

Pebble Brook Primary School

Balmoral Avenue, Crewe, Cheshire, CW2 6PL

Inspection dates 24–25 September 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		Requires improvement	3
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

- The proportions of pupils who make good progress in English and mathematics given their starting points are not high enough.
- The attainment of the most-able pupils is not as high as it should be and their progress is slower than for other groups.
- Too much teaching requires improvement and not enough is outstanding.
- The quality of teaching is inconsistent in making sure that the work set for pupils of different abilities is neither too easy nor too hard.
- Teaching is also inconsistent in making sure that all pupils understand fully what they are meant to do in lessons and in checking on their progress and understanding during lessons.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and their attitudes to learning are not always good enough.
- The curriculum in the early stages of Key Stage 1 does not fully meet the needs of pupils who do not attain their early learning goals at the end of the Reception Year.
- Leaders and managers do not set challenging enough targets for the progress that pupils are expected to make.
- The quality of planning for future improvement is not focused sharply enough on raising achievement. It is also too vague in explaining how the impact of initiatives to improve the school is to be evaluated.

The school has the following strengths

- Attainment has risen in recent years in English and mathematics. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress.
- The proportions of pupils making typical progress in English and mathematics has risen to be in line with the national average.
- Leaders, managers and governors know what the school does well and where it could do better. They are taking appropriate actions to improve teaching and, as a result, achievement is on an upward trend.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 16 lessons taught by 10 teachers. One joint observation was carried out with the headteacher. The inspectors also considered a sample of pupils' written work in their exercise books. They also observed the teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) and listened to a group of pupils read.
- The inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, a group of teachers, two groups of pupils and representatives of the governing body. An inspector also spoke to parents at the start of the school day. An inspector also spoke on the telephone to a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors took account of a wide range of documentation including: information on pupils' progress and attainment; the school's evaluation of its effectiveness and the development plan; school records relating to behaviour, safety and the monitoring of teaching and learning.
- Inspectors took account of 37 responses on Parent View, Ofsted's on-line site for parents to express their views. The inspectors also took account of questionnaires returned by staff.

Inspection team

Stephen Wall, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Lyn Pender

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Pebble Brook is similar in size to most primary schools.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is well-above average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after by the local authority.)
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average. It has increased since the previous inspection because of the numbers of pupils from Eastern Europe who have joined the school, chiefly from Poland.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well-above average.
- The proportion of pupils who join and/or leave the school at other than normal times is well-above average.
- The school runs a very successful breakfast club, in addition to a very popular before-school physical education session.
- Since the previous inspection, there has been a significant number of staffing changes including the appointment of a new headteacher and deputy headteacher who both started in their posts in September 2013.
- The school has been a cooperative trust school since January 2012. While retaining its full governing body, which has overall responsibility for the school, responsibility for the grounds, premises and developing community involvement has been assumed by a separate board of trustees.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make all teaching at least good and increase the proportion that is outstanding to enable pupils, especially more-able pupils, to make faster progress by ensuring that:
 - all teaching sets work for pupils that is neither too easy nor too hard and, especially, that work is always challenging enough for more-able pupils
 - teachers always check that pupils understand the most important words that are key to each lesson and that pupils understand fully what they are being asked to do before they start to work on their own
 - teachers always ask questions that make pupils think deeply and encourage them to justify their answers at length.
- Improve behaviour in some lessons by making sure that all teachers are consistent in following the school's behaviour policy and that they encourage pupils to take more responsibility for controlling their own behaviour.
- Improve the impact of leadership and management on improving the school further by:
 - setting more demanding targets for the progress that pupils are expected to make
 - giving a sharper focus to raising achievement in planning for future improvement and setting

