

Cowlersley Primary School

Main Avenue, Cowlersley, Huddersfield, West Yorkshire, HD4 5US

Inspection dates

23–24 October 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Achievement is still not good in all year groups.
- The most-able pupils are not given sufficiently challenging work and this means that they are not doing as well as they should.
- Not enough teaching is good or outstanding, and too much still requires improvement.
- Teachers do not all have high enough expectations of the amount and presentation of pupils' work.
- Teachers do not systematically check to see if their advice has been followed up from marking pupils' work. As a result, learning does not move on quickly enough.
- Pupils are not given enough opportunities to read widely and often.
- The extended leadership structure has not been established long enough to impact sufficiently on the process of improvement.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher's leadership and drive for improvement have been successful in raising standards and increasing rates of progress in the school. She has set targets with teachers which are beginning to bring about improvements in teaching.
- Behaviour and safety are good. Pupils show respect for each other and get along well together. They are keen to learn.
- The governing body has a good knowledge of the strengths of the school and challenges leaders to ensure that it improves.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in all classes and saw 17 lessons, including one joint observation with the headteacher. In addition, inspectors made a number of shorter visits to classrooms.
- Discussions with pupils about their work were held in lessons as well as in small group meetings.
- Discussions were held with senior and middle leaders, representatives of the governing body, teaching staff and a representative of the local authority.
- Pupils' work was scrutinised in English, mathematics and a range of other subjects.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and checked reading progress records including home-school diaries.
- A wide range of documentation was reviewed including national assessment data, the school's own data, monitoring records of the quality of teaching and the progress of pupils, the school's view of its own performance and the school development plan. In addition, the minutes of governing body meetings, safeguarding documentation and external reports from the local authority were reviewed.
- There were 22 responses from parents to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) taken into account as well as the school's own consultation with parents. Inspectors also spoke to some parents as they brought their children into school.

Inspection team

Gillian Hunter, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Juliet Demster	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is slightly smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds or who speak English as an additional language is higher than the national average. There are 17 languages spoken at the school.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is higher than the average.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported by school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is the same as the national average.
- The number of pupils who are eligible for support through the pupil premium is higher than the national average. (The pupil premium is funding to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and children who are looked after by the local authority.)
- The school meets the government's current floor standards which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Since the last inspection a number of teachers have left the school and a significant majority of teachers are now new to the school. This includes the appointment of three Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) this year.
- The senior leadership team has expanded to include two additional senior leaders as well as the experienced headteacher and deputy headteacher who were both in post at the last inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the overall quality of teaching to consistently good or better, in order to raise levels of achievement, by:
 - setting work at the right level for pupils so that they all make the progress of which they are capable
 - having higher expectations of the amount of work pupils produce as well as the quality of how they present their work in books
 - consistently checking that pupils have acted on the feedback given to them through marking and that their work has improved as a result.
- Enable more pupils to reach the higher levels of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by:
 - providing pupils with sufficiently challenging tasks and opportunities for independent learning and making sure that they access appropriate tasks quickly in lessons
 - developing greater use of questioning which is matched to the abilities of individual pupils.
- Further strengthen leadership and management by:
 - being more precise about the year groups and classes that need additional targeting in the school development plan
 - detailing the steps needed to achieve the school's challenging targets
 - leading the whole school community in raising the profile of reading to ensure that all pupils have more opportunities to read more widely and often.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- The achievement of pupils is uneven across the school. Until recently, expectations for pupils' attainment and progress have been too low.
- At the end of Year 6 in 2013 pupils' progress and attainment improved to broadly average in English and mathematics although too few of the most-able pupils reached the higher levels in reading and writing. School data and work in books show that most current pupils are making at least the progress expected across Key Stage 2. Progress is stronger in mathematics than in reading or writing.
- There is still some variation in pupils' progress between different classes, year groups and subjects due to differences in the quality of teaching. There is evidence of pupils making rapid progress in some classes but this is not consistent across the school.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similar rates of progress to other pupils in the school but their levels of attainment are still below similar pupils nationally. The school has prioritised improving the achievement of these pupils and is now making good use of a learning mentor and support staff to lead small group and individual sessions for them.
- Most children join the school in Nursery with skills that are well below those expected for their age, especially in communication and language. They settle in very well and make good progress over Nursery and Reception classes so that by the time they start in Year 1, standards are still below, but much closer to, what is expected nationally.
- Year 1 pupils are in line with pupils nationally in the phonics (letters and the sounds they make) screening check. They know how to break down words when they are unsure, although less-able pupils struggle to access simple words. Pupils across the school are enthusiastic and keen to learn but do not consistently read widely enough because reading is not given a high enough profile in the school.
- Attainment at Key Stage 1 improved in 2013. While still below the national average in reading, writing and mathematics, attainment is no longer significantly below average for the first time in two years. Few pupils who are capable of reaching the higher Level 3 do so.
- The school provides additional support in class and extra sessions to accelerate the achievement in English and mathematics of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding and pupils who have English as an additional language. The attainment gap between these pupils and other pupils has narrowed significantly compared to previous years, so that it is now broadly similar to national figures at Year 2 and Year 6. This demonstrates the school's commitment to promoting equality of opportunity, although inconsistencies remain across different year groups and classes throughout school.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching over time has not been good enough across the school. Since the last inspection, significant changes of teachers and instability in staffing have led to some disruption which has affected progress. More recently, staffing has become more stable, the proportion of good teaching is increasing and a small amount is now outstanding.
- In most lessons, teachers engage pupils from the start in contributing to and participating in interesting activities. However, too few staff routinely insist that pupils present their work neatly in books or that they produce enough written work in lessons. As a result, most pupils do not take extra care and this can lead to avoidable errors.
- Teachers mark work regularly and provide constructive feedback to pupils. However, some teachers do not routinely ensure that pupils reflect and act upon the guidance they are given. Consequently, some mistakes are repeated and pupils' work does not improve quickly enough.
- Where teaching is most effective, teachers use information on what pupils already know and

understand to adapt the tasks and the level of challenge to the needs of the different pupils.

