

Hester's Way Primary School

Dill Avenue, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire GL51 0ES

Inspection dates

17–18 January 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Standards in the school have declined since the last inspection. Weak teaching has resulted in too few pupils reaching the standards expected of them at the end of each key stage, including the early years. However, there are early signs of improvement.
- Phonics teaching is inconsistent and, as a result, too many pupils fail to develop secure early reading skills. The school is changing the way it teaches phonics but it is too soon to determine the success of this.
- Assessment is not consistently accurate, which means teachers often have an incorrect view of what pupils can already do. Consequently, activities planned by teachers do not routinely challenge pupils, including the most able. This impedes their progress.
- Leaders' monitoring of teaching is not robust enough to identify when pupils fall behind in their learning. As a result, many pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, are not catching up quickly enough.
- Governors have a limited understanding of how well pupils are doing and this restricts their ability to challenge and support leaders.
- Leaders' actions have not yet improved attendance for the few pupils who do not attend regularly. This means pupils are missing out on vital aspects of their education.
- The curriculum provides limited opportunities for pupils to practise and develop their reading, writing and mathematics across the different subjects. This hinders them from consolidating these skills.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher is dedicated to improving the school. She has worked hard to manage staff changes in order to minimise disruptions to pupils' education.
- Leaders and teachers have made noticeable improvements to teaching in Year 6. This is having a positive impact on pupils' achievement.
- Pastoral support for pupils is strong because all adults are committed to supporting pupils' welfare. Adults in the school form caring relationships with pupils and, as a result, pupils feel safe and trust them.
- Pupils are a credit to the school. They are polite, welcoming and keen to learn. They listen carefully and respect each other's ideas.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in all key stages by ensuring that teachers:
 - improve the teaching of phonics, so that more pupils achieve expected standards
 - develop the consistency of assessment in all year groups, including the early years, so that work is well matched to pupils' needs and supports them to make strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics
 - set suitably challenging work for the most able pupils, which leads to more pupils achieving higher standards
 - further accelerate progress for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities who need to catch up.
- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that leaders at all levels:
 - improve the monitoring of all subjects so that leaders swiftly identify when teaching needs to improve and they take appropriate action
 - improve attendance so that pupils can benefit from all that the school has to offer
 - develop governors' understanding of pupils' progress, so that they can accurately evaluate the effectiveness of the school's work
 - further develop the curriculum to provide pupils with regular opportunities to practise their reading, writing and mathematics.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Since the last inspection, leaders, including governors, have not made the improvements needed to ensure that all pupils make good progress in their learning. Several changes of staff have led to inconsistencies in the quality of education the school provides. This has had an adverse impact on pupils' achievement.
- Leaders' actions to address weak teaching have been too slow. Although there have been relatively recent improvements to teaching, these have mostly been restricted to the school's older pupils. This means that too many pupils across the rest of the school do not reach the standards they are capable of.
- Leaders' evaluation of teaching is not always accurate, which means that leaders have an over-generous view of how well pupils are doing. This prevents them from intervening when pupils are underachieving and, consequently, pupils do not make consistently strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Leaders regularly track the progress pupils make in reading, writing and mathematics and this helps them to set targets for their improvement. However, these targets are not sufficiently aspirational, because they do not routinely take account of the fact that many pupils need to catch up. This limits the extent to which leaders are able to challenge teachers to improve further so that pupils make better progress.
- Teachers feel that senior leaders support them well and this encourages them to work together to improve provision. However, professional development is not sufficiently well targeted to ensure that all adults are equipped with the skills needed to accelerate pupils' progress.
- School leaders use pupil premium funding effectively to provide a range of activities and teaching support for disadvantaged pupils. These are making a positive difference to pupils' attitudes to learning and they are making steady progress. However, teaching is not always precisely focused on making sure that pupils who still need to catch up do so rapidly. This means that many pupils do not make strong and sustained progress.
- The curriculum provides infrequent opportunities for pupils to practise and develop their reading, writing and mathematics skills in other subjects. This prevents them from consolidating the skills they have learned. Leaders' monitoring of the curriculum is variable and this means that leaders cannot assure themselves that pupils are making good progress in all subjects.
- Leaders at all levels are dedicated to improving pupils' outcomes. Leaders understand the school's main priorities, which has helped them to create detailed improvement plans. These identify the steps leaders and teachers need to take to help pupils make better progress. However, it is too soon to determine the effectiveness of these.
- Leaders are committed to supporting pupils' well-being and work hard to form positive partnerships with parents and carers. This gives parents the confidence to support their children. Most parents comment that they are very happy with the work of the school. Leaders know that a small minority of parents are unhappy about the school's support of pupils' learning and behaviour and are committed to resolving these issues.

- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has a secure understanding of the needs of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. This helps her to plan teaching and pastoral support, which makes a positive difference for many pupils. Parents typically comment, 'The pastoral team do an amazing job' and 'Issues are sorted out straight away.' Leaders regularly review and adapt plans to ensure that they are well focused on meeting pupils' specific needs. However, they recognise that many pupils have several complex needs, which hinder them from making better progress. Leaders are determined to make further improvements to provision to help pupils catch up quickly.
- As a result of leaders' actions, the developing curriculum enhances pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The curriculum sparks pupils' interest and develops their cultural awareness. Pupils enjoy finding out about different religions when they go on trips to a synagogue, a mosque and the local church. This helps pupils to develop tolerance, respect and understanding of the beliefs held by different faiths.
- The school makes good use of additional funding for physical education and sport. Leaders have recruited a sports coach to provide training for staff, which improves the teaching of physical education. Pupils benefit from learning new playground games and enjoy the chance to take part in cross-country running and swimming. The range of activities the school provides encourages pupils to participate in sport and stay healthy.

Governance of the school

- Governors check the work of the school but their limited understanding of what constitutes strong progress restricts how well they can evaluate leaders' work. This means they cannot confidently explain how effectively the school is supporting pupils.
- Governors are over-reliant on the information provided by the headteacher and do not actively seek out information for themselves. This reduces their ability to hold leaders to account for improving outcomes for pupils.
- Governors are keen to support school improvement and appreciate opportunities to undertake training to improve their skills. This helps them to ask the right questions to find out how school leaders are improving achievement. They are aware that they now need to measure the impact of the school's work more rigorously.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All adults in the school are aware of the need to ensure that pupils are kept safe. As a result, leaders carry out rigorous checks to make sure adults are safe to work with pupils. They record full details of these checks on the school's single central register, which complies with statutory requirements.
- Leaders provide all staff with regular training which equips them with the skills to identify when a pupil might be at risk. Staff can confidently explain the steps they need to take to refer concerns to senior leaders.
- Leaders keep detailed, secure records of concerns and promptly liaise with external agencies when necessary. They follow up their actions regularly to ensure that they are

having a positive impact on supporting pupils' welfare. Leaders work closely with parents to ensure that pupils are kept safe and parents appreciate the school's help.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teachers do not consistently take advantage of pupils' willingness to learn, because their aspirations for pupils are often too low. As a result, pupils do not always achieve what they are capable of.
- Teaching is inconsistent because the work that teachers plan for pupils does not routinely take account of what they already know and can do. As a result, work does not always sufficiently challenge pupils and they toil away in pursuit of learning objectives that they have already secured. This impedes their progress.
- Pupils are keen to find things out and learn from their mistakes. However, teachers' feedback does not always clearly indicate precisely what pupils have done well or how they need to improve. As a result, pupils are not effectively supported to deepen their understanding.
- When pupils become stuck or have finished their work, they usually wait patiently for adults to help them. However, they sometimes become distracted, wriggle in their seats and chat to their friends. When adults do not pick up on this and intervene to move pupils on, learning stalls.
- Adults' questioning is not always sufficiently probing, which means that teachers are not fully able to assess how well pupils understand what they are learning. Consequently, this limits the extent to which they can help pupils to make strong progress.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is not consistently strong in all year groups. Therefore, the work they provide for pupils does not fully develop the skills, knowledge and understanding pupils need to acquire for their age.
- The curriculum provides restricted opportunities for pupils to practise and develop their reading, writing and mathematics in other subjects. This prevents them from building on and consolidating these skills in a wide range of subjects.
- Adults form positive and caring relationships with pupils and pupils trust adults to help them. Teachers encourage pupils to have positive attitudes to learning and pupils know what is expected of them. Consequently, they settle to work with the minimum of fuss and listen carefully.
- Targeted teaching interventions help pupils who are falling behind. For example, short teaching sessions before and after lessons help adults to pick up on and correct pupils' misunderstandings. This helps pupils to be well prepared for the next stage of their learning. Although additional teaching support is helping pupils to make better progress, it does not consistently help them make rapid and sustained progress.
- Teaching is most effective for the oldest pupils in the school. Teachers plan work for these pupils that is challenging and appropriately matched to their ability. Strong teaching ensures that these pupils make strong progress and are working at standards expected for their age.
- Teachers deploy teaching assistants well. This helps adults to support pupils who need

extra help. For example, teaching assistants demonstrate what they want pupils to do and ask questions to prompt pupils to think carefully. Their support helps pupils to stay focused on their learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils are keen to learn and settle to work quickly. However, teachers do not routinely take full advantage of pupils' enthusiasm to learn. Where teaching is less effective, teachers do not fully support pupils to build strong skills in reading, writing and mathematics or achieve of their very best. This hampers their personal development.
- Teachers do not consistently encourage pupils to have sufficient pride in their work. As a result, many pupils take little care with their handwriting, or they scribble on their books.
- Leaders award certificates for good attendance and meet regularly with parents whose children do not attend regularly. However, this is not yet having enough impact. While attendance is improving for most pupils, some pupils frequently miss school. As a result, they are losing out on the education the school has to offer.
- Leaders provide strong pastoral support which is very well focused on meeting specific emotional and social aspects of pupils' academic needs. This helps to improve pupils' confidence and self-esteem. It is also leading to improved achievement for some of the school's most vulnerable pupils.
- The school takes great care to ensure that its vision of 'igniting a passion for lifelong learning' becomes a reality for pupils. Corridor and classroom walls are bursting with interesting and attractive displays, providing pupils with an exciting environment within which to work. Displays prompt pupils to remember what they have learned about different religious festivals such as harvest, Diwali and Sukkot.
- Pupils are welcoming to visitors and proud to be part of the school. They enjoy taking on positions of responsibility such as helping in the dining hall, picking up litter and looking after the school's chickens.
- Teachers and teaching assistants are keen to develop their skills and this has motivated them to promote pupils' personal development.
- Pupils enjoy joining different after-school clubs and taking part in sports activities. This improves pupils' participation in school and helps them to stay healthy.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Adults have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and pupils respond well. Pupils understand school routines well and listen carefully in lessons. Pupils are well-mannered and polite, respecting adults and each other's views.

