

# Parsons Down Infant School

Paynesdown Road, Thatcham, RG19 3TE

**Inspection dates** 9–10 September 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Leadership and management		Require improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Early years provision		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Teaching varies too much in quality so that pupils' progress is not always well supported.
- Questioning and marking are inconsistent in helping pupils learn.
- Teachers do not have high enough expectations of more-able pupils and of boys.
- Strategic plans for improvement are appropriate but have yet to make a difference to pupils' progress in Years 1 and 2.
- Too many pupils have difficulty in reading and have not been helped to improve rapidly enough.
- Not enough more-able boys and girls reach the standards they should in reading and writing.
- Boys' writing lags behind girls' writing; many do not write enough and their work is too often poorly presented and inaccurate.
- Teaching is not monitored and supported rigorously enough to secure improvement.
- Leaders below senior level have not had clear responsibilities for monitoring progress and taking action where improvement is required.

### The school has the following strengths

- Early years provision is good. Improvements are having a positive effect on pupils' learning at the beginning of Year 1.
- Realistic self-evaluation by the executive headteacher, supported by governors, has identified what is needed to improve progress and teaching. She has put clear structures in place to support strategic improvement.
- Pupils behave well at almost all times and feel safe.
- Pupils entitled to additional funding and pupils who speak English as an additional language are well supported and make better progress than others.
- Following an external review, governors are making a strong contribution to strategic improvement. They have directed resources to improve the early years and to support disadvantaged pupils.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed parts of 15 lessons, some of them jointly with senior leaders.
- They looked at pupils' books to gather evidence of progress and the quality of marking.
- Some pupils read to inspectors and talked about books.
- Inspectors met with pupils, staff, representatives of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors gathered the views of 46 parents from the online Parent View questionnaire and spoke to some parents on the premises during the inspection.
- They considered 34 questionnaires completed by staff.
- They reviewed school documents and records, including improvement plans and checks on how well the school is doing.

## Inspection team

Anthony Byrne, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Lynne Thorogood

Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This is a large infant school, comparable in size to an average-size primary school.
- The majority of pupils are from a White British background. The proportion of pupils from other ethnic backgrounds and of those speaking English as an additional language is below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported by school action is average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for support through the pupil premium is below average. This is additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those in local authority care.
- In February 2014 the school became partnered with the nearby junior school. The schools share an executive headteacher and the governing body. A head of school provides continuous leadership presence at the infant school.
- Junior school pupils can attend the breakfast and after-school clubs at the infant school.

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

- Improve teaching to good or outstanding by:
  - ensuring basic skills, especially in reading, are consistently well taught
  - improving boys' achievement in writing at sustained length, accurately and with good presentation
  - ensuring that teachers challenge more-able pupils to meet very high expectations in all their work
  - ensuring that questioning develops pupils' thinking
  - ensuring the new marking policy is consistently implemented and helps all pupils to rapidly improve their progress.
- Improve leadership and management to good or outstanding by:
  - regularly checking the impact of teaching on pupils' progress and following up any teaching that is less than good with advice and support until it has improved
  - sticking to the schedule of involving all leaders in book checks and reviews of information about pupils' progress, and taking action to ensure all pupils make good progress over time
  - providing extra teaching for any pupils not making sufficient progress in reading.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management

