

Pensford Primary School

Pensford Hill, Pensford, Bristol, BS39 4AA

Inspection dates 16–17 April 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Early years provision		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement.

- Some improvements have taken too long to be implemented. While the headteacher has tackled most of the key issues from the previous inspection, this has not been urgent enough to improve pupils' learning quickly.
- Progress has been variable across the school, and relies too much on accelerating pupils' learning in Years 5 and 6. Standards at Key Stage 1 have been below average. At Key Stage 2, standards have been average, although slightly lower in 2014 in reading and writing. Achievement requires improvement, particularly in reading and writing.
- Learning in the early years provision is not consistently good because not all the adults understand how to use children's interests to enthuse them about learning the skills they need.
- There is not enough urgency about teaching reading, particularly for younger pupils. Teachers do not expect pupils to write as well or as much in other subjects as they do in English. Overall, teaching requires improvement.
- Too often the use of teaching assistants is not effective. Where these adults support pupils' learning to read and write, progress slows. Teaching assistants do not expect enough of the pupils they work with and do not always ensure that teachers know how well pupils have been learning.
- Pupils' behaviour requires improvement. Pupils are not always determined enough to work hard because too little is expected of them. They too readily stop working if it is difficult and wait for an adult to help them.
- Governors have too readily accepted an overly positive view of information about pupils' achievement. They have not ensured that the headteacher takes full account of the achievement of all pupils when evaluating the effectiveness of the school. They have not checked that improvements have been carried out quickly.
- Communication with parents has not always been informative or timely. Some actions which have been agreed have not been implemented quickly.

The school has the following strengths

- Inadequate teaching has been tackled. Teaching of older pupils is consistently good. Recently, teaching of other pupils has improved. Marking helps pupils to know what they need to improve.
- Progress is increasing, particularly recently. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs often make good progress.
- Pupils feel safe at school and are kind to one another. They like being at school and appreciate the many experiences they have.
- Governors have undertaken training and have a clearer understanding of their roles and responsibilities.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector spent most of his time in lessons, observing pupils' learning and looking at the work they were doing. He visited 14 lessons and also looked at short sessions, particularly where teaching assistants and other adults supported pupils. About a quarter of these observations were carried out together with the headteacher.
- The inspector reviewed a wide range of documents provided by the school, including: the headteacher's analysis of data about the progress and attainment of pupils; policies and procedures about learning, marking, homework and keeping pupils safe; risk assessments for a range of activities and visits; the headteacher's checks on the quality of teaching and learning; and minutes from a range of meetings, including those of the governing body.
- The inspector talked to groups of pupils, listened to pupils read, held a meeting with middle leaders and considered the nine responses to a survey for staff working at the school. He also met with a group of governors, and with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector considered the views of parents from the school through the 32 responses to the online survey for Ofsted, Parent View. He also spoke to many parents informally before and after school, and considered correspondence sent to him.

Inspection team

Andrew Saunders, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a small school where pupils come from a wide area around the village. It is smaller than the average primary school. There are three classes, each catering for pupils from a range of ages. Children in the Reception year attend full time.
- Most pupils are White British. A few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below average. However, it varies widely across different year groups and is above average in some groups.
- There are very few disadvantaged pupils in the school, fewer than average. These are pupils supported through additional funding known as the pupil premium. The government provides this to promote the attainment and progress of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school meets the current floor standards. The government sets these as the minimum expectations for the attainment and progress for pupils at the end of Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics.
- There have been several changes in staffing over the past year. One teacher joined the school very recently.
- The school has been supported by a headteacher from an outstanding school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the pace and consistency of the progress pupils make in developing reading and writing skills, especially in Years 1 to 4, by:
 - making sure that teaching assistants expect more of the pupils they are working with
 - ensuring that pupils get on with the next stage of their learning more quickly as soon as they are ready for it, and keep working when it is more difficult
 - giving pupils more opportunities to write at greater length in subjects other than English.
- Make sure that teaching is good by:
 - raising teachers' expectations about how much work pupils can complete, and increasing the sense of urgency with which they work
 - ensuring that all teaching assistants contribute useful feedback to teachers about the learning of pupils with whom they work, so that pupils' next steps in learning are planned more accurately
 - making more use of children's interests to develop the skills they need in the early years provision
 - sharing the best practice within the school and more widely, and checking that teachers and teaching assistants put this into action for themselves.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that governors hold the headteacher to account for quickly implementing the improvements which have been agreed
 - improving communication with parents, including through the school website, and carrying out agreed actions quickly
 - urgently implementing the recommendations of the recent review of governance.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management

