

Gotham Primary School

Kegworth Road, Gotham, Nottingham, Nottinghamshire NG11 0JS

Inspection dates

9–10 October 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

- Leaders, including governors, have not ensured that the good teaching and outcomes for pupils seen at the time of the last full inspection have been maintained.
- Leaders' plans for improvement have lacked the necessary information for them to check that actions to raise standards are successful.
- Leaders' evaluation of the work of the school has lacked precision. Governors have not held leaders fully to account.
- Subject leaders do not have sufficient impact on improving the quality of teaching in their areas of responsibility.
- Leaders, including governors, do not ensure that additional government funding to support disadvantaged pupils is spent as well as it could be to overcome the barriers to learning for these pupils.
- Pupils' rates of attendance are too low. Leaders' actions to improve attendance have not been successful.
- The quality of teaching is not consistently good. Teachers' expectations of pupils are not high enough. They do not provide sufficient challenge for the most able pupils to enable them to achieve the high standards of which they may be capable.
- Outcomes for pupils are too variable.
- Teachers do not promote pupils' writing skills well across a range of subjects. They do not ensure that pupils' problem-solving and reasoning skills in mathematics are well enough developed.
- Learning activities in the early years do not always maximise the children's progress.

The school has the following strengths

- Safeguarding is effective. Pupils feel safe in school.
- Pupils enjoy reading. They make good use of the phonics skills they learn to help them read and spell words.
- Teachers use their strong subject knowledge to explain ideas clearly to pupils.
- The promotion of pupils' personal development and welfare is a strength of the school. Pupils are cared for well.
- Around school, pupils are polite and courteous. There are positive relationships throughout the school between staff and pupils.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the impact of leadership and management on raising standards by:
 - strengthening the systems for evaluating the school’s provision, performance and use of additional funding, so leaders can plan for improvements from a better-informed standpoint
 - ensuring that all plans for improvement are sufficiently detailed, so leaders at all levels can systematically implement improvements and ensure that these are consistently applied across the school
 - governors holding leaders at all levels to account with greater rigour, especially for the use of pupil premium funding
 - strengthening the approach to monitoring pupils’ progress, so additional support and challenge can be implemented swiftly, and teachers can be held to account for the progress pupils make
 - developing the role of subject leaders, so they can improve the quality of teaching and outcomes in their areas of responsibility.
- Improve the quality of teaching, thereby accelerating the progress pupils make, by:
 - raising teachers’ expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - ensuring that teachers plan learning that challenges the most able pupils
 - teachers providing pupils with appropriate opportunities to practise their spelling, punctuation and grammar skills when they write at length across all subjects
 - teachers developing pupils’ mathematical reasoning and problem-solving skills.
- Improve the provision in early years by planning learning activities that are purposeful, making the best use of time, so children gain maximum benefit from all the activities on offer.
- Improve pupils’ rates of attendance.

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

- Until recently, the school's plans for improvement have not been sharply enough focused to ensure that the good teaching and outcomes seen at the time of the last full inspection in 2014 have been sustained. The plans have not included enough information for leaders, including governors, to be able to check that all the approaches were being successful. The actions implemented to make improvements have not been well enough evaluated for leaders to know for certain what was working well.
- Where leaders have acted quickly and thoroughly when they recognised that improvements could be made, outcomes for pupils have improved. For example, leaders introduced a new approach to teaching writing and provided teachers with the appropriate training and resources. The approach has been in place for sufficient time to become consistently applied across the school. The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in writing by the end of Year 6 has improved.
- Leaders responded swiftly to the findings of the short inspection in March 2018. They now have a more accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. With support from the local authority, leaders have planned for improvement with greater precision this year. Plans are now more sharply focused on improving the quality of teaching and raising standards. Although not all plans are in place yet, leaders are much better placed to monitor and evaluate the success of the improvements they make.
- Leaders have recently improved their use of the well-established system to track the progress pupils make. They are now able to focus much more sharply on raising standards and providing the appropriate support and challenge for pupils to maximise the progress they make.
- Leaders have used the additional government funding to support disadvantaged pupils by providing additional support for pupils' learning. Leaders have not evaluated in sufficient detail the impact of the use of the funding to be certain that it addresses pupils' barriers to learning.
- Additional government funding for primary physical education (PE) and sport is used to provide training for teachers and to provide additional sporting opportunities for pupils. In common with leaders' other plans, this is not fully enough evaluated for leaders, including governors, to be certain of the impact of the use of the funding on pupils' health, well-being and participation rates.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Teachers provide a range of interesting learning activities for pupils. They plan themed weeks to focus on particular topics or subjects, for example a sports week, and a geography focus, where each classroom is themed as a different country for pupils to learn about a range of countries and cultures. Colourful displays around the school celebrate the breadth of learning pupils enjoy.
- The coordinator with responsibility for the provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities meets regularly with parents and carers so that they are informed about the progress their children are making. She engages with

external agencies where this is useful to support pupils. She keeps a check on the progress individual pupils make so she can provide support that will enhance their learning. She does not, though, have an accurate strategic overview of the progress that pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make. The refined approach to assessment, currently being implemented by the deputy headteacher, includes plans for this strategic overview to be clearer.

