

New Town Primary School

School Terrace, Reading, Berkshire RG1 3LS

Inspection dates

20–21 January 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Teachers frequently do not plan activities at the right level for lower and higher ability pupils within their classes.
- Some teachers focus too much on helping pupils to complete activities, rather than making sure they understand what they are doing. This means that pupils' work is not always a true reflection of their understanding.
- Teaching assistants sometimes give pupils too much help, so pupils do not have to think for themselves.
- Some pupils, groups and classes have not caught up to the expected level, particularly in reading. The most-able pupils do not achieve as well as they should.
- Teaching in some of the early years classes does not meet pupils' needs well enough. This is because some activities are not carefully planned and organised to interest children and help them learn.
- Although the early years leader knows what needs to be done, her other responsibilities prevent her from improving provision quickly enough.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders' relentless focus on improving teaching and achievement has led to significant improvements in the effectiveness of the school.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. Pupils are no longer scared of their peers and enjoy learning and playing in a calm environment. They are keen to make the most of opportunities.
- Pupils make good progress in acquiring early reading skills because phonics is taught well by both teachers and teaching assistants.
- The needs of disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs are met well through carefully planned and targeted support. This has led to accelerated progress.
- Leaders and the interim executive board keep pupils very safe. Systems and policies are robust. Pupils feel safe and enjoy school. Leaders have worked successfully with the local authority to tackle attendance.

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good or better by making sure that all teachers:
 - plan activities at the right level to meet the needs of the full range of abilities within their classes
 - check pupils' understanding in lessons and adapt tasks if pupils do not have the necessary skills
 - provide useful guidance to teaching assistants, so that their support helps pupils to learn more and acquire the skills to work independently.

- Improve achievement so that it is at least in line with national figures by ensuring that:
 - pupils understand the specific vocabulary in their reading books and are provided with texts that they can read independently
 - appropriate support is put in place to enable individuals, groups of pupils and classes to catch up to the expected level, and the most-able pupils are challenged to achieve above the expected level.