### require improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because they have not secured consistently good teaching and progress over time.
- Leaders have not thoroughly monitored the quality of teaching and provided timely and effective feedback to staff on help them to improve.
- Pupils' books and teachers' records have not been checked often enough by middle leaders to ensure that all pupils are making good progress.
- The school is recovering from an unsettled period. Following the formalisation of the partnership with the junior school, the executive headteacher has put in place clear structures and responsibilities for other staff. However, though it is clear what needs to be achieved, the structures and approaches are not yet leading to good outcomes for pupils in Years 1 and 2.
- These changes are based on unflinching and accurate self-evaluation which recognises the need for improvement. However, insufficient additional resources have been provided for pupils who struggle in reading.
- Expectations of teaching are higher. The executive headteacher is now in a position to base judgements about staff performance on meeting clear leadership and teaching targets. Her recommendations to the governing body on progression in pay are dependent on targets being met.
- The school had not made pupils sufficiently aware of life and values in modern Britain. A broader choice in learning is being offered through 'learning challenges' from which pupils can choose and pursue topics with guidance from the teacher. This includes opportunities for pupils to gain knowledge about the history and geography of the United Kingdom and about the diverse cultures and backgrounds which make up modern Britain.
- Primary sports funding extends pupils' experience of different sports and provides opportunities to take part in team sports, including external fixtures.
- Teachers expect pupils to be quietly reflective about their learning and their feelings and to be considerate of others. The range of experiences planned for pupils contributes well to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Safeguarding procedures meet requirements. Child protection training is up to date for those with responsibilities, and internal training of other staff is supported by a governor who is a well-informed serving member of a local safeguarding board.
- The school and governors keep parents informed of developments and seek their views in surveys, at parents' evenings and in workshops. Most parents responding to Parent View said they are well informed and the large majority would recommend the school to others.
- Leadership of the early years, closely supported by the head of school, makes sure the work in early years has a positive impact on the partnership's development.
- Local authority support for the school is regular, relevant and helpful. The authority gives good support to develop leadership because it recognises that improvement is needed.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Following an external review of their work to support the junior school, the governing body has transferred lessons learned to their work in the infant school and is making a strong contribution to improvement.
  - They are well informed about pupils' progress and are very watchful that additional funding, such as pupil premium and sports funding, is used for the pupils or purposes for which it is intended. They are determined to secure equal opportunities for all pupils. They are challenging the school to make improvements to achievement for those groups who are doing less well.
  - Committees are well organised. Members visit the school and talk with parents with a clear focus so that they have the evidence to contribute to discussions on what needs to improve.
  - Governors give strong support to constructive links between the two schools, including joint professional development. This is contributing to continuity in pupils' education.
  - They have been forthright in insisting that the executive head develops clear leadership structures, makes demands on staff and does not take too much upon herself.
  - Their responsibilities for performance management and pay are clearly organised and linked to targets being met.

### The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good because they show generally positive attitudes to learning. It is not yet outstanding because not all pupils realise they are not working at as high a standard as they could, and are used to getting by with too little effort.
- Pupils take pride in displaying learning skills which are regularly referred to in assemblies and in some lessons. This is motivating them to try harder.
- They pay attention to their teachers' instructions and respond well when they are helped by learning assistants.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say they feel safe and they are clearly at ease in mixing with each other. They understand what bullying could be like but have no fear of it happening. One pupil said confidently that nothing worse than 'the occasional bit of silliness' happens.
- Pupils work well together and care for each other in ways that show they absorb the values of tolerance and respect that the school expects of them. They conduct themselves well outside lesson times and in the before- and after-school clubs. Year 2 pupils enjoy mixing with junior school pupils at lunchtime, which is preparing them socially for the next stage in their education. Their experience of school life contributes well to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Recorded incidents of poor behaviour have declined to a very low level over the past year. Staff take appropriate action if required and this has eradicated any serious bullying or racist incidents. Attendance has risen to above average; pupils enjoy coming to school. Any pupils who have emotional, social or behavioural difficulties are well supported. Those pupils who arrive speaking very little English are made to feel welcome so that they settle quickly.
- The vast majority of parents who responded to Parent View online feel that their child is safe and happy at school. The majority either felt bullying would be dealt with well or acknowledged they had no experience to refer to. There were positive views of behaviour from parents inspectors spoke to in the playground and in staff questionnaires.
- Children are settling very quickly at the start of Reception class in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

