

New Town Primary School

School Terrace, Reading, Berkshire RG1 3LS

Inspection dates

8 to 9 May 2019

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| Overall effectiveness | Good |
| Effectiveness of leadership and management | Good |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Good |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare | Good |
| Outcomes for pupils | Good |
| Early years provision | Good |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Not previously inspected |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Since opening the school in 2016, the headteacher has recruited and galvanised a strong team of leaders, teachers and support staff. She has brought the community with her every step of the way. This is a happy and inclusive school which offers pupils a good standard of education.
- Pupils behave well and celebrate the rich and diverse population that the school serves. Pupils learn to appreciate and understand those with different religious beliefs and heritages than their own.
- Enhancements in the teaching of English and mathematics have improved outcomes for all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged. Nevertheless, standards in the wider curriculum are not as strong, because teachers do not routinely help pupils to build on their prior understanding.
- Governors and trustees work well together to challenge and support leaders to do even better. Their approach is rigorous and evaluative, meaning that weaknesses are quickly identified and rectified.
- Staff have a strong understanding of the needs of pupils, and they teach children the basics of reading, writing and mathematics well. Increasingly, teachers question and challenge pupils effectively, helping greater proportions to attain at a high standard.
- The early years gives children a good start to their education. Strong relationships between children, staff and parents ensure that families are welcomed and supported. Children make strong progress and are well prepared for Year 1.
- Despite significant efforts by leaders, rates of absence and persistent absence remain too high.
- Leaders monitor teaching closely and offer staff useful feedback. However, systems for checking that targets set have been met are not sufficiently robust. This hinders staff development.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the attendance of all pupils, particularly of those who are persistently absent from school.
- Strengthen leadership and management by ensuring that development points for staff are quickly revisited and checked.
- Improve the quality of teaching in science and the foundation subjects by ensuring that teachers' subject knowledge is sufficiently strong and that lessons build on pupils' prior learning.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher ably leads a motivated and skilled leadership team. They play to their strengths and have worked tirelessly to improve every aspect of this school since it opened. Their drive has been relentless and always focused on getting the best for pupils. As one parent noted, 'They have moved heaven and earth with a smile on their faces.' New Town Primary is a good school.
- Leaders know the school well and carefully evaluate strengths and weaknesses, using this information to plan and deliver continuous improvement. Leaders have looked outside to other successful providers and have secured strong support from Reading University, the local authority and schools outside the trust. Throughout the school, professional curiosity abounds, leaving it well placed to develop further.
- Leaders collect a range of information on pupils' progress and attainment and collate this to gain a meaningful understanding of pupils' performance. They use this to provide additional support and staff training, and to deploy resources where they are needed most. As a result, groups and individuals who fall behind are quickly identified and supported to achieve their best.
- Middle leaders are passionate and enthusiastic. This recently formed team have clear responsibilities and have received useful training to help them to hone their skills. Middle leaders are having an increasingly positive impact on the development of the school under the guidance of senior leaders. They are well placed to secure further improvement in the school.
- Leaders track the performance of staff closely. They visit lessons, scrutinise books and check assessment information to provide staff with useful feedback to improve their teaching. They have identified the strengths in the team accurately and match members of staff well so that they may learn from each other. Nevertheless, on occasion, targets for staff are not checked by leaders, meaning that improvements are not tracked as closely as they might be.
- The special educational needs coordinator is ambitious for pupils and unrelenting in her focus. She knows the pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and their families well and uses this to ensure appropriate provision is planned and implemented to overcome their barriers to learning. Regular monitoring ensures that all planned support has a positive impact and is adjusted quickly when required.
- Teachers' workload is carefully considered, and leaders have worked hard to ensure that unnecessary work is reduced. For example, staff are provided with time and support to adapt lessons for pupils, and processes for target setting have been streamlined. The focus on doing the right things ensures that pupils' interests and the work-life balance of staff are top priorities.
- Leaders have created a curriculum that is bespoke to the needs of the children. Pupils study a broad range of subjects and enjoy the opportunity to further their skills and talents. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 learned and performed 'Blackbird' by the Beatles, using percussion instruments to keep time and singing with great enthusiasm. An interesting range of trips and visits embellish the curriculum and help pupils to gain

real-life experiences. Nevertheless, the quality of teaching in science and foundation subjects does not match that of English and mathematics.

- The local authority works closely with the multi-academy trust to provide appropriate support for the school. They have helped leaders to forge links with other providers to enhance their skills and to research what works well. As a result, leaders and staff have been able to augment their own practice through research and professional dialogue.