- Improve the quality of early years provision by ensuring that leaders have sufficient time to tackle the improvements needed in teaching and learning.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The executive headteacher, head of school and senior leaders have worked tirelessly to raise standards at the school. Their vision for excellence has, over time, become embedded in the culture of the school so that all staff are committed to achieving the best for the pupils.
 - Leaders check teaching systematically by observing lessons and checking pupils' work and progress. Their rigorous and accurate feedback and follow-up have ensured that inadequate teaching has been eradicated.
 - Leaders check pupils' progress carefully. Using a new approach to assessment, they identify whether pupils are working at the expected levels for their age and where there are gaps in their learning. They sensibly give teachers opportunities to compare what pupils can do with those in other schools to ensure that assessment of learning is accurate.
 - Middle leaders, such as those responsible for a phase or subject, are developing in their roles. Through senior leaders' effective coaching and mentoring, middle leaders have recognised where there is stronger and weaker practice in their areas, identified priorities for improvement and drawn up suitable action plans.
 - Senior leaders set clear targets for teachers, linked to pupils' progress. Links between pay and performance are established. Where targets are not met, appropriate support is put in place to improve teaching. Leaders have managed significant recruitment and retention issues effectively through part-time roles and partnership working with St John's Primary School.
 - Leaders promote equal opportunities well. They check the progress of all groups of pupils carefully and take effective action when some fall behind.
 - Sports premium funding is used effectively to promote sport and encourage more pupils to get involved in physical activities. Almost all pupils participate in after-school sporting activities.
 - The pupil premium funding (to support disadvantaged pupils) is used carefully to meet the specific needs of individuals. Many of these pupils are making accelerated progress. In addition to supporting learning, the funding enables pupils to attend before- and after-school clubs, read regularly to an adult and participate in school trips. The combination of activities is helping these pupils to be more successful and raise their aspirations.
 - Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well supported through the curriculum and other activities. Pupils have daily opportunities to reflect on and discuss their beliefs. British values, such as tolerance, respect and democracy, are taught explicitly through lessons and assemblies. The curriculum provides a range of interesting opportunities for pupils to learn about different places, cultures and subjects. Links are beginning to be made between subjects.
 - The local authority has provided very useful support for leaders, teachers and the interim executive board (IEB). Frequent checks on progress, training and monitoring meetings have encouraged leaders to keep focused on the priorities, resulting in rapid improvements.
- **The governance of the school**
- The IEB supports and challenges leaders effectively. Its members regularly check how the school is progressing against the weaknesses in the previous report. They verify what they are told by leaders against reports from local authority advisers.
 - The IEB manages the finances well and checks that the funding for disadvantaged pupils is used effectively to support their progress.
 - The IEB has been instrumental in appointing a permanent leader for the school and has begun the transition back to a full governing body.
- Safeguarding processes are rigorous and robust. Leaders and governors ensure that all are appropriately trained to keep pupils safe. Staff know exactly what they need to do if they have a concern and are rightly confident that leaders will take swift action. The record-keeping of incidents is very thorough and information is shared appropriately.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- Too few teachers meet the needs of the range of abilities of pupils within their classes. They plan appropriate, and often interesting, activities for the middle-ability group. However, many teachers are not sufficiently adept at adapting activities for pupils who need more support, or challenging the most-able pupils who could achieve higher levels.
- Teachers keep pupils busy in lessons. They use a range of strategies to enable pupils to discuss their thinking and share ideas, such as working in pairs and small groups and then feeding back to the class. In the most effective lessons, teachers check pupils' understanding and adapt lessons accordingly. Some teachers, however, focus too much on helping pupils complete activities rather than how much they understand. This means work in books looks as though pupils have learned, but discussions with pupils show that this is not always the case.
- Teachers consistently follow the school's marking and feedback policy, but not all of them provide accurate and helpful feedback about what pupils need to do next.
- Phonics (how letters link to sounds) is taught well. Teachers and teaching assistants are precise and accurate in their teaching. They provide good opportunities for pupils to practise saying and writing their letters. This much improved teaching is helping pupils to acquire early reading skills at a better pace.
- The teaching of reading requires improvement because whole-class lessons do not help pupils to catch up in their reading. Teachers do not adapt texts so that they are accessible for pupils at the lower reading levels, and adults who hear individual pupils read do not take enough time to explore the meaning of specific vocabulary.
- The teaching of writing is improving and is often good. Teachers follow the school's policy, so they teach a combination of grammatical, punctuation, spelling and writing skills. In many classes, pupils have opportunities to write across the curriculum, so they are able to practise their skills more often and write for different purposes. On occasions, teachers provide too much support, so the writing in pupils' books does not give a true reflection of their skills.
- Mathematics teaching requires improvement. In some lessons, pupils are taught to follow a process rather than to understand the mathematics. In the best lessons, teachers explain the learning before they teach the process and set work at different levels to meet the range of abilities. However, in several classes this does not happen, so some pupils follow the process they have been taught but are unable to explain their answer. Other pupils waste time in lessons working through problems that are too easy or hard for them.
- The specific arrangements to meet the needs of pupils who speak English as an additional language are good. When pupils arrive they are assessed and, if necessary, provided with carefully planned support. Adults who speak their language provide regular help with English and other subjects.
- Teaching assistants' support is variable. Some work effectively with pupils to develop their learning and skills. Others concentrate too much on helping pupils complete the task, telling pupils what to do rather than deepening their understanding.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Leaders and teachers encourage pupils to be confident and independent, and to respect others.
- Pupils are proud of their school. They take care of resources and equipment and keep their classrooms tidy.
- Pupils are adamant that there is no bullying at school. Some remember that it was common in the past, but stopped as soon as the executive headteacher and head of school joined the school.
- Pupils listen attentively to each other and respond appropriately. They are very pleased to have a newly formed school council, through which they are beginning to share their views about how the school can improve further.
- Pupils learn to keep themselves safe. Owing to the location of the school, they learn about safety near railways and water. They also know how to be safe on the internet and in the event of a fire.

