

Northleigh CofE Primary School

St Peter's Road, Cowleigh Bank, Malvern, Worcestershire WR14 1QS

Inspection dates

14–15 November 2017

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Inadequate
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Inadequate
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Since the previous inspection, shortcomings in leadership, teaching and assessment have allowed academic standards to decline.
- Pupils' progress in writing and mathematics has slowed. Pupils who recently left the school at the end of Year 6 were not properly prepared for learning in key stage 3.
- Over time, leaders did not keep up to date with curriculum developments and did not pay sufficient attention to teaching and learning. Consequently, school improvement plans had limited impact.
- Staff training has been allowed to lapse. Until recently, teachers have not received regular feedback about their work or advice about how to improve.
- The quality of teaching, particularly in mathematics, varies from class to class. In places, teaching does not respond quickly enough when pupils do not understand. This limits progress and knocks pupils' confidence.
- Some of the routines for ensuring pupils' welfare require improvement.
- Pupil premium funding has not been used to good effect.

The school has the following strengths

- Governance is effective and the new headteacher has united the staff team. Current leadership is providing clear direction and has injected a sense of common purpose. Consequently, teaching is improving and pupils' progress is speeding up.
- Procedures for keeping pupils safe are fit for purpose.
- Pupils' conduct is good. They enjoy school and get on well with one another. Bullying or unkind behaviour is rare.
- Provision in the early years is effective.
- Newly appointed middle leaders show promise.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the impact of leadership and management on school improvement by making sure:
 - newly appointed middle leaders receive the training and support they need in order to do their jobs well
 - teaching staff get the support and guidance they need in order to stay up to date and improve their practice
 - properly informed improvement plans are seen through to completion
 - there is a reliable whole-school assessment system that supports progression in learning as pupils move through the school
 - the current sense of team spirit is used to drive sustained improvements.
- Improve the quality of teaching and assessment in order to raise standards, especially in mathematics and writing, by making sure:
 - accurate assessment is used to inform pupils' next steps in learning
 - teaching across the school builds securely and progressively on previous learning
 - staff receive regular training, support and feedback about their work in order to raise expectations
 - teaching responds on the spot when pupils do not understand
 - teachers' explanations help to build pupils' confidence and understanding.
- Ensure effective attention to pupils' welfare by making sure that staff follow the school's agreed policies with reliable consistency.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium funding should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Until recently, school leaders had not grasped the severity of the school's decline. Now, after a period of ineffective leadership, the school has turned a corner. Teaching is improving, pupils' behaviour is good and standards are starting to rise. However, remaining weaknesses in assessment continue to hinder pupils' progress.
- For a long time, there has been too little training for staff and leaders' checks on teaching and pupils' progress have been superficial. In the absence of clear direction from the top, staff have been left to their own devices and have set their own standards. Leaders have drawn up improvement plans but these have not been properly informed or seen through to successful completion. All of this led to significant variations in teaching and the ways staff respond to pupils' learning and behaviour.
- Since the summer 2017, leaders and governors have established an accurate view of the school's performance and are taking effective action to drive improvements. The support provided through the local authority and the diocese is also well informed and helpful. Already, a systematic and rigorous approach to monitoring teaching has been introduced. Staff receive clear guidance and know what is expected from them. Plans are in place to restructure the senior leadership team in order to provide stronger support for teaching and learning. Across the school, expectations and morale have lifted.
- Several middle leaders are new in post and still getting to grips with their roles, but they clearly demonstrate potential. They are stepping up to their new responsibilities and senior leaders are drawing up plans to make sure they have the time, opportunities and support in order to do their jobs well.
- Specific school funds, such as pupil premium and special educational needs funds, have been spent in line with their intended purposes. However, leaders have not done enough to check whether the extra support provided is working. Consequently, some of the target pupils have not been getting what they need.
- The primary physical education (PE) and sport premium funding, however, has clearly helped to improve the quality of PE at the school. For example, during this inspection, several instances of effective sports teaching were observed and pupils understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle.
- The school curriculum is suitably broad and provides a range of interesting activities, including trips to places of interest and after-school clubs, that pupils enjoy. Pupils' ability to apply their literacy and numeracy skills in different situations and subjects is underdeveloped but is improving. Some of the pupils' recent writing in science and history, for example, is well put together and interesting to read.
- The school's work to teach pupils the value of respect, care and courtesy has been a consistent strength at the school. While leaders have recently tightened up aspects of behaviour management, the school does have an established track record in shaping well-adjusted, polite pupils who show interest and concern for others. This positive outlook helps pupils to forge constructive and positive relationships, both in this school and when they move on to secondary school.

