

East Farleigh Primary School

Vicarage Lane, East Farleigh, Maidstone, Kent, ME15 0LY

Inspection dates 7–8 March 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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

- Pupils are not making as good progress in writing as they do in reading and mathematics.
- The more able do not always do as well as they should because work is not always hard enough for them.
- Teachers do not always make the best use of time available in lessons to drive forward pupils' learning. Not all staff use their questioning to make pupils think hard.
- Teachers and leaders do not always make effective and timely use of data about how well pupils are progressing.
- Checking of the quality of teaching over time by leaders and managers has not been effective or consistent enough to ensure that pupils make good progress.
- The acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher have not been in post long enough to have had a strong impact on ensuring teaching helps pupils to make consistently good progress.

The school has the following strengths

- Standards of attainment in reading and mathematics at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are above average.
- Pupils enjoy school, feel safe, behave well and show respect to each other and to adults.
- The opportunities which pupils are given to take responsibility and to develop socially, morally, culturally and spiritually are strengths of the school.
- The current acting headteacher and governing body understand the improvements needed and have started to take firm and effective action. As a result, achievement and the quality of teaching have already improved. This shows that the school is better placed to improve.
- Staff work together with a clear sense of direction and purpose, and morale is high.
- Governors hold the school to account well. They have steered the school well through a difficult period related to staffing.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 14 lessons. Five were jointly observed by the acting headteacher.
- In addition, inspectors listened to two groups of pupils read, and made visits to provision for pupils' learning outside the classroom to focus on specific aspects.
- Meetings were held with a group of pupils, members of the governing body, and school leaders. Meetings were also held with a representative from the local authority and a consultant headteacher to discuss the nature and impact of support provided for the school.
- Inspectors took account of 26 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, the views of six parents who communicated with inspectors during the inspection and of 104 parents and carers who responded to a school questionnaire the previous week, and 11 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- The inspection team observed the school's work, and looked at a number of documents, including the school's information on pupils' progress for the current school year and previous three years.
- Inspectors also looked at the school's checks for how well it is doing and school improvement documentation, planning, the governing body minutes and documentation on the management of teachers' performance over the last three years, and school policies and records relating to behaviour, safety and attendance.
- The school's safeguarding procedures were also evaluated.

Inspection team

David Webster, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Susan Senior

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- East Farleigh is smaller than an average-sized primary school.
- The vast majority of pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is below average, as is the proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- A below-average proportion of pupils are eligible for the pupil premium, which in this school provides additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or in local authority care.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has experienced a number of changes in staffing organisation, including the appointment of the previous acting deputy headteacher as acting headteacher in January 2013 during the long-term absence of the current substantive post-holder, an acting deputy headteacher and a part-time temporary consultative headteacher to advise on the school's improvement and development.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better by:
 - ensuring lessons run at the right pace with fully effective use of time
 - setting more challenging work for those pupils who are capable of doing harder work
 - developing the questioning skills of teachers and support staff.
- Raise attainment and accelerate progress in writing by:
 - planning more opportunities for pupils to work practically and independently
 - ensuring more opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills in other subjects and to write at length, particularly those in Year 3 to Year 6 and those who are more able
 - offering more interesting approaches to stimulate boys' writing.
- Improve the leadership of teaching by:
 - making sure key stage and subject leaders are sharply focused on continually improving the quality and consistency of teaching
 - improving the use of data so leaders and teachers can quickly react to how well different groups of pupils are performing throughout the school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- In recent times, too few pupils, particularly boys, have made rapid enough progress between Years 2 and 6 in writing. However, their performance is improving steadily. Progress in reading and mathematics is stronger, but too many pupils, especially the more able, have made limited progress because of inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. In particular, when the whole class is set the same work, the more able find it too easy.
- By the end of Year 6, standards achieved in reading and mathematics are above average.
- Despite a significant dip in pupils' writing attainment at the end of Year 6 in 2012, current standards in writing have risen and are now broadly average. This is confirmed by work seen in pupils' books.
- Most pupils start in the Reception class with skill levels and knowledge expected for their age, but with some weaknesses in writing and listening skills. They make at least expected, and sometimes better than expected, progress. This is because the curriculum is well planned, there is some good teaching, and partnerships with parents and carers support children well in their learning.
- A focus upon early reading, good teaching of guided reading and a systematic approach to the teaching of how letters and sounds link (phonics) help children to make good progress in reading. By the end of Key Stage 2 they are confident readers choosing to read books for enjoyment.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make similar rates of progress to other pupils, due to well-planned and well-organised support. This demonstrates the school's effective focus on promoting equality of opportunity.
- The school has taken appropriate steps to ensure the few pupils eligible for pupil premium funding are effectively supported in their academic and personal needs. This support is demonstrated by the increasing rate of progress, measured by increased average points scores, made by those pupils. In this way, the school is narrowing the gap in their English and mathematics attainment in relation to similar pupils in other schools and the national average.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching requires improvement because it is not consistently good.
- The teaching of writing requires improvement. Recent actions taken to develop pupils' skills in writing, for example through opportunities to write at length and in a wide range of subjects, have started to improve the quality of work. However, these strategies are not used consistently by all teachers, particularly in challenging more-able pupils and motivating boys.
- In some lessons, the pace of learning can be slow because teachers talk for too long and some pupils spend too long working on the same activity.
- Questioning is not always used skilfully by teachers and teaching assistants to check understanding, challenge thinking or develop pupils' ideas. This means that pupils' learning and progress is slower than it might otherwise be, particularly in writing. More-able pupils and some boys are not always challenged sufficiently, for example when questioning is not sharply focused and activities are not matched fully to their interests and abilities.
- Systems to assess how well pupils are progressing have strengthened since the previous inspection. Teachers are beginning to analyse the progress of individuals and groups of pupils and use this information to plan appropriate activities for pupils. However, the use of this data is not always consistent or timely enough to ensure that any changes in planned activities provide the right level of challenge. As a result, the progress of some pupils is slower than it might otherwise be.
- In more effective teaching, teachers hold high expectations, set a brisk pace, question skilfully,