require improvement

- The headteacher has tackled most of the key issues raised by the previous inspection. However, the pace of improvement has not been rapid enough to ensure that pupils' learning is consistently good. Despite the improvements, teachers and adults do not expect enough of pupils until they are older.
- The headteacher has challenged inadequate teaching and ensured that marking is effective. Teachers give pupils more opportunities to do practical investigations in mathematics, and more chance to work things out for themselves. Teachers are also making better use of the information they have about pupils' progress to plan work which helps them learn more effectively, particularly in mathematics.
- Some middle leaders are new to their roles and have not had the time to be fully effective. Turbulence in staffing has meant that there has not been the continuity required to bring about more rapid improvements. While they can point to success in improving teaching and learning in mathematics, and in the quality of marking, improvements in reading and writing have been more difficult to achieve.
- The headteacher makes sure that a wide range of information is collected to check the quality of teaching and learning. The systems to keep track of this and to make sure that teachers know what they need to do to improve are now well established. Despite this, there is more of a focus on checking that teachers are doing the things that leaders expect rather than focusing on the impact this has on learning.
- The school gives pupils a wide range of experiences around which to base their learning. For example, the annual camp is highly popular, as is the trip to @Bristol, where pupils learn about safety and life skills. The curriculum gives pupils opportunities to learn about life in modern Britain and in the wider world. The chance to apply for responsible roles, such as the school council, and to vote about issues help them to understand democracy. Pupils are increasingly expected to reflect on their learning. Where they do so, they show insight and thoughtfulness. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is given appropriate emphasis. They are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Pupils are very tolerant of those around them and like the opportunities they have had to exchange correspondence with pupils elsewhere. The school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination, although the lower expectations some adults have of pupils hinder this at times.
- Leaders and governors have made sure that the primary physical education and sport funding is used to give pupils experience of a wider range of sports and activities. Expert coaches provide exciting sessions which pupils enjoy greatly. Teachers watch how these sessions are run and improve their skills in delivering effective physical education. It has also enabled pupils to take part in more competitive sporting events.
- Governors and the headteacher make sure that they analyse carefully how the additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils is used so that it improves their learning. Funding provides extra support from adults or teachers where needed, access to resources which these pupils can take home, and helps them to participate in the experiences on which the topics are based.
- The arrangements for keeping pupils safe meet requirements. Teachers and other adults understand what action they should take if they have any concerns.
- Some parents are very positive about the school and appreciate the caring ethos and small size. However, some parents have concerns about the school. In particular, some parents say that communication is not always clear and that they do not always know about changes that are happening. The inspector found that the school is sometimes constrained by circumstances about the information they can share with parents. However, some communication is not always effective. The headteacher has not always made sure that action is taken quickly.
- The local authority has been increasing the level of its support but changes in personnel mean that the support has not been fully effective. In particular, it provides support for the headteacher in understanding what data show about the progress of pupils and in tackling inadequate teaching. It has also helped the governors to know how to challenge and support the school more effectively.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - There have been several changes in the governing body since the previous inspection. Governors have taken to heart the findings of the previous report and the subsequent monitoring visits, and their effectiveness has improved. They have sought training to develop their skills and increase their understanding of what the data show about the performance of pupils in the school and the quality of teaching. However, there are still times when they too readily accept a positive interpretation of what data show without probing in more detail. They have not shown enough determination to hold the headteacher to account where improvements have been slow.
 - Governors have recently commissioned a second external review of their work since the previous

inspection, but this is too recent to have implemented the recommendations. The finances of the school are reviewed carefully to ensure that they are used with care. Governors are aware of the need to consider the performance of teachers and the achievement of pupils when considering any additional pay awards, to promote best practice and tackle underperformance. This is happening more systematically.

- Governors check that the statutory requirements for keeping pupils safe are given an appropriately high priority. They make sure that all staff understand their responsibilities, and that policies and procedures are updated appropriately. There are plans to improve the website, to ensure that all the required information is more readily available, but these have not been implemented yet.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

require improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. There are occasions when pupils rely on reminders from the adults around them to focus on their work. There is some low-level disruption when pupils chatter about things that do not relate to what they are meant to be doing. This is more evident when the work they have been given does not challenge them enough.
- There are other times when pupils complete the work they have been asked to do very quickly, and they sit waiting for other pupils to finish. At these times, their learning stalls. Pupils too readily accept that this is what is expected of them, rather than showing determination to improve what they have already done or get on with their next task. Some adults reinforce this expectation.
- During break times pupils are cooperative and kind to one another. Around the school they socialise happily and their behaviour during free time is good. They often invite other pupils to join in with their games, and show great ingenuity and creativity in using the resources available at lunchtimes.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say they feel safe and they know a lot about how to keep themselves safe. In particular they are confident about how to use the internet safely.
- Pupils understand what might constitute bullying of different kinds, but they say that it is very rare at their school. They say that pupils do not use unkind words because they know one another very well and look out for each other. They would not put up with unkindness of any kind.
- Pupils usually know how to sort things out if they fall out with one another, although they are confident that they can talk to an adult if they are worried about anything. However, they do acknowledge that some adults are not as effective in sorting out disagreements, particularly during break times.
- A few parents feel that adults do not apply some sanctions consistently. Pupils understand the school's approach to promoting good behaviour and say that it is usually fair.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching is improving but it is not yet consistently good. Some improvements are very recent. Turbulence in staffing has made it difficult for leaders to ensure that all teachers implement some of the changes they have introduced in the same way.
- Despite recent training in teaching reading, there is not a great enough urgency about teaching phonics (linking letters and the sounds they make). Teachers and teaching assistants use a similar approach across the school. However, some teaching assistants are not as confident and work steadily through a planned programme of sounds without considering how quickly pupils are learning. This slows the progress pupils make in developing their reading. Teachers usually ensure that there is a good pace in learning and adapt this as they check pupils' confidence.
- Approaches to teaching writing have been improved and teachers make sure that the topics they choose relate to things pupils are interested in. However, not all teachers expect pupils to write as well in other subjects as they do in English. Pupils do not get enough opportunities to write longer pieces to develop their tenacity in writing outside of English.
- The teaching of mathematics has improved. Teachers make good use of resources to develop pupils' confidence with their mental calculation skills. They give pupils more opportunities to solve practical