- There are a few omissions on the school's website. Current leaders are aware of this and have matters in hand. In all other respects, parents have access to plenty of information. Many of the parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, felt that the school had improved a lot this term. Parents appreciate the newly formed parents' forum and most feel that the school provides a caring education.

Governance of the school

- Governance is effective. Governors are articulate, informed and realistic. They recognise that the school is in urgent need of improvement and have taken decisive action to start this process.
- They have ensured that statutory duties are met and that funds are accounted for, although the impact of some spending has not been properly evaluated in the past. Governors clearly act in the best interests of the pupils and are united in their commitment to raise standards. They are equally mindful of staff well-being and the importance of good morale. To this end, they are providing strategic leadership that ensures genuine successes are noticed and applauded, while also taking care to learn from any mistakes of the past.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. At the beginning of the autumn term 2017, the school commissioned a safeguarding audit. Leaders and staff have been quick to act on its findings and recommendations.
- Procedures and record-keeping have been tightened up recently and are fit for purpose. A few aspects of administration would benefit from further refreshment and leaders have this in hand. All staff know what to do should they have a concern about a child or an adult and are alert to the various risks that pupils can face.
- Pupils understand how to stay safe online and in other situations. Supervision arrangements are fine, first-aid treatment is given when needed and fire safety routines operate correctly. Pupils who require medicines, such as inhalers, have ready access to these when needed.
- The childcare provided at the school's breakfast club is run well. Well-thought-through routines for keeping children safe are in place. Staff liaise with parents and a range of organisations, as appropriate, in order to gather and share information.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- For several years, assessment has been weak. There has been no coherent whole-school system for checking on pupils' progress, so poor progress and low standards have gone undetected. Consequently, teaching has not been informed by reliable information about what pupils know. During this inspection, classroom observations, work seen in pupils' books and conversations with school staff revealed that, across the school, teaching has not built sequentially and progressively on what has gone before. The school's senior leaders have identified this problem and are making changes, but there still more work to be done.

- Many staff have also been aware of this problem for some time and have put their own assessment systems in place to inform practice in their classes or year groups. In a similar vein, and in the absence of clear direction, teachers have sought out their own resources and adopted their own approaches to teaching and learning. This piecemeal approach to teaching and assessment has resulted in a very mixed picture of teaching. In some classes, teaching is very effective and builds securely on pupils' differing levels of understanding. In places, however, teaching is more hit or miss.
- For current pupils, this inconsistent approach is most evident in mathematics. In a key stage 2 session, for example, the most able pupils were able to press on because they understood quickly and there was plenty for them to do. Other pupils, who were not so quick to understand, struggled to keep up. In some cases, this was because the work was simply too hard for them. In other cases, pupils who were on the verge of improving their understanding were held back by heavy-handed explanations and questions that did not take enough account of their current levels of knowledge or confidence.
- On the other hand, a key stage 1 mathematics session about number bonds was very successful because the teacher checked what pupils already knew and then adjusted her teaching on the spot. Pupils of all abilities were able to succeed because the teacher's questions and explanations were attentive and responsive to their current levels of understanding.
- The quality of current pupils' writing is improving due to improvements in teaching and a recent whole-school focus on raising standards. Teachers have good subject knowledge, plan interesting activities and make sure that displays of pupils' work exemplify good standards.
- Indeed, the current quality of teaching shows a lot of promise. Teaching staff are keen and capable and are refreshed by leaders' current drive to establish whole-school systems and raise standards. Staff are no longer working in isolation. Currently, teachers and teaching assistants work well together for the good of the whole school and there is a sense of optimistic team spirit.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- While staff are kind and supportive towards pupils, the school has not had sufficient concern for their welfare. Pupils have not been properly prepared for test situations or for learning in secondary school. Furthermore, the lack of clear and consistent guidance means that different staff do things in different ways. This is unsettling for pupils and does not help to build their confidence.
- That said, pupils do enjoy school and feel safe. Bullying is not a problem and, should it ever happen, pupils and staff know how to deal with it to make sure it is stopped.
- Lunchtimes and other informal times are pleasant occasions. Pupils are relaxed with one another and with adults. They willingly engage in lively conversation while

remembering to be respectful and helpful.