use imaginative resources, and set activities well to provide challenge for all pupils. They give pupils opportunities to reflect on and improve their work in both class discussion and in their written response to detailed marking. These features characterised a lesson in which pupils used their imaginations well to make good progress in writing creatively about their playground.

- In Reception, children enjoy an exciting range of activities. Teachers plan opportunities in response to children's interests to develop their use of language. Independence is encouraged and their progress is tracked well over time.
- Good teaching of the sounds letters make and the systematic teaching of reading throughout the school have helped pupils make good gains in learning to read during over time.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs benefit from well-planned effective support provided by adults. As a result, their attainment has improved in reading and mathematics compared to similar pupils nationally.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils enjoy coming to school to learn, and this is reflected in their attendance, which is consistently above the national average.
- There is a very positive ethos within the school. Pupils are thoughtful and considerate of each other, and welcoming to visitors. They show respect, courtesy and kindness regardless of age, race or disability. Relationships between pupils and staff are very positive and help to create a pleasant environment where pupils work well together and support each other's learning, either in discussion or when undertaking tasks.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to school and are keen to share their pleasure and pride in being selected as play leaders, peer mediators, monitors, members of the school council, or the school garden team caring for its animals and plants.
- Parents and carers who expressed a view say that behaviour is typically good and that their children are safe and happy at school. Pupils say that there is little poor behaviour. They are well aware of the different forms of bullying, such as internet-bullying or name-calling, and say that it is not tolerated. They are confident that should any incidents occur they would be dealt with quickly. They trust adults to help them if they have a problem and feel secure knowing that they can talk to someone and be taken seriously.
- Pupils say they feel safe and understand how to stay safe in a range of situations.
- The behaviour and safety of pupils are not outstanding because when learning activities fail to motivate or interest them, a few pupils do not fully engage in the tasks which have been provided.

The leadership and management require improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because it has not yet led to securely good teaching and rapid enough progress over time. This is partly due to the lack of continuity in the leadership team and the previous lack of involvement by middle and key stage leaders in monitoring and supporting improvements in the quality and consistency of teaching. However, current senior leaders have brought stability to the leadership and management of the school. As a result, the acting headteacher has been effective in creating change for the better in the school's learning environment.
- A strong staff team, effective governing body, and highly supportive parents and carers demonstrate their commitment to the school's continuing improvement; all want the very best for the school.
- Steps have been taken to raise pupils' achievement and improve the quality of teaching through the recent development of more structured tracking and monitoring systems. These have begun to secure improvements, evident in the increase in good teaching compared to a previous school

review, and the improvements in pupils' progress in reading and mathematics. However, the use of systems is still not rigorous enough to quickly identify underperformance, particularly by groups such as boys and more-able pupils. This means that action is not taken as quickly as it should be and their progress is slower than might otherwise be expected.

- Performance targets are set and regularly reviewed so that staff know and understand how well they are performing. They are linked to the level at which teachers are paid and are beginning to bring about improvements in the rate of pupils' progress.
- The local authority has provided proportionate support in assisting the acting headteacher in taking effective actions to improve the school's performance and facilitating regular support through the temporary appointment of a consultant headteacher.
- The school does well in promoting pupils' positive attitudes and respect for others. However, it does not fully meet the needs of all the pupils because it does not yet promote good achievement.
- Activities which involve pupils' learning about others' beliefs promote tolerance and understanding of ethnicity and diversity. All pupils are treated equally, including disabled and those with special educational needs, who make similar progress to their peers.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well through the varied opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and work together, the wide range of clubs, and the opportunities provided for enjoyment of music and drama. The curriculum contributes well to pupils' personal development, good behaviour, and enjoyment of learning, and is focused upon ensuring progress in reading, writing and mathematics. However, the school recognises the need to further increase opportunities, including teaching time available for literacy and numeracy.
- Effective use of pupil premium funding has helped identified pupils overcome barriers to their learning, enhanced their personal development and well-being, and raised their achievement in English and mathematics.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is effective. It has taken decisive actions to improve leadership during a considerable period of uncertainty in the leadership of the school. Governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement, examine pupils' progress information, and know how it compares to schools nationally. Training and a process of self-review have resulted in increased capacity to challenge and hold the school to account through a sharpened view of performance. Governors receive information on the quality of teaching and have taken appropriate steps to challenge where teaching has been weak. They have managed financial resources wisely and effectively to make acting leadership appointments and buy in effective consultant headteacher support. They have a detailed knowledge of how pupil premium funding is spent and its impact. They understand the link between performance and teachers' salary progression. Safeguarding has been given high priority to ensure compliance with statutory 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	118289
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	403344

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	210
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nick Robinson
Acting Headteacher	Ron Highman
Date of previous school inspection	18 September 2007
Telephone number	01622 726364
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