

Offord Primary School

Millers Close, Offord Darcy, St Neots, Cambridgeshire PE19 5SB

Inspection dates

13–14 November 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- School leaders and governors have not responded effectively to a decline in standards over time. They do not demonstrate the knowledge and understanding to ensure that the school rapidly improves.
- Actions taken by leaders have not been routinely checked to ensure that they are making a difference.
- The governing body accepts information provided to it too readily. Governors are slow to act upon inadequacies and do not have an accurate view of the school's performance.
- School leaders have an overinflated view of the school's effectiveness. The school's improvement planning is imprecise and lacks focus.
- Middle leaders do not contribute adequately towards school improvement. They do not have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities.
- Teachers' expectations are too low. Pupils do not make the progress they are capable of. This is particularly the case in mathematics.
- Staff do not understand the school's current assessment system or use assessment information effectively to plan effective teaching and future learning.
- Many pupils, particularly the most able, are provided with work that is too easy and lacks challenge. Pupils repeat work that they can already do.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) do not make adequate progress.
- Children in early years do not make as much progress as they could. Too few exceed the early learning goals.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils with SEND are well supported and cared for pastorally. This ensures they can participate in all aspects of school life.
- Behaviour in lessons is good. Pupils engage with their learning and cooperate well.
- The school gives pupils' well-being and personal development a high priority. Staff know pupils well and care for them diligently.
- Pupils enjoy the wider thematic curricular opportunities provided when studying subjects other than mathematics and English.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(1) of 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.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Urgently improve leadership and management, including governance, by ensuring that:
 - senior and middle leaders are held to account for the quality of their work and their contribution to whole-school improvement
 - pupils' underachievement is addressed strategically by leaders regularly checking that the actions they are taking are making a difference
 - the school's assessment system is fully understood by all, so that it can be used accurately to check pupils' progress and plan effective teaching and learning
 - leaders, including governors, use the external support provided and look at best practice elsewhere to develop a more aspirational outlook
 - the school's evaluation and improvement documentation is improved to become more accurate in identifying what needs to be done, by whom and by when.
- Swiftly improve the quality of teaching and learning, by:
 - planning work for the most able pupils which teaches them new things and challenges them to achieve the higher standards
 - capitalising on pupils' interest in the wider curriculum to provide more opportunities to practise core skills from subjects such as writing and mathematics
 - assessing and using pupils' starting points accurately to plan for what they should learn next
 - ensuring that the quality is consistently good in all classes.
- Rapidly improve outcomes for pupils, by:
 - holding high aspirations for what pupils of all abilities can achieve
 - ensuring the additional funding for pupils with SEND is used effectively
 - ensuring that all staff and governors have an accurate understanding of what constitutes good progress
 - addressing pupils' underachievement with urgency and rigour.
- Improve outcomes in early years, by:
 - planning learning activities which build on what children already know, understand and can do.

The school should not employ newly qualified teachers.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Leaders, including governors, have overseen a decline in standards over time. They have been slow to take effective action to ensure that pupils' achievement improves. Consequently, leaders' capacity to make improvements is weak, and leadership and management are inadequate.
- Leaders have prioritised pupils' well-being and personal development at the expense of their academic progress. The headteacher acknowledges that this strategy has not had a positive impact upon outcomes. Governors reflect that the focus on 'wellness' activities last year did not halt the school's decline and may have contributed to it. Inspection evidence confirms this view.
- Leaders have implemented a range of new systems. They did not think them through well enough and they have not checked to see if they have made a difference. Leaders took on too many new things at once; few of them focused on improving the quality of teaching and learning or raising standards.
- Leaders' monitoring of teaching and learning has had little impact on outcomes. This is because, to date, it has not been focused on fundamental weaknesses such as lack of challenge. Teachers have been slow to respond when weaknesses in their teaching are identified and leaders have not been rigorous in following them up.
- Senior and middle leaders have been reluctant to 'step up' and support the headteacher in her improvement of the school. They do not have an accurate or aspirational whole-school view and have been slow to act, beyond managing their own classes.
- School leaders have not been held to account effectively. Managing underperformance at all levels has been slow and imprecise.
- The school's chosen assessment system is not fit for purpose. Leaders, other than the headteacher, and governors are unclear of its purpose and do not use it effectively to track progress. More than one leader expressed their vague 'hope' that pupils' progress would improve. There is no precision or detail in leaders' knowledge and understanding of pupils' current progress.
- Targets set for pupils lack aspiration and leaders at all levels think that adequate progress equates to good progress. Leaders and teachers do not understand what good progress looks like.
- Support from the local authority has been slow to show impact. Following disappointing outcomes in the 2018 national test results, more regular targeted support has been provided, particularly with leadership and mathematics. The local authority has identified concerns about the quality of education being provided and the leadership of the school.
- An external consultant is employed by the school to assist with governance and leadership. His focus is to help leaders to prioritise, understand and deliver their core duties more effectively, such as through the school's revised governance structure.
- Of the 33 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, many