Governance of the school

- Governors are skilled and experienced. Many have been members of other governing bodies and have significant professional experience which they bring to the role. For example, governors routinely work with leaders to ensure that health and safety checks are carried out and any remedial action is taken. As a result, the site is safe, secure and well-maintained.
- Governors know the school well and visit the school often to ensure that leaders' actions are effective. For example, governors have worked with leaders to check that the partnership with parents and teachers is strong and that plans meet the needs of pupils with SEND. They use this information to challenge leaders to constantly improve their systems and have been key in helping to improve pupils' outcomes.
- The multi-academy trust was formed, initially, to support the school when standards were low. Officers understand the school and have focused on the right things, helping to improve every aspect of the provision while ensuring that the unique identity of the school is retained. Officers' efforts to evaluate the school and to improve its effectiveness have had a good effect on pupils' outcomes.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All staff are well trained and alert to signs of abuse, including neglect and extremism. They keep a close eye on pupils' absence and are alert to any unusual changes in behaviour. They record their concerns carefully and pass these on to leaders who take the right action to help families to get the support that they need.
- Pupils are taught to evaluate risk from the off. Children in the early years are well supervised but still allowed to make simple mistakes and discuss what is and isn't safe. As they get older, pupils learn to stay safe around canals and railway lines. They particularly enjoy the safety assemblies that take place before school holidays. Pupils are well prepared to make informed decisions when presented with risks.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Staff and pupils enjoy strong and positive relationships throughout the school. Teachers encourage pupils to consider, share and discuss their ideas. Classrooms are stimulating spaces where pupils feel safe to develop their confidence and knowledge.
- Teachers question pupils effectively to probe and extend their understanding. Teachers set pupils ambitious targets and offer pupils a rich range of opportunities to help them

make strong progress. As a result, increasing proportions of pupils attain at a high standard.

- Pupils learn the basics of mathematics and apply their skills often to solve increasingly challenging problems. Teachers explain calculation methods carefully and use a range of resources, counters and diagrams to help pupils to see and test their ideas before committing to paper. As a result, pupils are confident mathematicians who make strong progress.
- Pupils are supported to read well and enjoy the range of interesting books that they read. They use their phonics confidently and quickly learn to sight read. Texts are well matched to pupils' needs and help effectively to develop pupils' vocabulary. As a result, pupils quickly learn the basics of reading and enjoy reading for pleasure.
- Teaching assistants model and reshape tasks well, particularly for those with the lowest starting points. For example, teaching assistants support pupils who speak English as an additional language to understand the fundamentals of English and how to communicate at a basic level with staff and peers. The care, patience and support offered to these pupils helps them to settle quickly and build their vocabulary well.
- Pupils are taught to write well and have, at their own level, a secure grasp of grammar, spelling and punctuation. They use this to write interesting texts to persuade, entertain or inform their reader. Useful prompts are provided to remind pupils to include key features in their written work. Writing throughout the school has strengthened over time.
- Teachers possess strong subject knowledge in English and mathematics and are able to support pupils to achieve well and develop their skills. However, teachers are less confident in supporting pupils' learning in science and the foundation subjects.
- Pupils learn a wide range of subjects and show great interest in the world around them. For example, pupils in Year 2 wrote about the different continents of the world, including details about their topography, capital cities and climate. Nevertheless, teaching in these subjects does not routinely build on pupils' prior learning, meaning that progress can be variable.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils in this diverse and cosmopolitan school appreciate the rich mix of religions, races and cultures that they represent. Pupils celebrating Ramadan told inspectors that their classmates and teachers understood and showed a keen interest in this important festival. Pupils throughout the school are respectful, tolerant and well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The curriculum provides ample opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of fundamental British values. For example, in Year 2, pupils studied 'No!' by David McPhail in order to consider the impact of their actions on those around them and, subsequently, why laws are so important. Pupils are well prepared to make a strong contribution to society.

- The promotion of pupils' spiritual and cultural development is interwoven throughout the school's curriculum. Pupils read texts which help them to understand and make sense of their own and the lives of others. They enjoy the opportunity to fundraise for local community initiatives and to help improve the school. During the inspection, Year 5 pupils worked in teams to solve jigsaw puzzles to help understand Christian's commitments to god and compared this sensitively with their own religious beliefs.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Typically, pupils are diligent in their learning and apply themselves well, meeting their teachers' high expectations. Classrooms are enthusiastic spaces where mutual respect, purpose and fun are evident throughout.
- At breaktime, pupils play well together and enjoy the use of the well-maintained grounds. Pupils assert that behaviour on the playground is good and that they have an adult to talk to should any problems arise. Pupils report that bullying is rare and, when it does occur, staff are good at helping them out.
- Leaders monitor and analyse trends in behaviour and have adapted the provision to meet the needs of pupils. This work has significantly reduced incidents of poor behaviour over time. Leaders have worked with staff to ensure consistency in approaches to behaviour management. Consequently, pupils' behaviour continues to improve.
- Pupils' mental health and wellbeing are supported well. The 'Rainbow Club' helps reduce the barriers to learning for those with high levels of need and offers pupils a safe space to navigate and discuss the complexities of friendships and relationships. This has resulted in decline in poor and/or defiant behaviour and an increase in confidence and self-esteem for this key group of pupils.
- Leaders are aware that attendance rates are too low and have implemented a number of strategies to increase rates of attendance. However, these have had too little impact, and levels of absence remain above the national average.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils' progress has strengthened in reading in the last year. Staff provide daily support for pupils to practise their reading and have reviewed and enhanced the range of texts that pupils use in class. As a result, pupils now enjoy more challenging texts, extending their vocabulary and developing a love of reading.
- Pupils learn the basics of mathematics and apply their skills often to solve increasingly challenging problems. For example, Year 2 calculated fractions of shapes, whole numbers and used their reasoning skills to relate this to percentages. Repetition and carefully sequenced lessons ensure that pupils build on their prior learning and remember what they have learned.
- Pupils make strong progress in their writing because they are taught the basics of spelling, grammar and punctuation and use these in their work. Pupils' books are awash with examples of extended writing, and these writing examples are the