- In lessons where teaching is less effective, teachers set the same work for the whole class and their expectations of pupils, particularly the most-able, are not sufficiently high. This means that the pace of learning is slowed down for these pupils and they do not make the progress of which they are capable. Learning tasks are too easy for some pupils and they are not given sufficient time to work independently or think for themselves.
- Teachers do not always use questioning effectively to probe pupils' understanding and to deepen their knowledge. They ask the same questions of the whole class and accept short answers from the few pupils who respond. However, in a Year 6 physical education lesson, pupils were given questions to answer so that they could work out for themselves how they could best develop 'expert triple jumps' or use 'rhythm in motion'. This method ensured that they all made good progress.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, activities are well planned to build children's enthusiasm and interest in learning. Early reading, writing and number skills are introduced systematically through rhymes, songs and games.
- Support staff and additional adults are used well to support the learning of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. They break tasks down into small steps and engage pupils in purposeful discussion.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning in lessons and around the school are good. They are courteous and friendly. They show respect for each other and for adults; they work hard and cooperate well with each other. They enjoy lessons and listen carefully, having high levels of interest and motivation, even when the tasks provided are not matched to their interests.
- Most pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves and their friends safe. At break times and lunch times, pupils play happily and safely with their friends. Pupils are able to explain what bullying is and report that this is very rare. They recognise concerns regarding internet safety and the issues connected with social networking. They are confident that there are numerous adults to talk to if they have any worries.
- Most parents express the view that behaviour in school is good. They think their children are kept safe and several speak positively about how their children's individual and additional needs are well supported.
- While attendance is still below the national average, it has continued to improve annually since the last inspection. Persistent absence is followed up. Good attendance is promoted well and there is an expectation that pupils and parents know about the importance of attendance and its impact on pupils' achievement.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They are tolerant and supportive of each other. They understand other faiths and cultures and use their personal qualities to explore the experiences and feelings of others within the local and wider communities.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because leaders have yet to eliminate the remaining inconsistencies in teaching that hold back pupils' achievement.
- The headteacher is committed to ensuring that every pupil succeeds through improving teaching. The introduction of rigorous monitoring and evaluation procedures has resulted in changes in a significant number of teaching staff and the eradication of inadequate teaching. Teaching is improving quickly as new teachers are appointed to the school, although it is not yet consistently good or better.
- Members of the newly secured permanent leadership team have very clear roles and responsibilities that are focused on the needs of the pupils. This has included working alongside

subject leaders who are now more effective in improving teaching and learning in their subjects. However, the leadership team has not been established long enough to impact sufficiently on securing improvement in pupils' progress over time.

- Leaders now use a wide range of performance data to set achievement targets for all pupils. The headteacher has introduced a rigorous system of managing teachers' performance based on the national standards for teaching. Governors are provided with the information to link pay to teachers' performance and outcomes for pupils.
- School improvement plans, based on accurate analysis of information from monitoring, show the actions that leaders intend to take and the expected overall outcomes. However, although the progress of different groups varies, the plans are not sufficiently specific about which classes and year groups need even more support.
- The school has improved its curriculum so that it meets the needs and interests of the pupils. It is continuing to develop the use of literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects. The school provides significant enrichment to the curriculum and makes good use of visits and visitors to engage pupils' interests and experiences.
- Parents appreciate the changes that the headteacher has brought about since the last inspection and recognises the improvements. They are very positive about the work that the school does with their children.
- The school has identified that it will use the primary sports funding to increase the amount of sport and swimming sessions taught and provide greater opportunities for the active participation of all pupils in competitive sports. An external sport expert has been recruited to work with staff to increase their skills in effectively teaching a range of sporting activities. It is too early to assess the impact of these actions.
- The local authority provides appropriate support to bring about further improvements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors provide effective challenge and support. They are well informed about the strengths of the school and recognise the areas needing improvement.
 - They know that achievement has been below national expectations and are actively involved in ensuring that recent improvements are maintained.
 - They use available data to evaluate how well the school is doing. They are actively involved in the life of the school, making frequent visits to monitor its effectiveness.
 - They ensure that appropriate checks are made on the performance of teachers, and that the information from these checks is linked to pay rises and promotion.
 - The governors ensure that resources are managed effectively and expect value for money. They understand how the additional funding available through the pupil premium is used and have been involved in deciding how it is spent. They ensure that national safeguarding requirements are all met.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	107695
Local authority	Kirklees
Inspection number	425764

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	240
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Robert Iredale
Headteacher	Cate Speight
Date of previous school inspection	1 December 2011
Telephone number	01484 222240
Fax number	01484 222241
Email address	office.cowlersley@edukirklees.net

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