- In 2014, pupils' attendance was well below that of other schools nationally. The school has successfully tackled this so that it is now broadly average.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school.
- Consistently applied policies and rigorous monitoring of incidents mean that poor behaviour is a distant memory.
- Pupils are keen to learn; they are calm and attentive in lessons and try hard, even when teaching and activities do not meet their needs.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Although many pupils are now making good progress and catching up to where they ought to be, there are some for whom this is not the case.
- Too few of the most-able pupils reach the higher levels they are capable of because teachers do not know how to challenge these pupils effectively.
- Progress in reading has accelerated and more pupils are working at the expected level. Pupils are making good progress in phonics. They can use their skills to work out what words say, but do not always understand what they are reading.
- Achievement in writing and mathematics is improving. Work in pupils' books and information about their progress show that, broadly speaking, many pupils are now working at a level typical for their age. There are variations between boys and girls, with more girls typically, but not always, achieving the expected levels. Leaders' work to motivate boys is helping to tackle this, but the history of underachievement means they have not yet caught up.
- Across the school, pupils with special educational needs are making good progress. This is a result of well-planned programmes for individuals and small groups and careful monitoring of their progress.
- Many of the pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding are making good progress and reaching the same levels as their peers in school. However, there are some variations between classes and subjects, and disadvantaged pupils do not achieve as well as other pupils nationally.
- Work in books reflects the concerted effort the school has made to improve handwriting and presentation. Pupils take pride in their work.

Early years provision

requires improvement

- Teaching and learning are too variable across the three classes and progress in some classes is too slow. The youngest children do not learn as much as they could because activities are not carefully planned and organised to meet children's needs.
- Where teachers structure activities carefully, children make good progress. This is typically the case for the older children.
- Better teaching for the older children means that they are generally well prepared for their transition to Year 1.
- The early years learning areas are attractive, well organised and well resourced.
- Adults care for children and help them to become independent and confident. Relationships between children and adults are positive and respectful.
- Children generally behave well. They meet the expectations of adults, and when there are clear routines and high expectations, children behave very well. However, this is not the case in all classes.
- Children are keen to learn. When they find activities that interest them, they concentrate well. The younger children often flit between activities because there is not enough guidance from adults and not all the activities are well planned or enjoyable.
- The school provides useful opportunities for parents to be involved with their children's learning. An example of this is the morning drop-off, where parents bring the children into school and read with them at the beginning of the school day.

- The early years leader, who is also the executive headteacher, knows what needs to be done to improve the early years provision. However, with her other responsibilities, and the amount to do to ensure all early years teaching is good, improvement has been too slow to date.

School details

Unique reference number	109785
Local authority	Reading
Inspection number	10009306

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	304
Appropriate authority	The interim executive board
Chair	Mr M Lambden
Executive headteacher	Mrs A Brackstone
Telephone number	0118 9375509
Website	www.newtown.reading.sch.uk
Email address	admin@newtown.reading.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	15–16 October 2014

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized primary school.
- The large majority of pupils are from minority ethnic groups and speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium is above average.
- There is a part-time nursery and two full-time Reception classes, one of which also accommodates a few Year 1 pupils. The nursery is managed by the IEB.
- Pupil mobility is much higher than normal and many pupils leave and join throughout the school year.
- In 2015, the school met the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment in English and mathematics.
- Arrangements have been made for the school to form a multi-academy trust with St John's Primary School. The executive headteacher leads both schools.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed nine lessons, of which four were joint observations with senior leaders. Inspectors also made some shorter visits to classes, listened to pupils reading and looked at pupils' work in books and on display.
- Meetings were held with the executive headteacher and head of school, other leaders, staff, two members of the IEB, including the Chair of the IEB, and a group of pupils from Years 5 and 6. Inspectors also met with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of parents' views through informal discussions and the school's recent survey. Only three parents responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of school documentation, including the school's information on pupils' progress, the school improvement plan, minutes of IEB meetings, and documents related to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Louise Adams, lead inspector

Justin Bartlett

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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