- Leaders for English and mathematics have provided teachers with useful training, for example in teaching phonics and writing and pupils' mathematical fluency. They have looked at pupils' books alongside colleagues to review the curriculum and the progress pupils make. They have had some success, for example in raising standards in writing and phonics. They have not, however, undertaken checks on the quality of teaching to ensure that the training they have provided is fully implemented. In common with other action plans, they have not measured the success of their actions because the plans have not contained sufficient information. Leaders of other subjects check that teachers teach the full range of the national curriculum. Some leaders have provided training for teachers or opportunities for pupils, such as working towards the Arts Award.
- Leaders promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Pupils are reflective during assembly. The school council supports arrangements for pupils to raise funds for charities that are close to pupils' hearts. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. They understand that families could have beliefs or lifestyles that may be different from their own. A typical comment made to inspectors was, 'What matters is that they care for each other.'
- The majority of parents who expressed a view through the online survey, Parent View, or who spoke with inspectors would recommend the school to others.

Governance of the school

- The governors are ambitious for the school and want pupils to achieve well. Along with school leaders, they now have a more accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They show a determination that provision should improve.
- Governors visit school regularly to see it in action for themselves. They talk with pupils, work alongside leaders and attend staff meetings, to help them gain an accurate view of the provision. They have not held leaders fully to account because they have not had measurable success criteria in the school's improvement plans through which to hold them to account.
- Where governors identify that improvements can be made, as they work alongside leaders during their visits, they support leaders to implement new strategies. One example of this is the school's approach to encouraging positive attitudes to learning. Following a visit from governors, leaders successfully introduced a strategy to focus pupils' minds on positive learning behaviour, such as resilience, being attentive and trying hard. Pupils are rewarded for demonstrating these. The strategy is consistently applied across the school. Pupils of all ages demonstrate positive attitudes to learning.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders ensure that all the necessary vetting checks take place when an adult starts to work at the school. All staff have up-to-date training and know how to look out for the potential signs of abuse. They are fully aware of how to report a concern about a child's welfare, should one arise.
- The designated senior leader for safeguarding keeps records securely and in detail. She works closely with external agencies, where this may be necessary to support pupils or families.
- Pupils feel safe in school. Teachers make certain that pupils learn how to keep themselves safe when they use modern technology. Visits from the police teach pupils the importance of wearing a seatbelt, and older pupils learn about the potential dangers of the misuse of drugs.
- Pupils say that bullying does not often happen. They are confident that if they have any worries, or if bullying did occur, they could speak to a trusted adult in school, safe in the knowledge that the adult would help them.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is not consistently good. Teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils could achieve. They do not always make clear to pupils the purpose of the task they need to complete when they are working without the direct support of an adult. This limits the learning that takes place, including for the most able pupils.
- Teachers do not have high enough expectations of pupils in mathematics. Pupils' books show that teachers do not reliably insist that pupils are precise, in using rulers, for example. Books also show that the most able pupils sometimes have to complete work that is too easy for them before they move on to tasks that will challenge their thinking.
- The opportunities that teachers provide for pupils to improve their mathematical reasoning skills, or practise the skills they have learned by applying them to problem-solving situations, are limited in some classes.
- Teachers implement consistently the approach to teaching grammar, punctuation and spelling that was introduced last year. Pupils' books show that they use the skills they have learned in their writing. However, pupils are not encouraged to regularly and systemically practise these skills or to write at length across a range of subjects.
- Last year, leaders provided teachers with training to improve the teaching of phonics, and now phonics is taught well. Pupils make good use of the sounds they have learned when they read or spell unfamiliar words. Pupils enjoy reading. They have clear choices of favourite authors and styles.
- Teachers and teaching assistants make good use of their strong subject knowledge, so that they explain new ideas clearly to pupils. They also use well-considered questions to deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding.

