

# Pixmore Junior School

Rushby Mead, Letchworth, SG6 1RS

**Inspection dates** 11–12 September 2013

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Pupils reach standards that are no higher than the national average by the end of Year 6.
- Although rates of progress are improving, pupils do not make consistently good progress throughout the school.
- Not enough teaching is consistently good or better.
- Planned opportunities for using and applying skills in writing and number are not consistently practised in other subjects.
- Not all teachers are using data to match work closely to individual pupils' needs.
- The feedback that pupils receive on their work does not always make clear the steps needed to improve.
- Senior leaders have established a new tracking system but this is not being used effectively enough to track the progress of different groups.
- Until recently, checks on the quality of teaching were not systematic or sharp enough.

### The school has the following strengths

- The behaviour and safety of pupils are good and attendance rates are above average.
- Pupils enjoy regular high quality provision for sports development.
- Reading skills are taught effectively and pupils make good progress in reading.
- School leaders are now using tracking to check more closely on pupils' progress and to hold teachers to account and, as a result teaching and achievement are swiftly improving.
- Leaders and governors have effectively used the support of the local authority to support their drive to make improvements in teaching, and in the standard of pupils' work.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 13 lessons, two of which were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- Inspectors observed pupils in lessons, at play, at lunch and as they moved around school.
- Discussions were held with staff, the Chair of the Governing Body, and other governors, and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors held meetings with two groups of pupils, listened to pupils read and checked reading progress records.
- A wide range of documentation was reviewed, including records of the quality of teaching and of pupils' attainment and progress, the school's view of its performance and the school development plan. In addition, records of the governing body meetings, safeguarding documentation and reports from the school improvement adviser were reviewed.
- The inspectors took account of the 26 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View), and 21 responses to the staff questionnaire during the inspection. Inspectors also spoke to parents at the beginning of the school day.

## Inspection team

Susan Thomas-Pounce, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Elizabeth Buckingham

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This is an average-sized junior school.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is above the national average. This is additional government funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those children that are looked after by the local authority.
- The large majority of pupils are White British.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion of those supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also above average. A significant number of the identified needs is associated with social, emotional development and behavioural difficulties.
- There have been a number of staff changes since the previous inspection.
- The school met the government's current floor standard in 2012, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching, in order to raise pupils' achievement and accelerate their progress by:
  - more rigorously matching work to the different abilities of pupils so they are challenged at the appropriate level in all lessons and in all classes
  - ensuring pupils receive feedback on their work that gives them clear information on what they need to improve
  - extending the opportunities for pupils to use their writing and mathematical skills in other subjects.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
  - rigorously pursuing the drive to ensure the quality of teaching is consistently good in all classes
  - using data tracking systems more effectively to check regularly on the achievement of individuals and groups of pupils.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- The achievement of all groups of pupils requires improvement. Most pupils start school in Year 3 with skills that are broadly average. However, by the time pupils leave Year 6, standards are still broadly average, which is why progress, from their individual starting points, requires improvement to be good overall.
- In some classes, pupils make better than expected progress, especially in Year 6, because the quality of teaching is good or better. However, not all pupils have made consistently good progress as they have moved through Years 3, 4 and 5. Although achievement is improving, there is still too much variation in rates of progress in different classes because there is not enough good teaching to boost pupils' progress.
- The achievement of disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and those pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium requires improvement as they are only making the progress expected of them. Like other pupils, they do not do as well as they should.
- Following speedy identification of what is required to improve outcomes for individual pupils, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs receive support in the form of extra help from a range of teaching assistants and other adults. There has been variation in the rates of progress these pupils make. However, as a result of more rigorous tracking and effective intervention their progress is improving.
- The attainment of those pupils who are eligible for free school meals and therefore support from pupil premium funding was in line with their peers nationally. Although their attainment was almost a year behind other pupils in their class at the end of Year 6 in 2012, this represented a narrowing of the previous gap in performance.
- All pupils make good progress in reading due to a whole school focus. Pupils have good access to books. They are enthusiastic readers who willingly read with a variety of adults around school. In 2012 the numbers of pupils reaching the expected level was in line with the national average. However, achievement in writing and mathematics still varies from class to class and is directly related to the inconsistencies in the quality of teaching across the school.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Although teaching is improving, there is still a proportion which is not helping pupils to learn quickly enough, resulting in pupils making expected rather than good progress overall. Whilst teachers plan activities for differing ability groups, learning is not planned precisely enough to take account of what pupils can do already. Therefore teaching requires improvement.
- As a result of the new tracking system, there is much more accurate assessment taking place by teachers. However, this assessment information is not always effectively used to make sure that work always matches pupils' different abilities. Consequently, expectations and challenge are not always appropriate with some tasks being either too easy or too hard. This slows pupils' progress.
- The quality of marking is improving. Most teachers mark pupils' work regularly. However, there are inconsistencies in the quality of guidance given to pupils on how to improve their work, especially that which is linked to targets. Sometimes it focuses too much on the positive features

and doesn't make clear to pupils what their next steps should be.

