

Huntingdon Primary School

Ambury Road, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire, PE29 1AD

Inspection dates 20–21 February 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		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Despite a dramatic rise in achievement in the last year, pupils' progress is still not consistently good, because some teaching requires improvement.
- Attainment, although improving, remains too low because of a legacy of underachievement from the past.
- In some lessons, the pace is too slow, or some pupils are given tasks that are too hard or too easy for them.
- Marking of work and action taken subsequently by pupils do not always help them to improve.
- Several teachers are insecure in how to teach some subjects or aspects of subjects.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunity to undertake problem-solving and investigative work in mathematics.
- Too many pupils are persistently late to school in the mornings.

The school has the following strengths

- Excellent leadership by the headteacher, with strong backing from the governors and other senior leaders, has greatly improved the quality of teaching and learning in the last year.
- More lessons are now good than a year ago, and the high proportion of inadequate teaching at that time has been eliminated. Achievement is improving rapidly as a result.
- Staff manage behaviour well and pupils respond positively to the clear routines and teachers' high expectations.
- Pupils behave well, are keen to learn, and feel very safe in school. Provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.
- Pupils from different backgrounds have good relationships with each other and with staff. They have very good collaborative skills because of the many opportunities they have to discuss their work and make decisions together.
- Pupils are given a wide range of interesting tasks that they enjoy. They have good opportunities to write in different subjects, and this is improving standards in writing.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 18 lessons. Six of these visits were joint observations with the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- Several younger pupils read to inspectors.
- The team held formal discussions with staff, representatives of the governing body, a senior officer from the local education authority, and several groups of pupils.
- Inspectors analysed work in pupils' books and in displays around the school.
- Observations were made of pupils at break-times, in the lunch hall, during assembly and around the school generally.
- A variety of documentation was examined, particularly that related to safeguarding, records of pupils' progress, and the school's self-evaluation, and reviews of the school's work by the local authority. Inspectors checked documentation related to how teachers' performance is managed, and records of the school's own monitoring of teaching.
- The team took account of the 15 replies available to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) as well as replies to the school's own surveys about specific aspects of school life.

Inspection team

Steven Hill, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Fatiha Maitland

Additional Inspector

Fiona Robinson

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is above average in size for a primary school.
- The majority of pupils are White British, with about a quarter coming from a range of different ethnic heritages. An average proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The school receives pupil premium funding (provided for pupils who are known to be entitled to free school meals, those in the care of the local authority and those from armed-service families) for an above-average proportion of its pupils.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs who are supported at school action is high, at about double the national average. Similarly, the proportion who are supported at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is almost double the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are minimum expectations set for pupils' attainment and progress.
- All pupils are educated on site and the school does not make alternative provision for any of its pupils elsewhere.
- Just over year ago, a monitoring visit by Ofsted found that the school had made inadequate progress since its previous inspection.
- Following the departure of the school's headteacher in spring 2012, the local authority seconded one of its officers to the school as acting headteacher, who was later appointed to as the permanent headteacher. In the past twelve months, over half of the teaching staff have left and been replaced.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the consistency of teaching so that achievement improves, particularly by ensuring that:-
 - all lessons maintain a good pace of learning throughout
 - pupils are always given work that is suitably challenging, so tasks are neither too easy nor too hard
 - marking consistently tells pupils how they can improve, and that pupils are given time to follow their teachers' advice
 - specific training is provided for teachers who are insecure in some aspects of their subject knowledge.
- Provide pupils with more opportunities to use their mathematical skills in problem-solving and investigative tasks.
- Work with parents and their children to improve punctuality at the start of the school day.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- After the last inspection, pupils' achievement declined and became inadequate. This is confirmed by results of national assessments, as well as by the school's own records and a review of achievement by the local authority in March 2012.
- Pupils who were known to be entitled to free school meals did particularly badly over this period.
- Although progress has taken a sharp upturn in the last year, it still requires improvement in too many lessons to be good overall. Because of their slow progress in the past, the attainment of too many pupils is still lower than it should be, despite continuing improvements.
- Last year, progress was especially rapid for pupils in Years 5 and 6, who had fallen the furthest behind. Pupils in Year 6 who were known to be eligible for funding from the pupil premium did particularly well, so the gap between their attainment and that of their classmates reduced, although it was still wider than it should have been.
- In most lessons, pupils now make good progress, and attainment is rising quickly.
- The achievement of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs has followed the same pattern as that of their classmates. A major overhaul of assessment and provision for these pupils has seen their progress increase rapidly, because they are increasingly given work that is tightly matched to their particular needs. These pupils get a good mixture of challenge and support from the skilled extra adults who work with them.
- There are no differences between the achievements of boys and girls, those pupils who are from different ethnic groups, or between those who speak English as an additional language and others.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching, while much better than it was, still requires improvement in a significant proportion of lessons. Aspects of teaching which are strong in many lessons are weak in others.
- Teachers now routinely prepare different tasks for pupils with different ability levels. This is usually done well, making good use of the school's more accurate assessment systems but, at other times, some pupils are given work that is too easy or too hard for them.
- Many lessons have a brisk pace so a lot of learning is accomplished in the time. However, in others, the pace is too leisurely. On occasions some pupils have to wait after completing one task before starting another, or too much time is spent changing from one activity to another.
- The quality of marking is variable. Marking is always done thoroughly, praising pupils' successes and identifying their mistakes. There is some good practice in telling pupils how to improve, but this is not consistent. In mathematics in Year 6, pupils are frequently given extra examples to practise if they have had problems, or harder tasks to challenge them further if they have been successful, and pupils conscientiously do this extra work. In other year-groups and subjects, this practice is rarer, and too often pupils do not respond to their teachers' comments and questions.