### The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching over time has been inconsistent in quality so that some pupils have not made as much progress as they should. Some evidence in books shows a decline in progress last year for some pupils.
- Marking is inconsistent. Teachers do not always provide enough guidance on how to improve, confining their comments to stating what has been done or making encouraging remarks. Some marking is more helpful to pupils and can be seen to move them on when the teacher gives clear guidance or examples. An agreed system of marking has begun this term but its impact is yet to be seen.
- Teachers' expectations of pupils' work, particularly of boys and more-able pupils, have not been high enough for them to achieve as well as they should.
- Questioning by teachers varies too much in how well it supports learning. The answers to some questions are obvious and do not demand much thinking. Pupils respond keenly when questions are asked that gradually deepen their understanding.
- Teachers have not taken enough opportunities for pupils to use English and mathematics skills in other subjects. Other lessons are now based on research questions that allow pupils to use these skills to explore the topic, but the impact of this is not yet evident.
- Teaching of phonics – letters and the sounds they make – is inconsistent and does not support reading well.
- Individual support for disadvantaged pupils has a good impact on their progress. The working relationship between teachers and learning support assistants is close. Because they understand the work required in the lesson, learning support assistants provide very active and useful support for pupils.
- Teachers are very receptive to feedback on teaching that is observed. They are able to reflect on what went well or could have been done better.
- Teachers in Year 1 have adopted some teaching approaches used in the early years. At the start of this school year, pupils are responding well to routines and opportunities that they are familiar with from Reception class.

- Homework, although it includes opportunities to take a good range of reading books home, has not supported learning well. The school is trying a new approach based on supporting the research question that is the focus of current learning.

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Standards at the end of Year 2 are declining, particularly in reading and writing. This year the school requested the local authority to check all results. The proportion of pupils assessed as reaching a high level was subsequently reduced, indicating an over-estimation of performance by the school.
- Pupils with the potential to reach high levels, both girls and boys, do not make enough progress. For example in a mathematics lesson some found the work easy and were quite content to produce a few answers and then stop working. In an English lesson, there was wide variation in a more-able group between the number of words produced when they were challenged to write their own selection of adjectives to use in later writing.
- Boys do not achieve as well as girls. The gap is widest in writing. In English lessons, girls were generally seen to be writing more fluently and accurately. Progress over time, as seen in books maintained from last year, is inconsistent for both boys and girls. The quality of some pupils' work has deteriorated. There are signs that boys are writing more in response to the wider choice of topics that has been offered in lessons recently. For example, several boys had responded well to an opportunity to choose to write about dinosaurs within an 'Animals' topic.
- Low-attaining readers make slow progress because they cannot easily sound out words. Results of the phonics screening test in Year 1 were very low compared to those reported nationally in 2013. They have risen in 2014, but not enough; almost half of pupils did not reach an acceptable level.
- In mathematics, standards are average and progress is better over time, though not rapid. Pupils in Year 1 had fun and learned a good deal about working with numbers by choosing from a range of mathematics activities in the way they were used to working in the early years.
- Some groups have received additional support for their learning and their progress has been better. Pupils entitled to additional funding have closed the gap with other pupils that existed previously. They are now about a term ahead in reading and writing. Those who speak English as an additional language make good progress and achieve higher standards than others. Pupils with special educational needs make progress similar to other pupils.

### The early years provision

### is good

- Children enter with knowledge, skills and understanding typical for their age. The majority make good progress to reach good levels of development in all areas of learning.
- The beneficial effect of arrangements to ease entry from a variety of settings was evident at the time of inspection, early in the school year. Preliminary visits to other settings and home visits ensure that children are known well and make a flying start.
- Staff have high expectations of children based on accurate assessment.
- Planning for learning is good and resources are of high quality. Daily reviews and adjustment of planning is supported well by staff noting children's learning during the day.
- Parents have regular opportunities to meet with staff and they understand and support their child's learning. For children with special educational needs, close working relationships with parents and outside agencies ensures high-quality provision.
- A good balance was observed between activities led by adults and pupils choosing for themselves. Staff question children well and learning is good across all areas. Phonics is systematically taught so that children make a good start in reading and writing.
- Children develop good social skills and work well with their classmates. Safeguarding arrangements are good.
- The assistant head of school leads the strong team of teachers and support assistants very well. Managers and staff have made extensive changes to improve provision. This has taken time and children now in Year 1 are making a stronger start than in previous years. The local authority uses the provision as an example of good practice for others.

## 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>	109875
<b>Local authority</b>	West Berkshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	443788

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	246
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Jonathan Taylor
<b>Headteacher</b>	Petrina Winsor
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	14 January 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	01635 862475
<b>Fax number</b>	01635 874558
<b>Email address</b>	office@pdp.w-berks.sch.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit [www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk), or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)  
[Store St](#)  
[Manchester](#)  
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

© Crown copyright 2014