culmination of their learning in English and exemplify the school's drive to improve pupils' vocabulary, presentation and understanding of genre.

- The most able pupils are well supported and make strong progress. A useful range of extra-curricular opportunities helps these pupils to practise and extend the reading and writing skills that they have learned in lessons. As a result, increasing proportions of pupils attain at a high standard.
- Disadvantaged pupils make strong progress because they are given useful support to settle in school and to study the content of lessons before the main lesson starts. Consequently, these pupils start lessons well prepared and confident, and they achieve well.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language make strong progress from their starting points because they are supported to master the basics of English and are buoyed by the dedicated team of bilingual staff and pupils. Consequently, these pupils quickly grow in confidence and broaden their English vocabulary.
- Pupils with SEND are well supported because staff accurately identify their needs and help these pupils to understand and access their work. Meaningful adaptations to tasks and the environment help these pupils to make strong progress from their starting points.
- Pupils often use their writing in a range of subjects to explain their thinking. For example, pupils in Year 4 wrote explanatory texts to describe the purpose of different teeth. Nevertheless, pupils do not typically revisit or build on their learning in the foundation subjects, meaning that what is learned is not always remembered.

Early years provision

Good

- Children typically enter the school with skills and understanding below that expected for their age range. By the time they leave Reception, the majority have achieved a good level of development. This represents strong progress from their starting points.
- Detailed evaluations and action plans allow leaders to monitor progress through the provision and provide staff with useful guidance to improve their practice. As a result, staff work as a cohesive team across Nursery and Reception classes to ensure that there is sufficient challenge and support for all children. However, as in the main school, leaders do not routinely check that the small improvements in staff performance have been secured.
- Staff in the early years promote English and mathematics well. They skilfully guide children to write numbers and letters on paper, and many children are happy and confident recording simple sentences. Nevertheless, when some children are not directly supervised their concentration wains, and little is learned.
- Children in the early years are keen to learn and are enthusiastic. They form strong relationships with their key adults and get to know the ropes quickly. Their behaviour matches that of the rest of the school.
- Children learn to understand and pronounce a range of useful words and phrases. For example, children tried different flavours of porridge and explained if they thought that it was sour, sweet or bitter. The promotion of language helps children to build their

vocabulary and communicate effectively

- Parents are actively encouraged to participate in their children's learning through 'busy bags', which contain a task that a parent and child can complete together. Strong links with new parents ensures that families feel welcomed and supported as they enter formal education.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 142682 |
| Local authority | Reading |
| Inspection number | 10088104 |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Academy converter |
| Age range of pupils | 3 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 297 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair | Angie Morrish |
| Headteacher | Polly Cornish |
| Telephone number | 0118 937 5509 |
| Website | www.newtown.reading.sch.uk |
| Email address | admin@newtown.reading.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | Not previously inspected |

Information about this school

- New Town Primary School opened in June 2016 as part of The Berkshire Schools Trust. The trustees delegate responsibility for most strategic matters to the local board of governors.
- This is a smaller-than-average sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported by the pupil premium is slightly lower than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is in line with the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above the national average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 23 parts of lessons, mostly with senior leaders.
- In addition to discussions with parents, 14 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, were taken into account, including eight free-text comments.
- A range of the school's documentation was scrutinised to gather information on: leaders' evaluation of the school's performance; systems for managing the performance of teachers; the behaviour and safety of pupils; safeguarding; the progress and attainment of pupils; and curriculum leadership.
- The lead inspector scrutinised the school's website to evaluate the quality of information for parents and whether the school meets statutory publishing requirements.
- The inspectors spoke to pupils to gather their views about the school, and they heard pupils read.
- The lead inspector met with school leaders, the chair of the governing body, and officers from the local authority and the multi-academy trust.

Inspection team

| | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Dan Lambert, lead inspector | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| Clare Haines | Ofsted Inspector |
| Sam French | Ofsted Inspector |

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Manchester
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