

Little Ridge Community Primary School

Little Ridge Avenue, St Leonards-on-Sea, TN37 7LR

Inspection dates 26–27 September 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Inadequate	4
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures.

- The quality of teaching is weak in Key Stages 1 and 2 and consequently pupils leave the school with low standards of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics. Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage requires improvement.
- Pupils' achievement is inadequate because lessons do not meet the learning needs of different ability groups. More able pupils and those whose starting points are lower than expected for their age do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Teachers do not check pupils' understanding well enough in lessons and marking does not give clear enough guidance for pupils about what they need to do to improve their work.
- Pupils are given very few opportunities to work by themselves. Pupils' behaviour is often over-directed by adults.
- School leaders and governors do not evaluate the quality of teaching rigorously enough against the progress that pupils are making. They have been too slow to remedy weaknesses in teaching because they have judged teaching to be better than it actually is.
- School leaders do not check the progress of different groups to identify and take action when pupils are falling behind.
- Improvement plans lack focus and the impact of actions taken is not monitored carefully.
- The governing body is ineffective because it has not challenged senior leaders rigorously enough to bring about improvements.
- Safeguarding does not meet statutory requirements because the school does not have consistent evidence to show that concerns are systematically recorded and referred to other agencies.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils who attend the Speech and Language Centre achieve well.
- Pupils are polite and respectful towards each other and the adults around them.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 27 lessons or part lessons and observed pupils working in small groups with an adult outside of classrooms. They attended assemblies, including one for parents, and listened to individual pupils read.
- Inspectors carried out six joint lesson observations with school leaders.
- Meetings were held with pupils, staff and representatives from the governing body and the local authority.
- The inspectors took account of the 56 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and also spoke to parents on the playground.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documents, including that relating to safeguarding and child protection, pupils' achievement in the school year 2012/13, improvement planning, minutes of the governing body, logs relating to behaviour and attendance and exclusion figures.

Inspection team

Linda Pickles, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Peter Hare

Additional Inspector

Debbie Thomas

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

Information about this school

- Little Ridge Community Primary School is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for support through the pupil premium (additional government funding for specific groups, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, those who are looked after by the local authority or whose parent or carer is in the armed forces) is lower than that found nationally.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is below average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is higher than the national average.
- The school has a specially resourced provision for 16 pupils with special educational needs related to speech and/or language difficulties.
- The school does not meet the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- There is an early-morning breakfast club and after-school provision which is managed by the governing body.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching so it is consistently good by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can and should attain
 - making sure that teachers use information about pupils' progress to plan lessons which meet the individual needs of all pupils so that they can all make good progress
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to work independently and be more actively involved in lessons because activities interest and engage them
 - making it clear to pupils what they are learning in lessons and involving them in checking how successful they are in their work
 - ensuring marking provides clear guidance for pupils about what they need to do next to improve their work.
- Raise achievement in reading, writing and mathematics by:
 - providing pupils with more opportunities to independently apply their reading and writing skills, through activities which closely match their different abilities
 - ensuring pupils in all year groups have access to high-quality and varied reading materials
 - using practical resources and visual prompts to support pupils' writing and mathematical skills, particularly for less able pupils
 - challenging more able pupils by giving them more demanding, open-ended work which encourages them to think for themselves in mathematics
 - providing regular opportunities for all pupils to use and apply their mathematics skills in a real-life context.

- Improve the behaviour and safety of pupils by:
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for managing their own behaviour around the school
 - rigorously implementing guidance and support programmes from outside professionals for pupils at risk of exclusion.
- Improve the leadership and management, including the governance, of the school by:
 - taking immediate action to ensure the school meets statutory requirements for safeguarding
 - providing training for leaders at all levels so they are more accurate in judging the quality of teaching so they can inform teachers of what they need to do improve
 - rigorously checking the progress of individuals and groups in reading, writing and mathematics and swiftly identify any pupils who are underachieving
 - ensuring improvement plans are clear, have specific outcomes and include interim measures against which progress can be regularly evaluated
 - improving the skills and knowledge of the governing body so they are more able to hold school leaders to account for improvements in teaching and pupils' progress.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- In recent years, pupils have made slow progress across Key Stages 1 and 2. Attainment is stubbornly low at the end of Key Stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics, and the school's most recent achievement data show little improvement. Achievement is inadequate because too many pupils do not make the progress they should in English and mathematics.
- The proportion of pupils making the progress they should improved in 2012/13 for the oldest pupils, but not enough to narrow the gaps caused by previous underachievement.
- Progress is not rapid enough in reading in Years 1 and 2 because too few pupils are able to sound out words, make sense of unfamiliar ones and apply this knowledge in their writing. Books available for pupils to choose in their own classrooms in all year groups are limited in number and quality and do not always engage pupils or reflect their interests.
- In 2012, the very small minority of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding in Year 6 attained in line with their peers in reading and mathematics. Their attainment in writing was lower and was the equivalent of a term behind those pupils not eligible for the funding.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make slow progress, in line with their peers. The few pupils who attend the speech and language centre make good progress because specialist teachers and support staff are well trained in developing pupils' speech, language and communication skills.
- Pupils in Year 1 are now starting to make better progress in reading because there is a consistent approach to teaching letters and the sounds they make, but this is not always capitalised on by teachers in lessons.
- Work in pupils' books show that activities in mathematics do not extend learning well enough for all groups of pupils, including the most able. Pupils spend too much time practising formal calculations and do not have enough opportunities to independently record their thinking and to explore different problem-solving strategies. Pupils in all year groups have very few opportunities to apply their mathematics skills in a practical way to extend their understanding.
- Children are now entering the Early Years Foundation Stage with knowledge, skills and understanding which are in line with those expected. They make adequate progress and enter Year 1 with levels of attainment typical for their age.

