

Kimpton Primary School

High Street, Kimpton, Hitchin, Hertfordshire SG4 8RB

Inspection dates

10–11 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	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

- Since the previous inspection, standards have declined. Not enough pupils have reached both the expected and higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics in 2016 and 2017.
- The quality of teaching and learning, and the progress that pupils make in their lessons varies across the school, including the progress of disadvantaged pupils, pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities and the most able pupils.
- As yet, leaders are not evaluating the progress made by different groups of pupils precisely enough.
- Leadership of the provision for the small number of disadvantaged pupils requires improvement, including leaders' use and evaluation of the additional funding that the school receives.
- Leadership in the wider curriculum is still developing. Some subject leaders' work is at an early stage of development. They have not yet had enough time to bring about significant improvements in the subjects that they lead.
- Teachers do not precisely or consistently use their knowledge of what pupils know and can do to plan learning experiences that are well suited to pupils' potential and capability.
- On occasions, teachers' behaviour management does not ensure that low-level disruption in lessons is minimised. This sometimes leads to learning for others being disrupted.
- Children in the early years get off to a happy, positive start to school life. However, adults do not use assessment information well enough to support children to make good progress in their learning from their starting points.

The school has the following strengths

- Following her arrival, the headteacher has quickly demonstrated a very shrewd understanding of what needs to be done to raise standards, and her actions are starting to make a difference.
- Science teaching and learning is a strength within the school's wider curriculum.
- Leaders have created an improved, more rigorous culture of safeguarding. As a result, children and pupils are happy and safe in school.
- The teaching of phonics has improved, and pupils are beginning to make better progress in reading as a result.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality and effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that leaders’ development and action plans are more explicit about how different actions will raise standards and how staff will achieve this
 - urgently and precisely evaluating effectiveness of the actions taken to raise standards for disadvantaged pupils, including through the use of additional funding
 - further developing governance through ongoing training and external support
 - continuing to develop the role of subject leaders so that they rapidly raise pupils’ outcomes in the subjects they lead.
- Raise the quality of teaching, learning and improve pupils’ outcomes by:
 - ensuring that teachers use a consistently accurate knowledge and understanding of pupils’ starting points and use this understanding to plan tasks that accelerate pupils’ progress, particularly in mathematics and writing
 - planning challenging tasks that help pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, those who are disadvantaged and the most able pupils to make good progress from their individual starting points
 - accelerating the progress of disadvantaged pupils so that a greater proportion of these pupils achieve at least the expected standards, and more achieve the higher standards
 - making sure that all teachers use behaviour management strategies so that low-level disruption reduces and does not have an impact upon pupils’ learning.
- Continue to develop the provision and leadership in the early years so that assessment is used by all adults more incisively to ensure that a higher proportion of children make better than expected progress.

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

An external review of the school’s use of pupil premium 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

- Prior to the current headteacher's appointment, the school faced a period of instability and significant challenges, including turbulence in staffing and leadership. As a result, the quality of education declined.
- The headteacher has provided much-needed stability and increased rigour since taking on the role in September 2016. She has an in-depth knowledge and understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the school's provision. However, she has faced a number of challenges in securing rapid change and her new leadership team's work is only just starting to improve pupils' outcomes.
- Leaders' improvement plans do not place a precise enough focus on pupils' need to make quicker progress from their starting points, particularly in mathematics and writing. In particular, these plans do not show how leaders' actions are going to secure consistently good outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, those who have SEN and/or disabilities and the most able.
- Currently, the impact of leaders' work can be seen in improvements to teachers' planning and to the teaching of writing. Individual teachers are given guidance on how to improve their practice. Leadership monitoring shows that improvements have been brought about and weaker teaching has been challenged and subsequently improved. However, overall, it is too soon to demonstrate that leaders' efforts have secured consistently good teaching and faster progress for pupils.
- Leaders' work to ensure that they evaluate and provide high-quality provision for the small number of disadvantaged pupils is an area requiring urgent attention. Leaders have not effectively evaluated the use of the extra funding to support disadvantaged pupils. Therefore, they have not been able to precisely determine the impact of this support on pupils' attainment and progress and make adjustments accordingly to ensure that they achieve well.
- Recent support from the local authority is being well used to both validate and act upon the headteacher's accurate evaluation of the school's effectiveness. However, while there is now a greater sense of urgency to the local authority's support for the headteacher, this support did not happen early enough to halt the decline in pupils' standards over time.
- Leaders have only recently added additional capacity to support the progress of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Leaders have provided some high-quality support for pupils, but have not had the capacity, until recently, to ensure that effective strategies are consistently being used in lessons. The new leader of this area has an insightful understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the current position, including the use of additional funding, and is addressing any issues urgently.
- Science leadership is strong. Leadership monitoring of science is precise, and this is improving pupil's achievement and enthusiasm for science. However, other subject leaders' roles are still in their early stages of development, and the focus has not been as refined and precise as it is in science. This has resulted in other curriculum subjects not yet being as well led and developed.

