

Northgate Primary School

Green Lane, Northgate, Crawley, West Sussex RH10 8DX

Inspection dates

16–17 January 2018

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	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders and those responsible for governance were slow to respond to the findings of the previous inspection.
- Necessary improvements to the quality of teaching were not put in place quickly enough.
- Teaching is improving now but the impact is yet to be seen consistently in published results for the school.
- Standards in writing are not good enough, so pupils, especially those with middle-level prior attainment, are not as well prepared for secondary school as they should be.
- Teachers do not challenge frequently enough poor standards of presentation or handwriting. As a result, a large minority of pupils do not take sufficient pride in their work.
- Leaders of subjects and phase teams do not challenge their colleagues regularly enough to increase the pace of improvement.
- There is limited support for pupils' reading and writing both indoors and outdoors in the early years.
- The proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard in the phonics screening check is too low.
- Although children are happy, safe, and secure, and develop well physically and emotionally, only a few children exceed age-related expectations by the end of Reception.
- The large minority of pupils who join the school mid-year attain less well than their peers over time.

The school has the following strengths

- Adults ensure that Northgate Primary School is a welcoming and nurturing place where everyone is included and pupils' diversity is celebrated.
- Pupils behave well. They treat each other and adults with respect.
- Governance is improving quickly. The new team knows exactly what it needs to do.
- Teaching is strong in some areas of the school. There is some expert practice that is beginning to be shared more widely.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the standards of pupils' writing, especially for those with middle-level prior attainment, by:
 - focusing relentlessly on creating enriching opportunities for pupils to write accurately, and at length, in all key stages and across the curriculum
 - extending the range of exemplar material available to pupils to support the development of their writing
 - challenging weak presentation or untidy handwriting.
- Increase the proportion of pupils meeting and exceeding standards in the national phonics screening check by:
 - structuring more carefully the teaching of phonics across Reception and Year 1
 - enriching the learning environment in the early years so that children have daily support for the development of their reading and writing.
- Increase the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - strengthening the skills of middle leaders so that they are more able to hold teachers to account for the quality of their work
 - consolidating the new arrangements for governance so that leaders are held to account continuously and robustly for all aspects of the school's work.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The progress and improvement of Northgate Primary School has been hampered in the past by weak governance. Senior leaders had too much to do without adequate support from either individual governors or the local authority.
- After the last monitoring inspection in 2016, the local authority began to put in place a team to support the school's progress towards being a good school. The chair of governors was appointed because of his considerable experience in education. He has worked sensitively with the community to build an increasingly strong team. Although there are still some vacancies, the current governing body has a good set of skills and expertise.
- All leaders have a clear understanding of the school's relative strengths and weaknesses. They know that some aspects of the school's work are not good enough, particularly some of the teaching.
- Senior leaders use the school's performance management system to try to improve the quality and consistency of teaching but, to date, this has only brought about partial improvements. Teachers told inspectors that they are frequently given opportunities for training. However, the impact of these activities is not making a big enough difference to pupils' learning.
- Senior leaders' approach, while patient, has also contributed to the slow pace of improvement, having balanced the need for urgent action against contemporary requirements relating to teachers' workloads and the need to retain staff.
- Subject leaders and phase team leaders are not yet sharing enough of the burden of leadership activity. They are not regularly enough holding their teams to account for the quality of their work. While they share planning, they are not, for example, making sure that teachers prepare lessons that take into account what pupils already know, understand and can do. Consequently some pupils find the work too easy while others find it too hard.
- Leaders ensure that funding is used carefully. For example, the primary physical education and sports premium is used wisely to fund a physical education specialist teacher from a local secondary school. Class teachers learn from this expertise and support the programme of health-related fitness by organising the pupils to do beneficial sporting activities such as the 'magic mile a day'. The pupil premium is also used appropriately to support disadvantaged pupils' progress in literacy and numeracy, which are improving steadily. The school uses the funds for a series of tried and tested interventions.
- The leadership of the additionally resourced provision, the 'special support centre', is highly effective. Hearing-impaired pupils are supported adeptly in mainstream classes. As well as enabling such pupils to thrive, all pupils benefit from the opportunity to be inclusive and responsive to those they know have additional challenges. The interactions are often heart-warming.
- Leadership of the school's provision for other pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is developing. Full responsibility for this aspect of the

school's work has been adopted by one of the deputy headteachers. Leaders ensure that teaching assistants funded to support individual pupils are trained adequately for their roles.

