

Uplands Junior School

Melbourne Road, Highfields, Leicester, LE2 0DR

Inspection dates 15–16 January 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures

- Leaders, managers and the governing body have been ineffective in dealing with the gradual decline in pupils' standards and the quality of teaching since the previous inspection.
- Much of the teaching is mundane. Often, teachers do not expect enough of pupils, particularly the most able. They do not check pupils' understanding closely enough, or adapt their teaching as a result.
- Teachers' comments on pupils' work in lessons or on their written work are not always helpful. As a result, pupils do not know how well they have done or how they can improve their work.
- Teachers do not give enough attention to improving pupils' basic skills, such as in speaking and reading fluently with understanding.
- Leaders' checks on teaching do not always focus enough on the progress pupils make in lessons. Feedback to teachers and the school's management of teachers' performance have not led to improvements in teaching.
- Staff have not received sufficient, suitable training to improve their teaching, including in mathematics. Not all leaders are well equipped in making use of assessment data to help them lead and influence developments in their areas of responsibility.
- Teaching assistants are not always used well to support the best possible progress for pupils.
- Pupils' behaviour requires improvement in lessons which they do not find stimulating or interesting.

The school has the following strengths

- The acting headteacher has accurately assessed the challenges facing the school and the right priorities for development.
- Senior leaders now know how different groups are progressing as they move through the school.
- Attendance is above average.
- Most pupils behave sensibly and feel safe at school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 26 lessons or parts of lessons, three of which were jointly observed with the acting headteacher or the assistant headteacher. They also reviewed examples of pupils’ written work with one of the senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with two randomly selected groups of pupils, senior and subject leaders. The lead inspector had two meetings with representatives of the local authority. He also met the Chair of the newly formed Interim Executive Board.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of documents, including the school’s data relating to pupils’ current and recent progress, a summary of the school’s evaluation of its own strengths and weaknesses, monitoring reports, the school’s improvement plan, and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding arrangements.
- Inspectors took into account the 11 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire. Additionally, inspectors talked to 16 parents informally as they brought their children to school on the second day of the inspection.
- Inspectors considered the 20 questionnaires returned by staff.

Inspection team

Krishan Sharma, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Stephen Hopkins	Additional Inspector
Concetta Caruana	Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with 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.

Information about this school

- This is a larger than average-sized primary school.
- Almost all pupils come from a wide range of minority ethnic groups. Those of Indian background are by far the largest group.
- A very large majority of pupils speak English as an additional language, a proportion that is well above the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is about average.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported by pupil premium funding is above average. This is extra funding provided by the government to support certain groups of pupils. In this school, it applies only to pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school has experienced many staff changes, particularly at senior leadership level. The headteacher was not present during the inspection. The acting headteacher joined the school as acting deputy headteacher in August 2013 and became acting headteacher in mid-September 2013. The assistant headteacher also took up post in August 2013, after having served as acting deputy headteacher and acting headteacher previously. An assistant headteacher has been seconded to work in another school. Three class teachers and three teaching assistants left during 2013 and three teaching assistants were made redundant.
- At the time of the inspection an interim executive board had just been established as the responsible authority for the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching so that pupils make consistently good progress, by:
 - demanding more work in lessons from all groups of pupils, particularly the most able and those who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium
 - monitoring pupils' progress closely and adjusting the work set to speed it up, especially for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs
 - making clear comments on pupils' work in lessons and in their books to show them how well they have done and what to do to improve their work
 - always making the best use of teaching assistants to help pupils make rapid progress.
- Improve pupils' achievement in English and mathematics by:
 - encouraging pupils to develop their ideas, and helping them to speak fluently
 - focusing on improving pupils' skills in reading with fluency and understanding
 - ensuring pupils understand how to work out calculations
 - strengthening teachers' skills in teaching mathematics.