- Pupils are provided with a creative curriculum that excites them to want to learn more. Pupils could explain fluently how they start a topic through a 'big bang' beginning and end with a 'fantastic finale'. During the inspection, pupils in Year 3 talked enthusiastically about making 'chocolate rocks' and moving on to erupting volcanoes, while Year 6 pupils went fossil hunting. Children in Reception spoke about the recent snowy weather and their snowmen 'disappearing'.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered well through regular, thoughtful assemblies and the day-to-day encouragement of pupils' understanding and application of moral attitudes and values. For example, thought-provoking assemblies during the inspection encouraged pupils to reflect deeply and following this a pupil responded to another pupil's thoughts, saying, 'It is great to have dreams, but you do need to be realistic.'
- Leaders promote mutual respect for people's differences and similarities, particularly within faith groups. Pupils talked knowledgeably about 'it being interesting learning about others because people are all different in so many ways.' Pupils' books show that they receive many opportunities to explore other religions. For example, pupils look at the connections between Hajj for Muslims and other pilgrimages that take place. This successfully prepares pupils for life in modern Britain.
- The school's additional funding for physical education and sport is used effectively to provide a wide range of clubs and increase pupils' participation in these. The additional funding is also being used to build teachers' confidence in teaching specific aspects of physical education. For example, following a teachers' skills questionnaire and follow-up training, teachers are now feeling more positive and self-assured about their ability to teach gymnastics well.
- Staff are very positive about the new leadership team. They value the professional training they receive to help them develop their skills and knowledge. All staff want to do their best for the children and pupils at Kimpton Primary School.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the impact of the new leadership team. They particularly appreciate and value the work of the headteacher. As a parent commented: 'Since the current headteacher took up post, there have been a number of improvements across the school and these have had a very positive impact on children's progress in learning.' Leaders ensure that parents are well informed about children's and pupils' learning. They work hard to secure parental engagement, and this successfully promotes positive partnerships between home and school.

Governance of the school

- Historically, governors failed to stem the drop in standards. The current governing body now have a much clearer, transparent picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Although governors are working with increasing rigour, they are also aware that there are governors new to their role and there is further work to do to improve their effectiveness and consequently to secure the long-term, positive future of the school.
- Governors are now demonstrating that they know Kimpton Primary School well. They are working closely with current leaders and the local authority to hasten improvements to improve all aspects of the school's performance so that children and pupils achieve well.

