pupils. As a result, more are making better progress.
- The differences are diminishing between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils in reading, writing and mathematics. However, this improvement is not currently fast enough for disadvantaged pupils to attain as well as other pupils nationally.
- Teachers have prioritised the teaching of phonics. Consequently, an increasing number of pupils now achieve the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check.

## Early years provision

## Requires improvement

- Over the past three years, standards in the early years have risen. A greater proportion of children are achieving a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year than was the case in the past. However, this remains below the average proportion that meets this standard nationally.
- Staff do not use the system for recording children's learning well. Consequently, leaders do not keep a careful check on children's rates of progress and parents do not always know how well their children are achieving.
- Many children start school with skills and abilities below those seen nationally and are at an early stage of speaking English. These children make good progress from low starting points and some catch up with their peers by the end of their Reception Year.
- Staff have a good understanding of the importance of developing early language and communication skills with the children, and take every opportunity to do so. They skilfully provide tasks and opportunities that enable children to develop their vocabulary and improve their language skills, such as pointing out when words rhyme.
- Children have useful opportunities to develop early writing, reading and number skills. Phonics is taught well and children make strong progress which prepares them

effectively for their phonics learning in Year 1.

- The refurbished outside learning area enables children to explore a variety of different aspects of learning. The inside space is less attractive and opportunities for role play, for example, are limited.
- Children in the early years behave well. They are encouraged to develop their social skills and take turns when using equipment. They treat each other with respect. Relationships between adults and children are very positive.
- Safeguarding in the early years is effective. Leaders and staff are aware of all recent guidance related to safeguarding. Staff are suitably qualified and experienced, and ensure that all welfare requirements are met and that children are safe, happy and well cared for. Leaders have close links with external agencies and are vigilant in ensuring that policies and procedures are correctly followed.



## School details

Unique reference number	110324
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10037810

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	188
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Susan Huntley
Headteacher	Mrs Rebecca Marsh
Telephone number	01494 522476
Website	<a href="http://www.hannahball.bucks.sch.uk/">www.hannahball.bucks.sch.uk/</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:office@hannahball.bucks.sch.uk">office@hannahball.bucks.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	5–6 November 2013

## Information about this school

- Hannah Ball School is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who come from minority ethnic backgrounds and the proportion who speak English as an additional language are far greater than the national averages.
- The current headteacher has been in post since June 2015. There has been considerable turbulence in staffing over the last three years, with almost a complete change in staff as a result.
- The school runs a breakfast club, and has after-school care managed by an external provider.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of key stage 2.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its

website.

- The school is receiving support from the Buckinghamshire Learning Trust.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors visited all classes to gather a wide range of evidence about what it is like to be a pupil in this school. They talked to pupils about their learning, scrutinised their work and heard some read. Some observations of lessons were carried out jointly with the headteacher.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils, parents, staff, leaders, governors and a representative from the local authority. The meetings covered numerous aspects of the school's work, including: pupils' achievement; provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities; the school's use of pupil premium funding and the primary physical education and sport premium; pupils' behaviour and attendance; and the curriculum.
- Inspectors sampled a range of documentation, including records of safeguarding checks and leaders' own evaluations of the school's performance. They observed pupils' conduct at breaktime, between lessons, in an assembly and in classrooms.
- Inspectors took account of 25 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, along with 25 free-text comments, and 10 responses to Ofsted's staff survey. They also considered leaders' surveys of pupils' views, which were carried out in 2015 and in July 2017.

## Inspection team

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