- Strengthen the effectiveness of leaders and managers at all levels by:
 - when observing lessons, making rigorous checks on the impact of teaching on the progress different groups make
 - giving teachers clear and accurate feedback on the effectiveness of their lessons in improving pupils' progress
 - providing suitable training, linked to specific staff targets, to improve the quality of teaching
 - improving the monitoring skills of subject leaders, particularly in analysing assessment data and using the results to bring about improvement.

Ofsted has made recommendations for action on governance to the authority responsible for the school. An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- Pupils' achievement is inadequate because they make insufficient progress. From broadly average starting points on entry to school, pupils achieve below-average standards in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6. Standards have gradually declined from above average in 2011 to below average in 2013.
- Progress is particularly weak in Years 3 and 4, and this leads to considerable underachievement. By the end of Year 6, some ground is made up due to better teaching.
- Pupils' speaking skills are not as strong as they could be across the school. Pupils are willing to talk but their response in lessons is not always clear or fluent. In some lessons, the development of pupils' oral skills does not receive adequate attention.
- Progress in mathematics is weak. Pupils can use techniques taught by teachers to get to the right answer, but they do not always know why their answer is correct. As a result, some of them are not able to apply those techniques with confidence in unfamiliar situations.
- Reading is improving but not in all aspects. Pupils enjoy reading; they can talk confidently about main characters and events in texts. However, daily reading sessions are not used effectively to prepare pupils for reading with fluency or understanding the underlying meaning of the text.
- Many of the disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make the progress that they should, but some of them do not. A few of the most-able pupils do not achieve as well as they should because teachers do not demand enough of them. Senior leaders are alert to underachievement among these two groups, and they now identify pupils whose performance needs regular scrutiny.
- Most pupils who speak English as an additional language and those of Indian background, who also speak English as an additional language, make the expected progress in English and mathematics. Some, however, do not do as well as they should because general weaknesses in teaching do not help them to make sustained progress. .
- At the end of Key Stage 2 in 2013, the attainment in English and mathematics of pupils supported by the pupil premium was lower than that of others in school, and they had made less progress than other groups. Eligible pupils were nearly two terms behind others in English and mathematics and the gap had widened slightly since 2012.
- It is too early to judge the impact of sports funding on pupils' achievement, including their physical well-being. Pupils enjoy participating in the after-school and lunchtime sports activities on offer, and they do so in large numbers.

The quality of teaching

is inadequate

- The quality of teaching has been inadequate for too long, and this is at the heart of declining standards in the school. Too much of the teaching seen during the inspection required improvement or was inadequate.
- In too many lessons, teachers do not expect enough of pupils. Tasks fail to stretch pupils,

particularly the most-able; as a result, some of them underachieve. At times, teachers go over old ground, which means they have not taken into account what pupils are already capable of doing and do not adapt their teaching to provide a fresh challenge.

- Teachers' questioning skills vary across the school. Questions are routinely used to test pupils' prior knowledge and understanding, particularly at the start of lessons. As lessons progress, the use of questioning to check pupils' progress is not as effective as it needs to be. Teachers do not use pupils' response to their questions to adjust the difficulty of the work to make sure it is hard enough to challenge pupils but not too hard to make them lose interest.
- All teachers comment on pupils' work, orally during lessons and through their marking of written work. In many lessons, these comments are too vague. As a result, pupils do not benefit fully from the teachers' guidance. Recent marking shows some improvement, but too often it is still unhelpful.
- The support provided to assigned pupils by teaching assistants is not always effective; especially when it does not take enough account of what pupils already know and can do, or when teachers do not make efficient use of the teaching assistants' time in lessons.
- The teaching of mathematics is weak. In some lessons, teachers focus on getting pupils simply to replicate the calculation techniques they teach without making sure that pupils develop their skills in thinking mathematically so that they can apply their skills in different contexts.
- Teachers promote pupils' social skills well. As a result, relationships are good. Although most pupils are amenable, a few pupils are not always fully engaged, particularly when they find lessons dull and uninteresting.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils' behaviour requires improvement. In some lessons, pupils lose concentration and display a lack of interest. This slows their learning and progress and occasionally leads to disruption of other pupils' learning.
- Pupils assured inspectors that behaviour is mostly acceptable. Most parents are satisfied with standards of behaviour in the school, although a few expressed some concerns.
- Overall, pupils' behaviour is acceptable; most pupils conduct themselves responsibly in and around the school. They treat each other well and are courteous.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils understand different forms of bullying, including that which is prejudice-based or relates to misuse of the internet. Pupils feel safe in school and know that adults will always be on hand to listen to their concerns.
- Attendance is above average. Senior leaders remain focused on maintaining good attendance and punctuality.