Governance of the school

- Since September 2017, there has been a more recognisable and much more effective governing body. The current chair of governors began the formation of this team when he joined the governing body in December 2016. He was formally appointed as the chair in September 2017. Since then, governors have reorganised themselves into three committees: teaching and learning, finance, and safeguarding. The chairs of these committees operate as a strategic group which oversees the school's overall performance. The chair of governors commented that 'monitoring needed to be tighter'. As a result he has made sure that a number of improvements have been made.
 - The clerking of all governing body meetings has become much more rigorous. All reports are received and distributed ahead of each event. Items discussed are recorded accurately. Governors' questions are clearly set out and any responses noted with additional evidence if necessary.
 - Governors have ensured that there has been a thorough overhaul of the school's single central record. All safeguarding training is up to date, or commissioned for the near future, and a systematic review of policies and procedures is underway. One experienced governor is responsible for regular checking of the school's safeguarding processes.
 - Governors ensure that regular reviews of the quality of teaching and learning are carried out, both internally, and with the help of external advisers and consultants. Governors themselves now visit frequently to check the school's work. An increasing number of governors have a background in education.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. This aspect of the school's work is particularly strong.
- As well as a secure and well-maintained single central record, all administrative tasks associated with safeguarding are completed to a high standard. The premises manager ensures that all statutory checks on equipment are carried out by competent authorities.
- The headteacher has been diligent in ensuring that the pupils and staff remain safe while the extensive building works are underway. She ensures also that pupils are safeguarded when arriving or leaving the premises. She insists, for example, that parents and carers observe parking restrictions in the roadways outside.
- The headteacher ensures that staff are fully aware of their safeguarding responsibilities. Staff are trained annually to spot the signs of neglect, abuse or potential radicalisation. Staff receive informative updates on safeguarding matters such as the 'Prevent' duty, female genital mutilation and children at risk of going missing

from education.

- As designated safeguarding lead, the headteacher interacts with a wide range of agencies. She also maintains thorough records of any incidents of bullying, including those which have any aspects of racial abuse. The incidence of such behaviour is very low due to the highly inclusive character of the school. Parents were particularly keen to report how successfully the school integrates pupils from a wide range of cultures, belief systems and minority ethnic groups. The 'international lunch' is regarded by all as a high spot in the school's year when the rich diversity of the community is celebrated and shared by all.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching is not sufficiently good enough or consistent enough to enable pupils to make strong progress in each year group.
- Many pupils join the school with starting points lower than would be expected at their age. This is exacerbated in respect of those pupils who join from overseas and who are at an early stage of learning English or who speak English as an additional language. Although pupils' books show that steady progress is made by the majority of pupils across each year, the pace is not fast enough for many to catch up with their peers or those who have been in school from Nursery onwards.
- As yet, teachers do not take into account sufficiently the wide range of individual starting points of their pupils. Teaching is often arranged into different levels of activity, but even this makes it difficult for some pupils to access the intended learning. For some others, it repeats what they already know or is beneath their level of understanding. For example, some of the pupils who speak English as an additional language have above age-expected skills in mathematics. They complete tasks quickly and then lose interest.
- In some classes time is not used well. For example, on occasion, pupils spend time sticking instructions into their books rather than getting on with the work. In other cases, pupils move slowly from one activity to another, taking far too long to clear up from one session before moving to the next. This limits the pace at which learning can occur.
- Most teachers have accurate subject knowledge, but some do not consistently pick up pupils' errors or correct misconceptions. Others have not developed their classrooms to create a positive learning environment, especially to help pupils with their writing. This is disappointing since the school's advisers drew particular attention to this with regard to the early years during the last academic year.
- Some teaching is inspiring, imaginative and creative. However, as yet, this expert teaching is not routinely or systematically shared across all the staff. Consequently, teachers' professional development is not coordinated and does not sustain continuous improvement.
- Where teaching is most effective, pupils are stimulated to produce brilliant work. Northgate pupils are thirsty for knowledge and eager to learn. In one instance, pupils were motivated to make short movies using simple technology tools. In a mathematics lesson, effective questioning supported by good-quality resources encouraged pupils to

think critically about different methods of mental arithmetic.