- targets that allow the impact and success of the school’s actions to be measured more closely
- improving the curriculum in Key Stage 1 so that it meets better the needs of children who do not attain the Early Learning Goals at the end of the Reception Year.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because the proportion of pupils making good progress from their individual starting points is too small.
- Most children start the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are well below those typical for their age. They make good progress because teaching provides them with a wide range of activities to capture their interest in a welcoming and stimulating environment both indoors and outdoors.
- By the end of Key Stage 1, attainment is below average because from low starting points most pupils make typical progress for this key stage. However, the progress of children who leave Reception without having attained the Early Learning Goals is slower because they are not ready for the more formal teaching that Key Stage 1 provides.
- In recent years, attainment in English and mathematics has risen at the end of Key Stage 2. In 2012, the percentage of pupils attaining the expected levels in both subjects was in line with the national averages. However, the percentage of pupils attaining the higher levels remained below average.
- Over the last three years, the proportion of pupils making the nationally expected rate of progress in English and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2 has grown. In 2012, the proportions were close to the national average but not enough pupils made more than expected progress.
- The most-able pupils are not always challenged enough by the work that they do in lessons. As a result, not enough pupils attain the higher levels of attainment in English and mathematics by the end of Key Stage 2.
- Pupils who are known to be eligible for support from pupil premium funding achieve as well, and sometimes better, than those in school who are not known to be eligible. In 2012, the attainment of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals was above that of similar pupils across the country. In this school, in comparison to other pupils, they attained approximately one third of a National Curriculum level higher in English and at the same level in mathematics. This demonstrates the school's success in promoting equality of opportunity.
- Disabled pupils or those who have special educational needs generally achieve well because of the effective support and guidance that they receive through, for example, one-to-one and small group teaching.
- Most pupils who join the school at other than normal times and pupils who are from minority ethnic backgrounds make similar progress to most pupils. This shows the school's success in tackling any discrimination and providing equally well for all pupils.
- Phonics are taught effectively in the Reception classes and in Key Stage 1. This provides a solid foundation for the development of pupils' reading skills. Older pupils say that they enjoy reading and that they read regularly. They make regular use of the school's well-stocked and inviting library.
- The school uses the new primary school sport funding very effectively. It is used to employ a specialist sports teacher who works with teachers to improve their teaching of physical education and who runs an extremely well-attended sports session before school each day. This not only makes a good contribution to pupils' healthy lifestyles and physical well-being, it has also had a significant impact on improving pupils' enjoyment of school as seen in their improving attendance.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Although the quality of teaching is improving, it still requires further improvement because it is not consistently of good quality and too little is outstanding.

- In too many lessons, teachers do not set work that is appropriate to the needs of the wide spread of abilities contained in classes. For some pupils the work is too easy and for others it is not hard enough. Too often, more-able pupils are not fully stretched preventing them from doing as well as they should or could.
- Some teaching does not explain important words clearly enough and does not check on pupils' understanding before they start work on their own.
- Similarly, some teachers do not check that all pupils understand what they are meant to be doing before setting them off to work on their own or in groups. This causes some confusion, slows progress and leads to some lack of involvement and chatter. While most teachers check on how well pupils are doing during lessons, they do this after a considerable time delay during which some pupils become restless and do not apply themselves fully. As a result, progress slows.
- Teachers do not routinely ask probing questions that call for pupils to think deeply about their answers and give their reasoned opinions. This acts a brake on developing their skills of inquiry and on their development as confident speakers.
- Where teaching is good it makes expectations clear from the start and checks that every pupil understands fully what they are meant to do and how to go about it.
- The teaching of numeracy and literacy enables the vast majority of pupils to make the expected rate of progress but its quality is too inconsistent to make sure that more of them make more than this.
- For example, in a Year 6 English lesson where teaching was good, the teacher made crystal clear what pupils were meant to do. Pupils' progress was checked regularly and any misunderstandings were quickly put right by the teacher asking a few pertinent questions that led pupils to their own conclusions. Pupils responded to this teaching with keen interest and a genuine desire to give of their best. They made very rapid progress as a result.
- In the Reception class, good teaching identifies children's needs and provides a range of teacher-led and child-initiated activities that keep children fully involved in their learning.
- Teaching assistants work very effectively to support slower learners and those who speak English as an additional language.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly. Their comments are usually helpful in giving pupils next steps to improve their work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils' behaviour requires improvement because in some lessons pupils do not have positive enough attitudes to learning and find it difficult to manage their own behaviour when working on their own or in pairs and small groups. This leads to chatter and restlessness which slows learning and progress.
- Teachers do not always follow the school's behaviour policy. Their different expectations sometimes confuse pupils about what is acceptable behaviour and what is not.
- Some pupils in Year 1 are not ready for formal teaching in classrooms. They find it hard to sit still and to listen for longer than a few minutes, and follow instructions. This results in slowing progress for other pupils who are ready for more formal work.
- Pupils say, however, that in recent years behaviour has improved because 'lessons are getting more interesting'. School records of incidents of bad behaviour confirm their views and show a decline in the number of incidents of poor behaviour and a significant decline in the number of pupils excluded on a fixed-term or permanent basis.
- Pupils play and work in a harmonious environment where each individual is known well and valued equally. This has a very positive impact on promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social, cultural development.
- Activities such as learning musical instruments, learning a foreign language, sports and trips out add significantly to pupils' awareness of the world around them, extend their horizons and