The leadership and management

are inadequate

- Leaders have been ineffective in arresting the decline that set in after the previous inspection in 2012. The current senior leadership team has quickly formed an accurate view of the major issues facing the school. Plans for improvement identify the right priorities but do not define

specific enough actions.

- Senior and subject leaders make checks on teaching, including by observing lessons. However, these checks lack rigour. Monitoring is not sufficiently focused on the progress that different groups make in lessons. As a result, teachers do not receive accurate feedback on the effectiveness of their teaching and how it affects pupils' learning and progress.
- Senior leaders and staff have an overly generous view of the quality of teaching. The monitoring skills of subject leaders, including their analysis and use of data on pupils' progress, are not sufficiently developed to assist them in leading developments in their areas of responsibility. The log of staff training shows that leaders have attended some relevant courses on leadership and management, but so far their impact has been limited.
- Given the deterioration in the school's performance since its previous inspection, and despite the recent actions taken by current leaders, the capacity to secure necessary improvement remains limited. A track record of success is yet to be established.
- The senior leadership team is alert to the recent analysis of data that shows that the progress made by groups, such as disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs, and those who are supported by pupil premium funding, is not yet good enough. The use of data during meetings at which pupils' progress is discussed is now more robust; clearly identifying where exactly the underachievement is and holding teachers to account for it.
- Pupil premium funding is used to support small-group activities and one-to-one support for eligible pupils. Senior leaders recognise that this support has not been effective and that these pupils are still behind others in the school. Leaders have set as one of their key priorities, the aim of narrowing this attainment gap. They have set clear short-term goals for speeding up the progress of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and have specified the extra support that these pupils are going to receive. The plans also include arrangements for checking that the support has the intended impact. However, these plans are too recent for their effectiveness to be measured.
- The arrangements for the management of staff performance require improvement because they do not identify specific objectives needed for improving the quality of teaching. The record of training events shows that few made a direct contribution to improvement in the quality of teaching.
- The basic curriculum and the numerous enrichment activities promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development appropriately. However, the curriculum does not cater sufficiently for the needs of the most able pupils and in reading sessions there is not enough attention given to helping pupils who speak English as an additional language to understand the text.
- The school plans to use primary sports funding to extend the range of physical activities and pupils' participation in them, and to evaluate their impact on pupils' physical well-being.
- Most of the small number of parents who responded to Parent View are satisfied with what the school provides for their children. Some, however, rightly feel that they could have been better informed about recent changes at school, particularly about the many staff changes.
- Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

- A strained relationship between the local authority and the school disrupted its support work to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. The local authority was aware of the school's declining standards and was concerned. This led to the local authority dissolving the governing body and appointing an interim executive board, which was set to meet for the first time during the inspection. The recent steps taken by the local authority, including an audit of the school's financial management, have enabled it to resume its support for the school.

- **The governance of the school:**
 - In the absence of a properly constituted governing body, the inspection team looked at the limited documentary evidence made available during the inspection. Records show that the governing body was not aware of the full scale of the school's declining performance. It is not possible to judge whether the governing body held the senior leaders to account for the school's emerging weaknesses. The current senior leaders provided information to assure the inspection team that safeguarding arrangements meet current national requirements. The interim executive board is now getting ready to take on the governance of the school.

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	120035
Local authority	Leicester City
Inspection number	440358

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.

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	478
Appropriate authority	Interim executive board
Chair	Peter McNamara
Headteacher	Tim Luckcock
Date of previous school inspection	6 February 2012
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