- Many of the teaching assistants support pupils' progress by questioning them carefully too. These teaching assistants actively seek opportunities to extend all pupils' learning. Other teaching assistants have less impact on pupils' learning.
- Leaders ensure that there is a culture of reading. Parents appreciate the school's efforts to help pupils read early, quickly and often. This is an example of the school's mainly positive working relationships with parents. Pupils are very appreciative of the library. They enjoy going there for timetabled sessions lead by the school's librarian.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils develop an appropriate set of contemporary values at Northgate Primary School. They learn to be independent and self-assured and they also understand the need to be caring and considerate of their peers.
- Pupils learn quickly how to cooperate or play well with others. Simple routines related to hygiene and self-care in the early years help them form good habits. Pupils respond immediately to adults' instructions. Often a single word or the start of a rhyme is enough to trigger well-practised behaviours.
- Leaders have high aspirations for all the pupils. They are also kind and caring to all. Their good example is followed by all adults. Pupils observe this and consequently demonstrate high levels of empathy with each other, especially those who are experiencing difficulties. Some pupils attend a 'signing club' and learn British sign language. This means they can communicate with their hearing-impaired peers. As a result, such pupils are more fully integrated into mainstream classes.
- The forest school, school pond, extensive outdoor areas and the gardening club afford positive opportunities for pupils to develop respect for nature. Pupils also learn quickly where food comes from and how it is produced. The enterprise week held in the autumn builds on this experiential approach to learning so that pupils begin to form understandings of entrepreneurship and industry.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. During the inspection, the pupils were unfailingly polite and courteous to the team. Pupils' conduct around the school was calm and orderly.
- The behaviour of a small number of pupils is challenging as a result of specific medical or emotional conditions. Staff are expertly trained to deal with such behaviours and manage any incidents skilfully and safely. Other pupils react to any incidents with compassion and sensitively. This is further evidence of the nurturing and inclusive atmosphere created over time in the school.
- Pupils like the school's rewards scheme. They are proud to collect house points. This encourages them to behave well and to take on leadership responsibilities. Those who

win badges wear them with pride.

- Most pupils take care with their work and present it neatly. The vast majority take pride in their appearance and come to school dressed smartly in their uniforms.
- Leaders have focused intently on good levels of attendance for pupils. As a result, the school's overall attendance figures are broadly, and consistently, in line with all schools nationally. This is noteworthy given the high number of pupils on roll who have specific medical needs. Some of these pupils have unavoidably high levels of absence. Staff do what they can to ensure that those who have to miss school do not fall too far behind.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- For three years consecutively, from 2014 to 2016, the school's academic performance at key stage 2 meant that it met the Department for Education's (DfE's) definition of a coasting school. In 2017, however, the school's published results were considerably better. Local authority officers have notified the headteacher that the school does not appear on the current list of coasting schools.
- Outcomes for pupils are improving, so that, for example, in 2017, the average progress made by Year 6 pupils in mathematics was better than the national average. Higher-attaining pupils did particularly well in this measure.
- However, average progress for pupils in Year 6, in writing, was below the national average. This is part of a pattern of underperformance in this subject over time. Recent changes to the curriculum, and the methods of its assessment, have contributed to this, but so has the weaker teaching over time.
- Similarly, over time, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard in the phonics screening check in Year 1 has been below the national average. There is some variation in the way adults approach the teaching of phonics and the rigour with which they check that all pupils are secure, in appropriate sequence, with the correct letters and sounds.
- The performance of pupils who speak English as an additional language is too dependent on their individual experience at school. Some receive focused and targeted support, catch up quickly and go on to make rapid progress. Too many do not get the kind of support that would help them make quick learning gains that reflect their latent ability. Many of these pupils are bilingual and have no difficulty communicating in two language codes. They do not regularly enough get work that stretches and challenges them in English.
- Disadvantaged pupils do not do as well as their classmates. Because the school's outcomes require improvement overall, these pupils lag behind other pupils nationally. The differences between their performance and that of others are not diminishing fast enough.
- Pupils in the specialist support centre make strong progress from their individual starting points because leaders and teachers know their needs precisely. They arrange support and resources to meet these needs carefully.
- In the last year, the deputy headteacher has increased considerably the quality of information about pupils' performance. There is 'no hiding place' now as the

performance of each pupil, and each group of pupils, is crystal clear for teachers and their assistants.

- Information about current pupils' attainment and progress shows that both are improving over time. In almost all year groups a half to three quarters of the pupils are already on track to be at the age-expected level by the end of this academic year. This is the case for disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities. In each year group, a few pupils are making faster progress than their peers. This is an important sign that necessary increases in pupils' learning are now occurring.
- In 2017, average levels of attainment in reading and mathematics for Year 6 pupils were broadly in line with the national averages. The percentage of pupils reaching the expected level in reading, writing and mathematics combined increased significantly from 2016. Careful calculations suggest that the percentage will rise again dramatically in 2018.
- Generally, pupils are ready for their transition to secondary school.