- The pupil premium and the allocation of funds for special educational needs have been used to provide small-group teaching. This is successfully focused on closing the gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding.
- Teaching assistants give effective support to those individual pupils with more specific needs. They skilfully ensure the inclusion of children with behavioural difficulties, who make good progress against their individual targets.
- Adults use a good range of resources, including information and communication technology, to motivate pupils and enhance their learning.
- Where teaching is good, pupils are highly engaged in their learning and lessons move along at a good pace. This was seen in a Year 6 lesson which was pitched at the right level to challenge and engage, pupils were clear about the learning objectives and the teacher knew precisely what pupils needed to do to achieve well.
- The school had been working on improving the quality of teaching and learning so much of the teaching that requires improvement has good elements and this is beginning to have an impact on pupils' achievement.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- Pupils' behaviour on the playground and in most lessons is good as it is managed well by teachers and support staff. Relationships between adults and pupils are positive, which contributes to the welcoming atmosphere in the school.
- Pupils enjoy learning and are keen to do well. They listen attentively in lessons and set to work with enthusiasm. This is less evident in a few lessons where too little was expected from them and they became restless.
- Most pupils respond well to the spiritual, moral, and social guidance they receive. They develop positive attitudes to life and learning. They have a clear sense of right and wrong and are keen to help each other and the staff and are proud to do so.
- Pupils are encouraged to become responsible citizens. The school council help to fund raise and organise charity events. Members suggest ways of improving the school at their meetings.
- Pupils say they feel safe at school, and this is supported by the views of most parents. Pupils say there is no significant bullying and they are confident that, if any did occur, they could trust the staff to deal with it well. Pupils are knowledgeable about different types of bullying, especially regarding new technology. Pupils are confident to share their worries with staff because they trust them.
- Pupils participate with enthusiasm in the many sporting, environmental and cultural events in the school and the local area.
- Pupils' attendance is above average and pupils enjoy coming to school. Governors, parents, staff and pupils all expressed positive views about behaviour in the school.

**The leadership and management requires improvement**

- Pupils' achievements and the quality of teaching have not been consistently good since the previous inspection, therefore, leadership and management require improvement.
- The headteacher and the governing body have identified strengths and weaknesses in the quality of teaching and set about improving its overall quality. Professional training, individual coaching and challenge, as well as support from the local authority, have begun to improve the quality of teaching. There are still inconsistencies but improvements are evident with subject leaders taking an more equal share in checking and improving the quality of teaching in their subjects
- Staff are motivated and demonstrate a shared sense of responsibility and commitment to improving the school further. There are clear procedures for checking the performance of staff. Training and targets are linked well to the school's priorities for improvement. Salary increases are now linked to pupils' progress and staff responsibilities.
- The curriculum is sufficiently matched to pupils' abilities and interests to ensure that all groups of pupils make at least expected progress and have equal opportunities to develop their learning and personal qualities. However, pupils have too few chances to use their skills of writing and mathematics in other subjects to steadily develop their knowledge and skills.
- The primary school sports funding is used effectively. Pupils take part in good quality sporting activities provided by a qualified sports coach both during the school day and in clubs after school. This is greatly valued by pupils and makes a strong contribution to their development of healthy lifestyles.
- The school has a strong ethos of care, inclusion and equality. It carefully identifies pupils' needs and offers support for these pupils to learn alongside their peers.
- The local authority has a clear understanding of the school's performance and has provided useful and timely support to improve pupils' achievement including specific advice to help improve teaching and learning, improve management skills and support the governing body. This is beginning to raise standards.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The members of the governing body bring a broad range of experiences and skills to benefit the school and are very involved in the life of the school. They have made good use of the support provided by the local authority and have undertaken training to enable them to question pupils' standards, evaluate the quality of teaching and know how to tackle weaknesses. They keep a close eye on standards and know exactly why achievement has been inconsistent. The headteacher keeps the governors fully informed about the school's performance. The school's finances are managed well; governors understand the school's system for performance management and how teachers are rewarded. The impact of pupil premium funding is thoroughly discussed. Statutory requirements regarding the safeguarding of pupils are met and governors update their training regularly.

## 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>	117259
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	425253

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	238
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Deborah Skeldon
<b>Headteacher</b>	Alex Evans
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	28 November 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01462 620555
<b>Fax number</b>	01462 620555
<b>Email address</b>	admin@pixmore.herts.sch.uk

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