- Governors keep themselves up to date by attending regular training, including in aspects of safeguarding. Governors visit the school more regularly to monitor aspects of its work and do know what needs to improve. While the school improvement plan links the governor visits more securely to the school's priorities and targets, governors, like the headteacher, are aware that they need to further refine the priorities so that the focus is dominantly upon increasing the pace of the progress that children and pupils make from their various starting points.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The headteacher was quick to identify safeguarding as a high priority when taking up her post and much work has been undertaken to ensure that systems and processes are now more thorough and rigorous. As a result, leaders, including governors, demonstrate that they have a secure oversight of all aspects of keeping children and pupils safe.
- All staff training is up to date and leaders have ensured that the policies and procedures to keep vulnerable pupils from harm are in place and routinely reviewed. Increasingly, the school is providing more support for families. Parents who spoke to inspectors acknowledged this and commented upon 'safeguarding being a big improvement since the new headteacher started'.
- Leaders and governors are rigorous when recruiting staff. Meticulous checks are made to ensure that staff and volunteers are safe to work with pupils. The school secretary has a thorough insightful overview of the induction process as well as checking of personnel paperwork thoroughly. This work successfully contributes towards the leadership management of safeguarding being effective.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school, which matches parents' views. Parents and carers are confident in the school's commitment to securing their children's well-being. As a few parents said, echoing the views of many, 'The school feels very safe and the children are well looked after' and 'The needs and welfare of the children are at the centre of all the school does.'

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement because not enough teaching has been consistently good enough over time to ensure that pupils make good progress. Pupils have not made rapid enough progress from their varied starting points.
- Since September 2017, staffing has begun to stabilise and leaders have taken actions to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. However, teaching and learning is still not yet consistently good in all year groups and subjects. Leaders have already identified this, particularly in the teaching of writing and mathematics, and have quickly intervened to begin to secure improvements across the whole school.
- Across the school, generally teachers do not use assessment information as well as they could to plan learning that consistently meets the needs of all groups of pupils. Where teaching is stronger, there is increasing evidence of teachers capturing pupils' interest and planning tasks at an appropriate level of challenge, which helps pupils to learn better.

- Behaviour in lessons is not yet consistently good across year groups. Where teaching does not interest, engage or meet the needs of pupils, pupils can become disengaged and disrupt others. This is not an issue across all classes, but does effect learning for some.
- The quality of learning in mathematics is starting to improve. An example of this improvement was seen in a Year 6 mathematics lessons, where pupils engaged well with a teacher’s questioning and were able to apply their knowledge and understanding to solve increasingly difficult algebra problems. In a Year 2 lesson, incisive questioning supported pupils to apply skills in division accurately to word problems. However, this good progress is not a consistent picture for pupils in mathematics across the school.
- The teaching of writing remains inconsistent. Teachers are starting to plan more lessons which successfully develop pupils’ skills and provide wider opportunities for pupils to apply these skills to different types of writing. Pupils are doing this increasingly in other subjects such as science, history and geography. However, this is not yet well embedded across all year groups.
- The school widely encourages and promotes the importance of regular reading. For example, the delivery of the English curriculum includes a book focus whereby all the work revolves around the in-depth analysis and understanding of a text. For instance, Year 6 are reading ‘Ortega’ and their writing activities stem from this. As a result, pupils are developing a love of reading and interest in exploring a range of reading materials.
- The teaching of phonics has improved. Staff are receiving effective training and lessons are helping pupils to make good progress, particularly with their early reading development. There has been a successful focus on reading throughout the school and now pupils are reading more often and more widely. This was further confirmed when inspectors heard pupils read. The youngest children and pupils applied their knowledge of phonics well and used it to help them read, spell and check their own writing.
- Overall, teaching assistants provide effective support. This is largely because they have positive relationships with pupils and know them well. Teaching assistants lead a range of catch-up sessions and teach small groups of pupils. Many of these sessions are beginning to be more successful in closing the gaps in pupils’ learning, and this is particularly so for the pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school’s work to promote pupils’ personal development and welfare is good. A large contributory factor is that all staff take the time to get to know children and pupils well. One parent commented how staff know all the children well, ‘clearly care about all the children in the school, whom they know individually by name.’
- Pupils have ample opportunities to develop responsibility in a number of roles across the school. The ‘hub group’ meetings are a valuable example of pupils working together across the age groups sharing their views and carrying out activities to develop their life skills, such as, for example, learning to wash and dry up and sharing their thoughts about how to be a good friend.

