

# Northlands Junior School

Winifred Road, Pitsea, Basildon, SS13 3JQ

**Inspection dates** 31 January–1 February 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
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

- Pupils are now making better progress than in the past thanks to better teaching, but are not yet reaching the standards they are capable of in English and mathematics.
- Teaching requires improvement. Most is now good, but the quality is still inconsistent. This means that different groups of pupils do not always make as much progress as they could.
- Additional adults are used well to support slower learners, although they sometimes direct pupils' learning too much rather than encouraging their independence.
- Leaders have raised the quality of teaching across the school. They check lessons regularly to spot required improvements. However, the feedback to teachers is not always detailed enough, or followed up quickly enough, to ensure that changes are made quickly and effectively.
- The school has made well-considered changes to the way reading is taught, although too recently for this to have had an impact on pupils' learning and progress.

### The school has the following strengths

- Leaders and managers are doing the right things to improve pupils' achievement.
- The governors are well informed. They hold leaders to account effectively and support the school well.
- The school is a happy and friendly community. Pupils say they feel safe and attendance is improving.
- Pupils enjoy their learning and speak with pride about the work they do.
- Behaviour in class and around the school is good. Pupils get on well with each other, and with the adults who teach them.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development is promoted well through lively and relevant teaching.
- The arrangements to hold teachers to account for pupils' progress are having a positive impact on learning.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 14 lessons, 12 of which were seen together with members of the senior leadership team. They attended the breakfast club and observed a school assembly.
- Discussions were held with the head and deputy headteacher, staff, governors and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors also looked at other aspects of the school's work, including documentation relating to safeguarding and information about pupils' progress and attendance.
- The inspectors listened to pupils in Year 3 reading and looked at a range of pupils' work, both in their books and on display in classrooms and corridors. They observed playtime and lunch breaks, and met with a group of pupils to consider their views.
- Account was taken of the 13 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) as well as comments made during informal discussions inspectors had with parents and carers bringing their children to school. The views of the 26 staff who completed the voluntary questionnaire were also considered.

## Inspection team

Judith O'Hare, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Matthew Klimcke

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This school is average in size for a junior school.
- The majority of pupils have a White British heritage. Relatively few come from minority ethnic groups or speak English as an additional language.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- A high proportion of pupils are supported by the pupil premium, which is additional government funding for certain groups of pupils, including those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is average. However, the proportion supported through school action plus or a statement of educational needs is well above average.
- All pupils are educated at this site.
- Over the last few years a high number of staff have joined or left the school.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make the quality of teaching consistently good or better and raise standards by:
  - giving teaching assistants clear instructions on how to guide the learning of pupils in their care
  - encouraging pupils to develop their skills without direct supervision
  - using assessments made during lessons to change activities or pace when necessary
  - giving pupils better opportunities to practise and develop the areas for improvement identified in marking.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
  - monitoring and evaluating the impact of recent changes made to the teaching of reading, to ensure this has maximum impact on pupils' progress
  - ensuring that feedback to teachers following lesson observations identifies shortcomings precisely
  - setting clear deadlines for resolving these required improvements in teaching.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Pupils' progress is improving, but not all pupils are reaching the standards they are capable of. Standards have not improved fast enough because weaker teaching in previous years, combined with staffing instability, has held back pupils' progress.
- Pupils' attainment when they join the school in Year 3 is slightly below average in reading, writing and mathematics. At the end of Year 6, it remains below average. Staffing is now more stable, and improvements to the quality of teaching have had a positive impact on pupils' achievement. However, some inconsistencies remain in pupils' progress. For example, pupils supported at school action did not do as well as other groups until recently, and although progress for all pupils improved in 2012, some more-able pupils did not do as well as expected.
- The school has addressing this issue and good 'special focus' programmes such as one-to-one tuition have been introduced to accelerate progress. Current tracking data show that these programmes are proving successful and that gaps between different groups are closing.
- Pupils now have good and regular opportunities to write independently in different subjects. The most recent school data show pupils' performance to be closer to nationally expected levels. Year 6 reading levels remained below average in the 2012 tests. Changes to the way reading is taught across the school are beginning to have an impact, although it is too soon to tell if these initiatives have been fully successful.
- The 2012 Year 6 results show that pupils known to be entitled to free school meals, over half the school population, made progress which was similar to other pupils. Such data, together with a pattern of rapidly improving progress evident in pupils' books across the school, show that the school is now driving improvements at a better pace and previous gaps in attainment between this group and those not supported by additional funding are narrowing.
- The results also showed that pupils supported at school action made slower progress than other groups, but those at school action plus did better than expected in all subjects. In the lessons observed there was little difference between the progress these pupils make and that of other groups. This is because of the good quality of the small group and individual support they now receive.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Good use of training and performance targets has improved the quality of teaching across the school, although it is not yet consistently good enough to ensure all pupils make rapid progress in all year groups. The strongest teaching is in Years 3 and 6.
- The best teaching is well planned. Teachers make good use of assessment information to guide the lesson content. Activities are generally well matched to pupils' ability levels, and are lively and engaging. Teachers ask searching questions to probe pupils' understanding, but do not always use the results to adjust the difficulty of tasks, or give pupils enough time to consider their responses. This limits their opportunities to engage in discussions and to draw their own conclusions.
- The school has used pupil premium money well to give pupils who require extra help with their learning a good level of support from teachers and teaching assistants who have the specific

skills to improve their progress. Sometimes pupils rely too much on this support, and do not work enough on their own. Occasionally, work with specific pupils detracts from the whole-class teaching focus when teaching assistants are not properly guided by the teacher.