- Teaching assistants provide effective support for pupils, including those who have SEN and/or disabilities so they can learn well alongside their peers.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils of all abilities are rewarded and celebrated for their positive attitudes to learning.
- Teachers ensure that pupils learn a wide range of skills and information which will stand them in good stead for life beyond primary school. Pupils understand the benefits of eating healthily and taking regular exercise. They can learn to play the guitar or the violin. Some classes visit the theatre or the National Justice Museum. Pupils have learned the basics of sign language. Pupils enjoy taking part in community activities, such as placing baubles on trees at Christmas.
- Pupils say that bullying is rare at Gotham Primary School. They are confident that if it did happen, an adult would deal with it successfully.
- Pupils take responsibility for a range of important tasks in school. At lunchtime, pupils help with trays in the lunch hall. Pupils represent their classmates on the school council or as house captains. Pupils are responsible daily for collecting the eggs that have been laid by the school's hens.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. This is because attendance is too low and only showing slow signs of improvement. This is particularly the case for disadvantaged pupils. Too many pupils are not punctual to school.
- Although rates of attendance so far this year show some improvement, leaders' efforts to improve attendance have not been very successful. Leaders have not evaluated their strategies early enough to be able to spot that they were not working well and adapt their approach. Leaders have not evaluated patterns of attendance and punctuality closely enough to be able to tackle these issues with precision.
- In class and around the school, pupils behave well. They demonstrate their good manners when they talk with adults and their peers alike. They show respect for each other's ideas in class, and cooperate sensibly when they work together. Only rarely, when teachers do not ensure that the learning is clear, a few pupils lose concentration. Pupils follow instructions given to them by adults without fuss. On the playground, pupils play together well.
- Leaders work creatively, including with external agencies and partner schools, to ensure that those few pupils who have difficulty moderating their own behaviour can integrate into school life and achieve well.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Outcomes for pupils are not good because there is too much variability in attainment and progress between each subject and each year group.
- Published data shows that by the end of Year 6 in 2017, pupils had made progress in line with that seen nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. Unvalidated data for 2018 suggests that while rates of progress have improved even further in writing, they have fallen in reading and mathematics.
- Similarly, pupils' attainment by the end of Year 6 fluctuates from one year to another. The proportion of pupils attaining at the expected standard has risen steadily for three years in writing. In reading and mathematics, however, while attainment rose in 2017, early indications are that attainment in these subjects fell in 2018. These pupils were not as well prepared for secondary school as they could have been.
- Too few pupils achieve the higher standard by the end of Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school's assessment information shows that most pupils currently in school are making stronger progress than was made by pupils at the end of key stage 2 in 2018. It also shows that some variability remains between classes and year groups. Pupils' progress and attainment are not yet securely good across the school.
- Pupils' books demonstrate that most pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are making the progress the school expects of them. However, books also show that some pupils, particularly those who are the most able, do not reliably make the swift progress they could.
- The strategies and training leaders have provided to improve the teaching of phonics have been successful. The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the Year 1 national phonics check improved in 2017 and again in 2018. School records show that a very close check is kept on the progress pupils make in their phonics skills. Current pupils are making strong progress in phonics.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Until recently, the plans for improving the early years provision have lacked the necessary precision and urgency to ensure that the quality of teaching and outcomes for the children have been good. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development by the end of the Reception class is below the national average. Some children are not as well prepared for Year 1 as they could be.
- Over recent months, with the support of the deputy headteacher, the leader has reviewed thoroughly the provision in the Reception class. She has made several improvements at the start of this year. The leader is acting more swiftly on assessments of what children know and can do, in order to provide learning that is just right for the children. She has ensured that adults promote children's writing skills more regularly by including opportunities for children to write in activities. For example, before making fruit kebabs, children wrote a sentence, using their early phonics skills, about the fruit they were using. It is, however, too early to judge whether the improvements the leader has introduced are likely to be successful in improving

children's overall outcomes by the end of Reception Year.

- Adults in the Reception class promote children's vocabulary well. They ask well-considered questions to promote children's understanding.
- Staff do not ensure that the activities the children do by themselves are sufficiently focused on what they can learn. When children, including the most able, participate in the activities provided, such as with sand, modelling clay and construction materials, they are not clear about what they could do to get the most out of the experience.
- Adults have ensured that children have settled quickly into school life. Routines and expectations have already been established, so children know what is expected of them. Children respond very well to instructions given to them by adults.
- There are no breaches of statutory welfare requirements.
- The leader makes sure that transition into the Reception class is carefully planned. She speaks with parents, and visits the pre-school settings to find out about the children before they start school. Children can visit the classroom to become familiar with the staff and setting.
- The leader has forged strong relationships with external services where this will be helpful for staff to provide well for the children's needs. Children who have SEN and/or disabilities are well supported.

School details

Unique reference number	122644
Local authority	Nottinghamshire County Council
Inspection number	10054390

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	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	195
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cath Kayler
Headteacher	Susan Lymn-Brewin
Telephone number	0115 914 9751
Website	www.gothamprimary.co.uk
Email address	office@gotham.notts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	20 March 2018

Information about this school

- Gotham Primary School is slightly smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is below average, as is the proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, the leaders for English, mathematics, geography, PE, art and design technology, and the leaders responsible for early years and for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities respectively.
- Inspectors met with three governors, including the chair of the governing body. They also met with a representative from the local authority and held a telephone conversation with leaders at a partner school.
- Inspectors spoke with parents as they brought their children to school and considered the 67 responses to the online survey, Parent View, and the 18 free-text comments. An inspector spoke with a parent by telephone. Inspectors also spoke with two groups of pupils formally and with pupils in class and at breaktime. They were no responses to the pupil online survey, but inspectors considered the eight responses to the staff survey.
- Inspectors observed learning in 11 lessons, sometimes alongside the headteacher. They examined a range of pupils' books from across the school.
- Inspectors attended an assembly and considered the work displayed on walls throughout the school.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including that relating to school self-evaluation, development planning, reports from an external adviser, minutes of governing body meetings, and documents related to the safeguarding of pupils.

Inspection team

Di Mullan, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Elizabeth Mace

Ofsted Inspector

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Manchester
M1 2WD

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