were positive, although opinions were mixed. A minority worry about the progress made by their children and the quality of teaching they receive. Others are concerned about behaviour and homework. How well the school is led and managed was also raised by some and around one in six parents would not recommend the school.

- Responses to Ofsted's staff survey were distributed in paper copy to all staff. Twelve responses were analysed. The vast majority of staff enjoy working at the school. A minority had concerns about workload and how much support they receive.
- Fundamental British values, such as democracy and the rule of law, were demonstrated in an assembly when pupils discussed whether the Queen had a role in government and why she attended the Remembrance Day parade. Displays around the school reflect the wide range of work undertaken in this regard. This shows that pupils are exposed to a range of experiences and activities which contribute to raising their awareness and understanding of life in modern Britain.

Governance

- Governors have been too accepting of explanations provided by school leaders about reasons for the school's decline.
- Many governors hold an inaccurate view of pupils' progress. They, too, have readily accepted adequate progress as good progress. This led to an underestimation of the rate of improvement being made and they were subsequently 'shocked and surprised' by the school's 2018 poor national test results.
- Governors' minutes of meetings indicate that their involvement in the school during the previous academic year was, at times, sporadic. They did not, therefore, have an accurate view of the quality of the school's work.
- Governors have monitored and published reports on additional funding provided to the school such as for disadvantaged pupils, sport and pupils with SEND. While these reports contain some detail, it is unclear in places about the precise impact this funding has had on pupils' outcomes.
- The governing body is made up of individuals with a range of key professional skills and competencies. They are committed to the school and to their roles. An external review of governance has recently been commissioned by the local authority.
- Governors have reviewed their working model and changed to working in pairs rather than on committees. They now hold monthly meetings with the whole governing body. Governors report that this model is more effective in ensuring that everyone is kept well informed.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Safeguarding policies and procedures are in place, up to date and understood by staff and governors. These are also published on the school's website.
- The record of appropriate checks undertaken on adults working at the school, including volunteers and contractors, is thorough and meets requirements. A recent audit of this

document was carried out by the local authority and action points have been completed by school leaders.