- Extensive extra training has greatly improved teachers' subject knowledge, particularly in mathematics and English, and this has been successful in raising achievement. However, some staff still have weaknesses in their expertise in teaching particular subjects, or aspects of subjects, which can slow the pace of learning for pupils.
- A consistent strength in teaching is the management of behaviour, based on well-established routines, positive relationships with pupils and well-understood systems of sanctions and rewards. The resultant good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning have helped underpin the improvements in pupils' progress in the last year.
- Teachers provide pupils with very effective opportunities to work together and share ideas in discussion. This greatly supports pupils' good collaborative skills and enhances their progress in many subjects. In a Year 6 lesson, for example, pupils' complete involvement in animated discussions, and their thoughtful sharing of ideas, led to good progress in their skills and understanding of different ways of starting a story.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils behave well and enjoy school. They report that behaviour has improved over the last year, a view endorsed by staff and by the local authority. Parents' views on behaviour are more positive than at the last inspection.
- Pupils concentrate well in lessons, listen attentively to their teachers and to each other, and collaborate very effectively when working in pairs or small teams. They work hard, take a pride in their success and tackle their errors patiently.
- Boys and girls from different backgrounds cooperate well in class and play together happily outside. They are tolerant of each other's problems and, by Year 6, are very mature in their support for each other. They see it as their responsibility to help new pupils to settle happily into school, for example.
- Pupils feel very safe and secure in the school and can explain why. They are very confident that they will receive good support from the adults if they have difficulties, either personally or academically. One girl told an inspector that she enjoys school more now, because she is much more confident in approaching the teachers if she is worried about anything. Her classmates agreed that this was the case.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how they can contribute to their own safety in a variety of situations, for example when using the internet.
- A variety of initiatives, such as anti-bullying week, has given pupils a good understanding of different kinds of bullying and how to combat them. In discussion, a group of Year 6 pupils agreed that bullying is increasingly rare, and struggled to remember any recent examples. The schools' records confirm this picture.
- Attendance has improved to be broadly average, but there are still too many pupils who do not arrive on time in the mornings. This undermines their learning and that of their classmates at the start of the school day.
- The school has been very successful in the last year in helping to improve the conduct of pupils

who struggle to conform to expected standards of behaviour. Staff have been very willing to 'go the extra mile' in working with these pupils and their families to help them do better at school.

The leadership and management are good

- The very clear direction given by the headteacher, together with strong support from her deputy and an increasingly effective senior leadership team, has greatly improved provision in the last year.
- A rigorous and unrelenting focus on improving teaching, and consequent learning, has been very effective, particularly in eliminating inadequate teaching. Regular monitoring of lessons and an insistence on high expectations have been complemented by an extensive programme of training to help teachers to improve their practice. This has been successful despite a huge turnover in teaching staff over the last year.
- The systems to manage teachers' performance provide clear targets for them which are linked clearly to school priorities as well as to teachers' management responsibilities, and to suitable training. Assessments of these targets are used to ensure that teachers' financial rewards are linked to their performance.
- The accuracy and use of assessment have improved. Assessment data are used very effectively to hold teachers to account for the progress made in their classes.
- The school provides an interesting curriculum which increasingly links subjects together in themes that make learning more meaningful. This has proved particularly successful in boosting pupils' writing skills, which are used well in different subjects. However, the use of mathematics skills, particularly in problem-solving or investigative work, is not extensive, either within mathematics itself or in applying these skills to other subjects.
- The pupil premium funding has been used well. Last year, the focus was on helping eligible pupils who were in the oldest classes to catch up with their classmates, particularly those in Year 6 who were due to leave for secondary school. This was successful, and this group of pupils made excellent progress in their last year of primary school, although not enough to make up all the ground lost in previous years. The money is being spent more widely this year, so that eligible pupils throughout the school are given effective help to make better progress.
- There are good systems in place to ensure that all pupils have equal opportunities for success, and to eliminate discrimination. This is shown in the similar progress of different groups as well as pupils' good relationships.
- The local authority has provided extensive, good-quality support to the school to underpin improvements in the last year. The initial provision of a successful, experienced interim headteacher, who has since become the substantive headteacher, was a major factor in success. However, the local authority has also contributed a vast deal of training and coaching to teachers to help improve practice and raise standards.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The members of the governing body played a major part in improving provision, including helping initiate major changes when they challenged the school about its poor performance, and enlisted the help of the local authority to help drive improvement. They have a good understanding of the quality of teaching and data about pupils' progress, and continue to challenge the school about its practice, as well as strongly supporting leaders in making difficult

decisions. They understand the use of performance management, and ensure it is used well to reward success as well as tackling weaknesses. They give a high priority to keeping pupils' safe and secure, and have ensured that procedures for safeguarding meet requirements.

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	135568
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	402721

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	390
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Gail Cowmeadow
Headteacher	Elaine Lynch
Date of previous school inspection	12 January 2010
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