- Older pupils who have specific jobs, such as house captains, perform their duties well. This helps to instil a sense of responsibility and pride in their school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. In lessons, on the playground and when moving around the school, pupils' conduct is orderly and good-natured.
- Lessons proceed smoothly and without disruption. Pupils show respect for property and for others and say that staff teach them to be considerate and caring. Good behaviour is recognised and rewarded and any instances of poor behaviour are followed up in swift and constructive ways. Since the previous inspection, there have been no exclusions from school.
- Pupils communicate clearly with one another and are able to establish and maintain positive relationships with their peers and staff. They are polite and courteous, offer cheery greetings to visitors and readily hold open doors or step aside for others.
- Attendance at school has dipped slightly just recently but, over time, has been in line with the rates seen in most other schools. The school is quick to follow up any unexplained absences and regularly reminds pupils, and their parents, about the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Significant weaknesses in assessment and the leadership of teaching have allowed academic standards to decline. In both 2016 and 2017, the school's end of key stage 2 results were below the government's floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment by the end of Year 6. Given pupils' very positive start to school in the early years, this is indicative of poor progress between Years 1 and 6.
- Progress rates in writing and mathematics have given the greatest cause for concern, with progress in key stage 2 being weaker than key stage 1. Standards in reading have been stronger overall, with most pupils making acceptable progress and usually reaching standards in line with or above those expected for their age.
- For pupils currently in the school, progress is improving. Standards in reading are generally good and the quality of pupils' writing is on the up. Nevertheless, a legacy of weak assessment across the whole school means that progress is still somewhat erratic. In mathematics, for example, pupils make strides forwards in some classes but slower progress in others. For the most part, current pupils make stronger progress in key stage 1 and upper key stage 2 than they do in Years 3 and 4.
- Over time, the most able pupils have fared better than the middle and lower ability pupils and this remains the case for pupils currently in the school. Again, this is a consequence of weak assessment. Pupils who readily understand manage to cope with work and race ahead. Those who are not so quick to learn are not noticed soon enough and fall behind.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils also gives cause for concern. While the school

has tracked their progress, very little has been done in response. For instance, those who have made slow progress have not received effective help to catch up. Those who have done well have received little extra support or challenge to push them on further.

- The progress made by pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities has varied, just as their needs have varied. Some have made good progress and some have not done so well. As with other pupils, a lack of evaluative leadership has allowed ineffective support, and also success stories, to go unnoticed. Leaders are working to improve the situation.

Early years provision

Good

- Leadership in this part of the school has a good effect on ensuring that children get a positive start and are ready for key stage 1. In the early years, there is coherent teamwork, accurate assessment and good teaching. From day one, children are occupied productively and supported to make good progress. Consequently, the proportions of children reaching a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year are usually above national averages.
- Staff have established effective routines that help children to feel secure and safe in school. Parents and children know what to expect because staff know what they are doing and communicate clearly. Parents receive plenty of information about their children's progress and are able to share information about achievements at home. This two-way flow of information serves to build an accurate picture of what children know and can do and ensures that teaching is pitched just right.
- Class activities are purposeful, well organised and informed by children's previous learning. Adults take a constructive lead in developing children's early literacy and numeracy skills. They provide plenty of opportunities for children to make their own decisions and take responsibility. During this inspection, for example, children's role play in the class shop was used by staff to check and develop their early arithmetic skills. Outside, boys and girls worked together to construct a 'fire engine' from large blocks. In both instances, adults intervened at just the right moments in order to steer new learning and build confidence.
- Classrooms and outdoor areas provide bright creative spaces in which to play and learn. Adults provide nurturing attention to children's needs that makes them feel good about themselves and their achievements. As a result, children enjoy school and behave well.

School details

Unique reference number	116863
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	10043158

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	299
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Andrew Jarvis
Headteacher	Mr Stuart Busby
Telephone number	01684 574889
Website	www.northleigh.worcs.sch.uk
Email address	office@northleigh.worcs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	30–31 January 2013

Information about this school

- Northleigh CofE Primary School is larger than the average-sized primary school. It provides before- and after-school childcare.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils at the school is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is below the national average.
- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about special educational needs, accessibility, the use of the pupil premium and the primary PE and sport premium funding on its website.
- The school does not meet the government's current floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment by the end of Year 6.
- The current headteacher took up his post in September 2017.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all year groups. The inspectors also examined pupils' work in books and considered school test and assessment information.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour, and the school's procedures, at the beginning and end of the school day, at lunchtimes and breaktimes, and when pupils were moving about the school site. Inspectors also saw pupils taking part in PE lessons outside.
- Meetings were held with pupils, staff, school leaders, governors and a local authority representative. The lead inspector had a phone conversation with representatives of the Diocese of Worcester and the local authority.
- By the end of the inspection, there were 85 recent responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View) and 56 free-text responses. In addition, inspectors spoke with parents at the beginning of the school day.
- A number of school documents were examined, including information about pupils' achievement, evaluations of the school's performance and several policy statements. Records relating to governance, staff performance management, training, the quality of teaching, special educational needs, early years, external support, behaviour, admissions, attendance, safety and safeguarding were also scrutinised. The school's website was also checked.

Inspection team

Martin Pye, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Michael Appleby	Ofsted Inspector
Marie Thomas	Ofsted Inspector

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