- Staff files and other documentation relating to safeguarding are well maintained and complete. Office staff are rigorous in following up any missing documentation or actions required. This includes those relating to children missing in education.
- The intimate care policy and other policies and procedures relating to the needs of disabled children and those with medical conditions are appropriate and staff are well-trained in their implementation.
- Staff are regularly trained in safeguarding procedures and practices. Training for the 'Prevent' duty, about potential radicalisation, is planned for January 2019. Staff show an appropriate understanding and awareness of the different types of abuse and know what to do if they have any concerns.
- Most risk assessments are undertaken appropriately for the various activities that take place, but some lack detail.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- Staff do not effectively use or understand the school's assessment system. While it is completed by teachers, they do not use it effectively to measure progress or plan teaching and learning that meets pupils' needs.
- The most-able pupils are not routinely challenged. Consequently, they do not achieve the higher standards in adequate numbers. Pupils report that the work is 'a doddle'. While additional challenges are provided, these can only be undertaken once the pupil has completed the set work, even if this is too easy. These extension tasks are well within pupils' capabilities. Pupils say that they are bored and frustrated by this.
- Pupils with SEND and pupils with lower starting points are usually supported by adults during learning activities. When adults do too much for these pupils, they do not get the opportunity to grapple with their work or show how much of it they understand and can do. This slows their progress. Teachers do not plan work appropriate for these pupils' capabilities.
- Evidence in books indicates that a large amount of time is dedicated to English, mathematics and science. There is also a range of work from other subjects on display. Pupils say they enjoy the whole-school themes they study, such as 'castles and dragons' or 'build it big', which include subjects such as history, geography and design technology. Key stage 2 pupils study Spanish and music.
- The school's monitoring information shows that teaching and learning is not good enough. This has not been addressed with any urgency. While staff have responded to the identified development points which are 'quick fixes' such as tidying up their classrooms, they have been more reluctant or unable to tackle fundamentals, such as underlying weaknesses in their teaching or pupils' inadequate progress.
- Classrooms are well-organised and attractive. Helpful prompts are displayed, which support pupils with their independent tasks. The curriculum has been organised into themes to include subjects such as history, geography, design technology and art and design. These are well received by pupils.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Leaders have prioritised this area in response to feedback from pupils and parents about mental health issues and well-being. For example, yoga classes have been provided for pupils with anxiety. An outdoor learning space is currently being developed and a facilitator trained so that all pupils will have access to active learning opportunities in the local environment.
- Staff know their pupils well and are alert to any changes in behaviour or attitude. Pupils demonstrate respect, both to each other and towards adults. They are polite, considerate and confident.
- Pupils say that they feel safe. They understand the definition of bullying, including cyber bullying and inappropriate use of social media. School records confirm this view.
- Pupils' awareness of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. They are accepting of difference, as is shown by how well pupils with disabilities are accepted and supported by their peers. They attend daily assemblies which the headteacher has renamed 'together time'. Collective acts of worship and reflection take place during these sessions.
- Leaders at all levels genuinely want the best for their pupils and for the school. They know pupils and their families well.
- The heavy focus on the personal development and welfare of pupils at Offord Primary has been at the expense of their academic development and progress. The headteacher and governors acknowledge this.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils generally behave appropriately in lessons and when moving around the school. Their attitudes to learning are positive, even when work is too easy or difficult for them. They politely accept the task and get on with it.
- In lessons, pupils show respect to one another and listen to each other's points of view. They are accepting of differences and tolerant of difficult situations. For example, Year 6 pupils who share an open-plan space with younger children show understanding when the children become overexcited by learning activities.
- Pupils' attendance has improved. It is now similar to the national average. This is because leaders have put in place a variety of strategies, including rewards and sanctions, to encourage good attendance. They have engaged with families well. A few pupils are regular non-attenders and leaders are doing all they can to ensure that these pupils are in school each day.
- There have been no incidents recorded of bullying or prejudiced behaviour. This is confirmed by pupils, who say that there is no bullying at the school and if it did happen they are confident that staff would sort it out.

- Indoors, the school is an orderly and calm environment. In most cases outside and at breaktimes behaviour is orderly too. During the inspection a small amount of boisterous behaviour was observed in the playground and at the end of the school day, which went unnoticed by staff on duty.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- This is a small school with small cohorts, so analysis of published data must be undertaken with care, given the difference that one or two pupils can make to percentages. Even so, both over time and currently, underachievement is widespread. Evidence from the inspection indicates that assessment is weak, and leaders do not know how well current pupils, including those with SEND and disadvantaged pupils, are doing.
- Leaders have not effectively analysed pupils' performance information. Work in books indicates that pupils are not making the strong progress required to address historical underperformance. Some key groups of pupils, such as those most-able or those with SEND, have made insufficient progress over time.
- Attainment in writing in 2018 remained below national averages at both key stage 1 and key stage 2. With only broadly average progress between key stage 1 and key stage 2, the opportunity for Offord pupils to catch up with other pupils nationally in writing has been weak. There is no evidence to suggest that this situation is improving for current pupils.
- Mathematics remains an area of concern. Year 6 pupils' progress in 2018 was well below the average nationally. Attainment at both key stage 1 and key stage 2 was below national averages. Evidence from the inspection indicates that this situation is not being addressed with enough urgency.
- The combined outcome of reading, writing and mathematics was well below the national average in 2018 in both key stages. The three-year average for this outcome is slightly below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the higher standard in reading and mathematics and greater depth in writing was below average in 2018 and for the past three years.
- Attainment in phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) at the end of Year 1 has been broadly in line with national average scores since 2016. There was a significant drop in 2018. Improvement in phonics teaching was identified as an area for development in the previous inspection. These outcomes and evidence from the inspection indicate that the teaching of phonics has not improved enough to improve pupils' phonic knowledge.
- Attainment in reading has been better than attainment in other subjects over the past three years. While only average progress was made in 2018, pupils still attained above the national average at the end of key stage 2. This is because progress over time has been better in reading and was strong in 2016 and 2017.
- Attainment in science has been above the average nationally both at key stage 1 and key stage 2 since the previous inspection and remained so in 2018.
- Pupils' underachievement in writing and mathematics has resulted in a significant