- Year 6 pupils are very proud of, and aware of, their responsibilities. They clearly understood the importance of their role when sharing information about how they settle the younger children into school when they explained their Year 6 and Reception buddy system. One Year 6 commented that, 'It is hard when you are small, and you are not sure about all us big people running around. Talking to them makes them feel safe and happy.'
- The way subjects are taught helps pupils feel safe. For example, pupils could link their learning to their personal safety; when they studied the Great Fire of London, the fire brigade visited them to explain how to keep safe. Pupils confirm that they are well supported to feel happy and secure
- Pupils show a good understanding of bullying, including cyber bullying, and said that is not tolerated by staff. They explained that during 'anti-bullying week' they were taught all about online safety and how to reduce risks and stay safe. They also said that they have confidence to talk to staff, who they know will deal quickly and decisively with any unkindness or worries they may have.
- Pupils understand about British values such as tolerance, respect and democracy. The school council makes a valuable contribution to pupils' understanding of being involved in whole-school decision-making.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. This is because, while pupils' behaviour is mostly positive both in class and around school, there are repeated instances of low-level disruption in some classes. In these situations, teachers do not effectively manage behaviour and as a result, other pupils become distracted from their learning and do not achieve as well as they could.
- Pupils' conduct, at play times and during the lunch break, is generally positive. Pupils are polite and sociable. They show respect for each other and the adults who supervise them. As a result, pupils enjoy these social times, playing games together in the playground and chatting happily while eating their lunch.
- Comments from pupils, staff and external advisers, along with inspection scrutiny of leadership paperwork over time, reflect that the school environment has improved considerably. It is well looked after by the site team, with an emphasis on safety and security. Pupils show respect and care when using resources and accessing various areas of the school. There is an increasingly effective use of high-quality displays in classrooms and corridors to celebrate pupils' learning and achievement.
- Attendance rates are consistently average. The number of pupils who are persistently absent from school has reduced and the current overall attendance is now above the national average. Leaders work effectively with parents and offer support to promote consistently positive attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Outcomes at the end of key stage 1 and 2 have declined since the previous inspection. Despite the recent improvements in leadership and the quality of teaching seen during

the inspection, in recent years the majority of pupils were too far behind to reach the standards typical for their age and they did not make quick enough progress to catch up. As a result, pupils, especially in key stage 2, continue to have gaps in their knowledge and skills.

- Current pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and the most able pupils, do not make consistently good progress from their different starting points. Evidence gathered during the inspection from scrutiny of pupils' work, the school's assessment information and observations in lessons shows that although there are improvements, pupils are not yet consistently making the progress they should.
- Leaders do not monitor precisely enough the progress that disadvantaged pupils are making, and effective steps are not taken to help them catch up. As a result, these pupils do not generally make good enough progress. However, current work in disadvantaged pupils' books shows some signs of current improvement in their progress, though this is not consistent across all year groups.
- For older pupils in the school, leaders' regular assessment information shows that a higher proportion of pupils are working at both the expected and higher standard and at greater depth. This is particularly the case in writing and mathematics. This improvement was also seen in pupils' work and during lessons. However, because a large proportion of pupils are so far behind, these improvements did not have enough time to have an impact on improving standards at the end of each key stage in 2017.
- Although past pupils have not been prepared well enough for secondary school, current pupils are being better prepared for the move to secondary school.
- Pupils' knowledge of phonics is rapidly improving. In 2017, Year 1 pupils achieved above average in the phonics screening check. This is because the teaching of phonics has significantly improved, and teachers now give pupils opportunities to practise their skills regularly and children and pupils apply their understanding confidently to their work.
- Assessment in all curriculum subjects is currently at a developing stage. It is most effective in science. Pupils' books illustrate that pupils' progress and provision in science are strong across the school. Pupils are able to carry out scientific enquiries from an early age and can make observations and record them systematically in order to reach conclusions. This is due to the provision of more opportunities for pupils to undertake investigative work.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- A new early years leader role was established in September 2017. The leader has been quick to develop a team ethos and rapidly introduce improved systems to ensure that assessment becomes more accurate and the provision for the children swiftly improves. However, there has not been enough time to ensure that all adults are fully skilled in planning effectively, especially to move children on when they are ready to achieve more.
- The majority of children start school with skills and knowledge typical of those usually found for their age. The proportion who attained a good level of development in 2017

was just above the national level. However, inspection evidence and the school's own assessment information shows that children could, and should, be achieving better.