- In most lessons pupils have frequent opportunities to use and develop their literacy skills in real-life situations. For example, following from a discussion during a Year 6 lesson on internet safety, pupils developed their 'instructional texts' skills through writing guidelines to inform safe use of social networking sites. This activity provided them with a useful prompt to consider the importance of clarity when writing. Sometimes the tasks set are directed too much by the teacher. This limits pupils' opportunities to develop their skills independently.
- Good improvements have been made to assessment procedures, the marking of pupils' work and the feedback they receive. Comments made by teachers recognise good work and detail steps to be taken to bring about improvements. Pupils are getting used to these but do not always respond promptly to the advice, so errors are not remedied fast enough to ensure good progress is maintained.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are good

- This is a happy school. Behaviour has improved significantly because the clear and precise behaviour code is respected by all. Pupils are polite, well mannered and considerate. Inspectors were touched by the warm welcome they received.
- The school has developed a warm and positive climate for learning, with a strong focus on striving to do one's best. This helps to make sure that pupils from all backgrounds have an equal chance to succeed. Pupils support each other well in lessons. They work together in groups and willingly engage in activities such as discussing their learning with a partner.
- Pupils respond well to their teachers' instructions. Occasionally, when work is too easy or when activities take too long in lessons, their attention can wander. When this happens, teachers and teaching assistants quickly get them back on track.
- Pupils behave well around the school during school breaks and at lunch times. They say that there is little bullying or racist behaviour and that where a problem occurs, it is well managed by teachers and teaching assistants. The number of recorded incidents of, for example, racist or homophobic name-calling is very low and has decreased significantly.
- Parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire were unanimous in their view that their children feel safe at school. Pupils also say they feel safe. They appreciate the lessons they receive about issues such as internet safety and 'stranger danger'. They can explain what cyber bullying is and know how to deal with this.
- The school has used a number of successful strategies to improve attendance. This includes close partnership working with parents and carers, celebrating good attendance and a lack of tolerance where absence is not authorised. The rate of attendance is now broadly average and the level of exclusions has reduced markedly.

### **The leadership and management** requires improvement

- The headteacher and leadership team are appropriately focused on improving the school. However, the high turnover of staff, particularly in the last two years, has slowed the pace of change, and it has not been fast enough to bring about the required improvements in pupils'

progress and make it good.

- The leadership team has an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They have sought out the support they need to help them move forward. For example, close partnership work with neighbouring schools is enabling all staff to benefit from a range of useful and important training opportunities. This includes inter-school visits to share and observe good practice and to moderate pupils' work.
- The management of teachers' performance has been strengthened. Regular monitoring of teaching through lesson observations and learning walks is effective in identifying where improvements are needed. However, one reason why improvements in pupils' progress are not more rapid is that the feedback given to teachers is not precise enough to help them respond quickly. As a result, inconsistencies in the quality of teaching in different year groups still remain.
- The range of subjects taught is well balanced, varied and interesting. Pupils particularly enjoy their topic-based learning. The themes selected help them to develop their understanding of the wider world and support their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well. Activities such as art classes, trips and visits further enhance these opportunities. Pupils appreciate the wide and varied range of after-school clubs, trips and visits.
- Changes made to the teaching of English, and in particular the focus on improving writing skills, have been highly effective. Pupils have very good opportunities to write at length across the full range of subjects. The introduction of 'Big Write' offers further opportunities for pupils to write independently. Pupils say that this and the new guided reading sessions are helping them to make better progress.
- The local authority has an accurate view of the school's current performance, and has provided some helpful support and guidance. Its recent review, for example, acknowledged the progress made, but also indicated clearly the improvements required to the teaching of reading.
- Pupil premium funding has been used to employ additional adults in class, and to supplement activities so that eligible pupils can take a full part in school life. The progress of these pupils is closely monitored, to be sure the funding is being spent well.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governors are led well by an effective Chair of the Governing Body. A former teacher at the school, she understands clearly the challenges they face. Governors have had extensive training to ensure that they can challenge leaders successfully. They have an appropriate understanding of the school's performance management, data and appraisal systems. Changes made to the way teachers are rewarded ensure that their pay is appropriately linked to pupils' performance. Governors track finances well, including the use of the pupil premium money, for which they hold the school to account. They support the school in deciding how this money is to be used. Their good understanding of data gives them an appropriate awareness of how well the school is performing. They monitor the success of the school first hand through regular visits to the school, which include lesson observations.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	115243
<b>Local authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	405574

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	245
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Margaret Stimpson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Kevin Watts
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	9 May 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01268 553366
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