minority of pupils not reaching the expected standards by the end of Year 6. As a result, Offord pupils are not being well prepared for their next stages of their education.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- The early years leader assesses the children regularly. However, she does not use this information or the school's assessment system effectively to improve outcomes. She is unsure how much progress children are making, and she does not use the information available well enough to inform teaching and learning. The early years leader and other senior leaders have an overinflated view of the setting's effectiveness.
- On entry to the school, children's development is broadly typical with what could be expected for their age. The proportion of children attaining a good level of development by the end of Reception has been static at broadly average for three years. There is no urgency or ambition to increase the number of children reaching a good level of development or for more children to exceed the early learning goals. This is despite having motivated, articulate and able children in the setting.
- Few children exceed what is typical for their age at the end of Reception. The most able children are known to staff, but additional challenge is not routinely provided. During the inspection, an able child self-extended her phonics activity when the 'tricky' word she was challenged to write by the teacher, 'ticket,' was considered too easy. She chose 'steering wheel' and quickly wrote 'stirin wiyl,' demonstrating sophisticated phonological awareness for her age. The activity provided by the teacher lacked challenge and did not build on her prior knowledge.
- Provision for the youngest children in the school is attractive and engaging. Both indoors and outdoors, children access a wide range of well-planned activities which they enjoy.
- Children demonstrate well the characteristics of effective learning. For example, they work together, and demonstrate perseverance. Children are mostly confident, happy, and engaged learners.
- The teacher plans activities for the children which are active and fun. During the inspection children engaged in an outdoor phonics treasure hunt in which they were tasked to find and identify words. They demonstrated age-appropriate phonological awareness during this game. For example, some children were able to read words such as 'crab'.
- Children's welfare and personal development is prioritised in the setting. Safeguarding and welfare requirements are met. Staff are vigilant to any changes in children's behaviour or presentation and liaise closely with their families when required.
- Parents are invited to participate in their children's education, for example by engaging with the word bags sent home to reinforce reading skills. They are kept informed about the activities their children have undertaken.

School details

Unique reference number

110682

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| Local authority | Cambridgeshire |
| Inspection number | 10047047 |

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Maintained |
| Age range of pupils | 4 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 102 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Andrew Shefford |
| Headteacher | Roz Amner |
| Telephone number | 01480 810308 |
| Website | www.offord.cambs.sch.uk |
| Email address | office@offord.cambs.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 14–15 December 2014 |

Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school. Pupils are taught in mixed-age classes, apart from early years.
- The percentage of disadvantaged pupils is much lower than the national average. The school's deprivation score is low.
- There is a similar percentage of pupils with SEND to that seen in most schools nationally. The percentage of pupils with an education, health and care plan is higher.
- The governing body has recently changed its structure to a 'circle of governance' model. This involves pairs of governors, rather than committees and monthly full governing body meetings.
- The school has brokered support from an external adviser this year. He is supporting the governing body and senior leaders.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was scheduled as a one-day, short inspection. By the end of the day the lead inspector had some serious concerns. The inspection converted to a section 5

inspection, with the lead inspector returning the following day to complete the full inspection.

- Several short lesson observations were undertaken by the lead inspector, accompanied by the headteacher. Each of the four classes was visited more than once.
- Learning walks also took place, accompanied by the headteacher, and during these pupils' books were scrutinised and pupils' views sought through informal discussion.
- A more formal book scrutiny took place separately, between the lead inspector and headteacher, with a focus on mathematics and writing.
- Pupils' opinions on safety, well-being, their work and the school were sought at breaktimes and in lessons.
- The lead inspector observed both playtime and lunchtime sessions and behaviour.
- Discussions were held with leaders holding responsibility for mathematics and early years and with the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo). The leader with responsibility for English was not available.
- Extensive discussions were held with the headteacher, who holds several key responsibilities such as the designated lead for safeguarding. She also oversees curriculum and assessment.
- The school's documentation on safeguarding, self-evaluation, school improvement, performance management and monitoring of teaching and learning was scrutinised. The school's website was checked.
- Meetings were held with governors, collectively and one individually. The chair of the governing body was part of this discussion and attended the staff briefing hosted by the lead inspector on day one. Governors' minutes of meetings were also scrutinised.
- Results from 33 respondents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were considered as well as a number of free-text responses from parents. Staff returned 12 copies of Ofsted's staff questionnaire, which were taken into account. No pupils completed Ofsted's pupil survey.

Inspection team

Jacqueline Bell-Cook, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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