prepare them well for life in a multicultural society.

- The very well-attended breakfast club provides pupils with a welcoming start to the day. This, together with the sports activities every morning before school and very effective measures to check on attendance has led to a significant rise in attendance that now is in line with the national average.
- Pupils feel safe in school. They talk knowledgeably about unsafe situations and how to deal with them or avoid them. They are fully aware of the potential dangers of using the internet inappropriately.
- Pupils say that bullying of any kind is rare and that the school deals with isolated incidents quickly and effectively.
- The family support coordinator is pivotal in providing high quality care and guidance for pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable and for many parents. This is fundamental to the good relationships the school has forged with parents.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- New leadership, including the governing body, has a clear view about where the school needs to be in future and what needs to be done to bring this about. It aims to continue the improving trend of achievement in recent years that shows the school is well placed to carry on becoming more effective.
- However, priorities in the school development plan do not have a sharp enough focus on what the school plans to do raise pupils' achievement and to improve teaching; nor is it clear enough in showing how the effectiveness of planned actions is to be measured.
- Senior leaders check on the quality of teaching and learning regularly but recognise that more needs to be done. There is not enough good or outstanding teaching. However, the feedback leaders provide to teachers has brought about improvement in its quality in recent years. The outcomes of observing the quality of teaching and the progress pupils make towards defined targets are integral to managing the performance of staff and deciding on progression up the pay scale.
- However, targets for the progress that pupils make are based on typical progress and are not as challenging as they should be. This reflects that there is not enough ambition or drive to promote pupils' good progress.
- Staff work well together as a team. They are all keen for the school to improve and help and support each other well. They all take full advantage of opportunities to develop their professional expertise and teaching skills.
- Through the effective systems to care for, guide and support pupils, the school has sharpened its focus on pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching. As a result, the progress pupils make and their achievement is on a rising trend.
- Policies and procedures for safeguarding pupils are fully in place and give no cause for concern.
- Pebble Brook was judged to be a good school at its previous inspection and achievement has been on a rising trend, the local authority has taken the decision to provide light touch support for the school. This level of support has not, therefore, ensured that the grade of good at the time of the previous inspection has been maintained.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The quality of governance is improving, although the improvements are relatively recent. Governors are becoming more challenging about pupils' academic achievement while retaining a sharp focus on the welfare needs of the pupils. They are now aware that achievement is in need of further improvement. Governors are clear about the quality of teaching in the school and offer effective support and challenge to senior leaders that has brought about improvement in recent years. The governing body understands the importance of performance management in the process of improving teaching and achievement and is becoming more rigorous in its application. Governors keep themselves up to date by attending necessary training events provided by the local authority. This is giving them a much sharper view of

how well Pebble Brook is doing in comparison to other schools both locally and across the country. Governors have good control of the school's finances and ensure that pupil premium funding and sports funding are used to good effect by keeping a watchful eye on the impact they are having.

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	111219
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	412090

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	235
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dorothy Flude
Headteacher	Nikki Lawton
Date of previous school inspection	5 May 2010
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