problems.

- Teachers do not always have as complete an understanding about pupils' progress as they might have, especially where groups of pupils work with the teaching assistants. Teaching assistants are not always clear how pupils have achieved the learning the teacher intended, or how they may not have done so. At times they focus on managing behaviour or checking that pupils are quiet rather than noting how well pupils are learning. This means teachers do not get enough information to help them plan effectively for the next lesson.
- The quality of marking has been a focus for the school and teachers make sure that the comments they give pupils show them what they need to do to improve. Teachers typically expect pupils to respond to these comments and the quality of pupils' responses has improved. Teachers also check these responses, so that pupils know that their efforts to improve are worthwhile.
- Teachers have had some opportunities to observe their colleagues, both in the school and elsewhere, but the turbulence in staffing has made this difficult. Consequently, the intention that teachers learn from seeing best practice has not been as effective as it might be.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement is not good because the progress of pupils is inconsistent, particularly in reading and writing. Progress of pupils in Years 1 to 4 has been variable.
- Progress in mathematics has improved; pupils are more confident with their mental mathematics skills and are learning to use these in solving more practical problems.
- Standards at the end of Year 6 have remained broadly average. From their starting points, most pupils make the expected progress. However, low expectations in the past meant that progress was slower in the middle years and then accelerated in Years 5 and 6. This inconsistency means that pupils did not make as much progress as they were capable of. Work in their books shows that progress is improving, but it is too recent to have had an impact on the data.
- In 2014, progress across Key Stage 1 was inadequate. However, it has improved this year, particularly recently. Consequently, pupils in Year 3 are starting to make up lost ground. Pupils currently in Year 2 have made better progress and are set to achieve higher standards than previously.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are helped to overcome the issues they face through a wide range of support. The adults who support individuals who have special educational needs know the needs of these pupils well. Some of these pupils make good progress and, by the end of Year 6, require less support. Like other pupils in the school, expectations of what these pupils can achieve are not always high enough, particularly when they are learning to read.
- The most-able pupils are well challenged and nurtured to think about more complex problems. More pupils than average reach the very highest standards at the end of Year 6. In contrast, some adults too readily expect much less of pupils who are not as able.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language make rapid progress in developing their understanding because they are well supported. These pupils are made to feel very welcome when they join the school because other pupils are kind and actively help them learn new vocabulary.
- Disadvantaged pupils are given additional help which is funded by the pupil premium. They make similar progress to other pupils. There are too few disadvantaged pupils in the school to make meaningful comparisons between the standards they reach and those of other pupils, or to comment anonymously on their achievement.

The early years provision

requires improvement

- Leadership and management of the early years requires improvement. Turbulence in staffing has made it difficult to ensure that improvements are implemented consistently. This has improved recently. There is good communication between the teachers so that they know what the children in Reception have been learning.
- Achievement requires improvement. Children join the school with skills and knowledge which are typical for their age, although boys' skills in communication and language are often lower. By the end of Reception, the proportion of children who have reached a good level of development is average. However, it is slightly lower in reading.

- Teaching requires improvement. When children are with the teachers, they often learn well. However, learning is not always as effective when they are with the teaching assistants. Children do not always get enough opportunities to try out the skills and knowledge they are developing in their own play. Shared leadership and changes in arrangements mean that this has not been tackled decisively.
- The behaviour and safety of children are good. Children in Reception are keen to do their best. They very quickly settle into the routines of the school because they have the example of the Year 1 pupils to follow. This means they know what learning will be like in Year 1. They also like having an older 'buddy' from Years 5 or 6 who helps them.
- The teachers make sure that the environment is safe, and that children know how to think carefully before making decisions, to help keep themselves safe. This is particularly relevant to road safety and children are well trained in this regard.

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	109068
Local authority	Bath and North East Somerset
Inspection number	462518

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	79
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Butler
Headteacher	Lorna McIsaac
Date of previous school inspection	13–14 June 2013
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