Early years provision

Good

- Children make a good start to their time in school in the early years. Those who stay in the school from Nursery through to Year 6 make better progress and attain higher levels than those who join the school midway through a key stage or at non-standard transition times.
- Staff care well for children, nurturing them and making them feel comfortable. Staff set the right conditions for learning. They establish routines early on so that children know soon after entering what is expected of them and when. In one case, a child recently woken from a nap enjoyed some quiet story time with an adult before happily joining in again to play with her peers.
- Parents appreciate the home visits made before their child enters either Nursery or Reception. They also like specific activities such as the 'stay and play' sessions designed to help them feel included and their children settle.
- Nursery staff meet and greet parents at the beginning and end of each session and this enables the easy exchange of information. As a result, adults form a secure picture of each child's skills, gifts, talents and needs. These contribute to an accurate baseline assessment.
- Children enter either Nursery or Reception at levels that are typically below those expected for their age nationally. Many children are most notably behind other children nationally in their communication and language skills. Children who speak English as an additional language receive good-quality support from adults so that they can access the curriculum quickly and make strong progress.
- Most children make steady progress during their time in the early years. This means that an increasing majority start Year 1 having attained a good level of development.
- Leaders rightly have a clear focus on further increasing the proportion of pupils meeting and exceeding the expected standards in the specific areas of literacy and mathematics. They are working with staff to ensure that all activity leads to even stronger outcomes over time.

- Leaders are aware that the current learning environment does not provide sufficient support, stimulation or excitement for children’s rapid acquisition of language, knowledge and skills. Both the outdoor and indoor learning spaces lack materials and resources that would support children’s writing on a daily basis. Boys, in particular, need more help to develop as confident writers.
- Conversely, the current teaching of number, shape, space and measure is well planned and carefully thought through. It is supported with a wide range of resources that aid children learning to count and use number confidently. Children make strong progress in groups appropriate to their stage of mathematical learning. All adults increasingly contribute successfully to this important aspect of the early years.
- Disadvantaged children and those with SEN and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points. This is because highly effective support from a range of staff ensures that they are included and their needs are known and met well.
- As is evident in the systematic teaching of mathematics now, good teaching in the early years is generally more consistent than in other parts of the school.
- Children’s behaviour is good in the early years. They play together happily, taking turns and sharing toys and resources. Adults manage the setting well with simple commands and gestures.
- There are no breaches of the statutory welfare requirements. All areas of the setting are safe and secure. All adults are checked as fit and proper persons with the same rigour as in the rest of the school.

School details

Unique reference number	133973
Local authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	10036935

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	542
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Fry
Headteacher	Georgina Beaven
Telephone number	01293 526 737
Website	www.northgate.w-sussex.sch.uk
Email address	office@northgate.w-sussex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	3–4 November 2015

Information about this school

- Northgate Primary School is a larger-than-average primary school. It is maintained by West Sussex local authority and serves a community on the north-east side of Crawley, West Sussex.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is broadly average. The community served by the school has average levels of deprivation.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above average.
- About a third of the pupils are from White British households. Two thirds of the pupils are from Black, Asian, mixed or other minority heritage families.
- The proportion of pupils who receive support for their SEN and/or disabilities is below average.
- The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan related to their

SEN and/or disabilities is well above average.

- The school houses an additionally resourced base for pupils with hearing impairments. There are currently 14 primary-aged pupils placed in this unit. Their learning is supported alongside pupils in mainstream classes. The school employs a team of specialist teachers and assistants who support communication using British sign language.
- The school has a maintained nursery attached which caters for pupils from three years of age.
- A large minority of pupils leave or join the school mid-year.
- The school met the DfE's definition of a coasting school based on key stage 2 academic performance results in 2014/16.
- The school meets the current government floor standards.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in all classes across the school. Inspectors observed learning in English (writing and phonics), mathematics, information and communications technology and French, in 27 parts of lessons.
- Inspectors observed two assemblies. They also observed pupils learning while gardening and at playtime and lunchtime as well as in the breakfast club.
- Inspectors spoke informally with many pupils. A group of six key stage 1 pupils met with one of the inspectors and a group of eight key stage 2 pupils met with another inspector. The team considered 42 responses to Ofsted’s confidential pupil survey.
- At the school gate, several parents spoke informally with inspectors. The lead inspector met a group of eight parents. The team considered 23 responses to Ofsted’s confidential online survey Parent View and took into account 17 free-text responses submitted through that tool. Inspectors also considered the outcomes of two parent surveys undertaken by the school.
- Senior leaders worked closely with the inspection team, jointly observing learning, examining pupils’ work, and discussing aspects of the school’s performance. Inspectors met with middle leaders, the SEN coordinator and a group of teachers at different stages of their careers. The team took into account 46 responses to Ofsted’s confidential online staff survey.
- The lead inspector met with members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors considered a wide range of the school’s documentation, including leaders’ evaluation of the school’s performance, information about pupils’ outcomes, records of the work of governors and the local authority, and information on the school’s website.

Inspection team

Simon Hughes, lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Sara Benn	Ofsted Inspector
Deborah Gordon	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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