The quality of teaching

is inadequate

- Teaching in Key Stage 1 and 2 is inadequate because expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving are not high enough. As a result, pupils at the end of each key stage cannot read, write or apply mathematics as well as they should, given their starting points at the end of Reception.
- Teaching is inadequate because:
 - too much time in lessons is spent on whole-class teaching, dominated by 'teacher talk', which does not engage and sustain the interest all pupils
 - teachers do not use the information they have about pupils' attainment to plan activities which suit pupils' different learning needs, so the work set is often too easy for more able pupils and too difficult for less able pupils
 - teachers do not check pupils' understanding regularly enough during lessons and do not reshape tasks to match pupils' different needs, which results in less able pupils being over-reliant on support from adults in order to be successful
 - in lessons pupils are not told clearly enough what they are expected to learn or how they can tell if they are successful or not
 - teachers do not always provide visual aids or practical resources to support the learning of less able pupils in applying their knowledge of letters and the sound that they make in their

reading and writing

- teachers do not provide pupils with enough opportunities work independently and to use and apply their mathematical skills in a real-life context
 - teachers' marking gives little guidance to pupils about how they can improve their work.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is in need of improvement. Children often make better progress when they work with an adult. Progress is sometimes slower in activities that children choose for themselves because the purpose of the activity is not always clear. The outdoor learning area was well used during the inspection.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are inadequate

- This is inadequate because statutory requirements for safeguarding to ensure all pupils are safe are not being fully met. The school does not systematically record all the actions taken to ensure pupils identified as vulnerable are safe.
- Pupils display positive attitudes towards school, but too often pupils lose concentration in lessons because they are required to sit for long periods listening to teachers and then become increasingly disengaged in their learning.
- Even when teaching is inadequate pupils rarely disrupt lessons and no poor behaviour was seen during the inspection. Pupils do, however, lose focus on their learning and become easily distracted when they are not motivated or engaged by their work.
- Staff generally manage pupils' behaviour appropriately in lessons but over-direct pupils' behaviour around school. This limits pupils' opportunities to manage their own conduct in preparation for their later life.
- Pupils are typically polite and courteous. Pupils enjoy working and playing together and show respect for cultures different from their own.
- They say that they feel safe and are confident that adults will help them if they have any problems. Pupils know about verbal, physical and cyber-bullying and can speak confidently about how to keep themselves safe outside of school.
- Occasionally, a very few pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs do not get the support they need from adults to help them manage their behaviour. Inspectors found no evidence that advice given by outside professionals is implemented rigorously enough by school leaders, who are over-reliant on exclusion for pupils whose behaviour is challenging.

The leadership and management are inadequate

- The school's leaders, including governors, have failed to respond effectively to the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection report and all of the same weaknesses remain more than two years later. The school has not demonstrated the capacity to secure improvement because achievement and teaching have worsened.
- The performance of different groups is not tracked or looked at carefully enough by the school leaders to identify weaknesses in teaching and to communicate clear priorities for improvement to staff and through improvement planning. Teachers and subject leaders are not being held to account for pupils' underachievement.
- Senior and middle leaders' checks on the quality of teaching are not rigorous enough. Self-evaluation is too generous and leaders, including governors, have not shown enough determination to raise attainment or to eradicate inadequate teaching.
- The quality of teaching in the core subjects is mediocre at best, and yet inspectors found that almost half of the teaching staff had progressed to the upper pay spine and beyond. This does not represent good value for money, and is indicative of the poor quality of the appraisal of teachers' work at this school.
- Pupil premium funding is not used effectively to rapidly narrow gaps in achievement for the very small minority of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium across all year groups,

particularly in English. The oldest pupils do not make as much progress as pupils entitled to pupil premium nationally.

- The impact of the school's actions to promote equal opportunities and to combat discrimination is limited because too many pupils, including those entitled to pupil premium funding, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, are not achieving well enough.
- The specially resourced provision is well led. The school works effectively with partner agencies to meet the learning needs of disabled pupils or those with special educational needs who are taught in the speech and language centre. School leaders, however, do not consistently implement the guidance provided by outside professionals for managing the behaviour of the very few disabled pupils or those with special educational needs whose behaviour can at times be challenging.
- The curriculum meets statutory requirements and adequately promotes pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development. There are a number of planned visits, including to the on-site forest school, and a wide range of after-school activities which significantly contribute to pupils' enjoyment of school. Senior leaders are using additional funding for school sport to improve the quality of teaching for physical education.
- The large majority of parents who completed the Parent View survey were positive about the school. A small minority expressed concerns about how effectively the school deals with bullying, responds to parental concerns and informs parents about how well their children are progressing.
- In the last academic year the local authority has provided leadership and teaching support but this has not been effective in reversing the falling trend in achievement.
- The school must not appoint any newly qualified teachers.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors do not carry out their duties rigorously. For example, the systems and routines to make sure pupils are safe in school do not meet the statutory requirements. The governing body has an accurate understanding of the school's performance but has been too slow in challenging school leaders and holding them to account for declining standards. The governors do not check on the quality of teaching and have an incorrect view of its effectiveness because they rely on information given by school leaders. They do not have rigorous enough systems in place to check the school's effectiveness themselves and to evaluate the impact of planned actions. Governors understand that pupil premium funding should be used to support all eligible pupils but have not monitored its expenditure closely enough or checked on its impact on learning. They have also not ensured that there is a close enough match between performance management and improvements in teaching and teachers' pay.

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	114481
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	426678

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	428
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Malcolm Vint
Headteacher	Tom Collins
Date of previous school inspection	26–27 January 2011
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