- Leaders' recent work with the local authority is helping to improve the quality of the early years at the school. For example, leaders have raised staff expectations, improved the accuracy of assessment and developed the early years learning environment, particularly the outside area. Even so, leaders are perceptive and know that they have more work to do to make sure that the curriculum helps all children to achieve well.
- There is inconsistency in the quality of adult intervention during activities. While the tasks are plentiful and engaging, they sometimes lack specific purpose. During these times, adults sometimes miss chances to develop, record and extend children's learning through modelling the expectations and questioning effectively.
- Children behave well in the early years and quickly learn established routines. There is a happy atmosphere in lessons. Staff have high expectations of the following of rules, which they model well for the children. As a result, children learn and play together safely and well.
- Children in early years are confident in their environment. They demonstrate that they are ready to learn and show signs of wanting to do more. Children swarmed around inspectors and were inquisitive and eager to talk about their learning. Children set good examples for each other; one child matter-of-factly said to another child who was not clearing away, 'You need to help put this away because we are a team.'
- The early years team has established positive relationships with parents and encourage an open-door policy. Parents are asked to discuss their child's learning, look at their child's learning journals and contribute 'wow' moments from home. Transition arrangements to support children when they start school and move from other settings are effective. This successful partnership work ensures that children start school confidently and feel happy and secure.
- Staff are fully trained in all aspects of keeping children safe in line with whole-school policies and current statutory guidance. As a result, they all provide a caring, nurturing environment, ensuring that children are safe and enjoy their early school experience.

School details

Unique reference number	117118
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10041791

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	197
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Co - Chairs	Stuart Wheatley and Ed Knight
Headteacher	Tracy Clements
Telephone number	01438 832394
Website	www.kimpton.herts.sch.uk
Email address	head@kimpton.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	24–25 October 2013

Information about this school

- Kimpton Primary School is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for support through the government's pupil premium funding is below average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is average.
- The proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is below average.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been several changes of leadership and staffing. The new headteacher started full time in September 2016. During this time the leadership team capacity was reduced due to maternity leave.
- In September 2017, a new structure of leadership was implemented, increasing the leadership team capacity. There is now a headteacher, deputy headteacher, early years leader and key stage 1 and 2 phase leaders.

- In 2016, the school did not meet the government's floor standards, which set the minimum requirements for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classes, carrying out some observations jointly with the headteacher. Inspectors also looked closely at pupils' work across all year groups and in all subjects.
- The lead inspector held meetings with the co-chairs of governors and five other members of the governing body. The lead inspector also had a telephone conversation with the school's local authority improvement partner and the primary education services director.
- A wide range of documentation was scrutinised, both before and during the inspection, including that relating to the school's website, safeguarding, behaviour and attendance, the school's self-evaluation, improvement planning, assessment information and leadership checks on the quality of teaching.
- The views of staff were gathered through discussions with them and 15 responses to the staff survey.
- Both inspectors attended school assemblies. The lead inspector observed the whole school assembly and the team inspector observed a key stage 1 and a key stage 2 assembly.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils informally during the school day and observed them during playtime and lunch. They also met formally with some groups of pupils and individual pupils to hear them read. There were no pupil responses to the Ofsted pupil survey.
- Inspectors spoke with a number of parents during the inspection and considered the 57 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and 54 free-text messages.

Inspection team

Tracy Fielding, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Stewart Caplen

Ofsted Inspector

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