- Pupils feel that adults care for them well. They understand the consequences if their behaviour falls short of the school's expectations and say that adults resolve behaviour issues well. Pupils say that bullying is rare, but believe adults would tackle it quickly if it occurred.
- The school is dedicated to including all pupils in learning. Leaders have clear behaviour management strategies in place, which support pupils who might be at risk from exclusion. This has led to a noticeable reduction in exclusions over the last year.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- As a result of weak teaching over time, too few pupils reach the standards expected of them at the end of each key stage. Few pupils, including the most able pupils, reach higher standards.
- Inconsistent phonics teaching over several years means that too few pupils secure essential early reading skills. In 2017, phonics outcomes declined. The school has changed its approach to phonics teaching but does not currently have convincing evidence to confirm that this is making a positive difference.
- Leaders have not improved teaching swiftly enough to help pupils who need to catch up from a legacy of ineffective teaching. Consequently, last year, almost one third of pupils overall did not reach standards expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school's own assessment information and current pupils' work reveal that pupils continue to make less progress than they should. This is because teachers do not always have an accurate understanding of pupils' starting points. This leads to them providing work that is not appropriately matched to pupils' needs. For instance, the most able pupils are not sufficiently stretched, which inhibits them from reaching higher standards.
- Pupils eligible for pupil premium funding and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are making similar progress to others. However, some of these pupils have benefited from additional support, which has helped them to make stronger progress.
- In 2017, improved teaching for older pupils led to striking improvements in outcomes at the end of key stage 2 compared to the previous year. In 2016, only one third of pupils met expected standards overall in reading, writing and mathematics. However, in 2017, the proportion of pupils achieving expected standards was much closer to pupils nationally. There were also improvements in the proportion of pupils achieving higher standards. However, it is too soon to tell if these improvements can be maintained.
- In 2017, the proportion of pupils who achieved expected and higher standards at the end of key stage 1 improved slightly from the previous year, but was still lower than for pupils nationally.
- The school's current assessment information and pupils' books show that it is still mostly the school's oldest pupils who benefit from stronger teaching. Consequently, more of these pupils are working at standards expected for their age.
- Pupils enjoy reading and use their phonic knowledge to read accurately. Adults ask

some relevant questions to help pupils explain their understanding. Pupils who need to catch up read to adults regularly, which improves their reading. However, teachers do not always focus on developing the specific skills all pupils need to develop to become better readers.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- The leadership of the early years requires improvement because, over time, too few children reach the standards expected of them at the end of the early years foundation stage. This means that children are not sufficiently well prepared to make the transition into Year 1. Recent improvements to teaching have led to more children reaching the standards expected of them. However, it is too soon to determine if teaching can continue to improve and be sustained.
- The majority of children typically join the early years at standards lower than might be expected for their age. However, leaders do not focus sharply enough on ensuring that children, including disadvantaged children, make swift progress to gain the knowledge and skills they need to achieve well.
- Assessment does not routinely take account of what children can already do. Consequently, teachers do not always plan activities that have sufficient challenge. This means that children, especially those who are more able, achieve tasks easily. This hinders them from achieving what they are capable of.
- Adults do not intervene effectively enough in children's learning to help them make progress. For instance, they miss occasions when they could help children to practise, develop and extend their skills in writing or mathematics. This prevents children from consolidating the skills they have learned.
- Leaders ensure that they communicate well with parents, which helps them to understand how well their children are doing. Parents are typically happy with the support that adults provide for their children in the early years.
- Adults in the early years do not routinely take advantage of children's enthusiasm to learn. This is because they do not fully exploit all opportunities for children to explore and find things out for themselves.
- Education in the early years is offered within a safe and secure learning environment. Adults have received up-to-date safeguarding training, which means they know what to do if they have concerns about a child.
- Teachers provide many exciting activities, which ignite children's enthusiasm and develop their skills in a range of areas of learning. For instance, children can practise scanning luggage in the 'airport' and pay for food in the 'café'.
- Children are imaginative and are keen to 'have a go'. They relish the opportunity to talk about which substances would make the best 'rocket fuel' and enjoy sorting magnetic and non-magnetic objects. Children communicate well, which helps them to explain what they understand.
- Adults have warm and caring relationships with children. Children know what adults expect of them and have a good understanding of school routines. Consequently, they behave well, listening intently to instructions and engaging enthusiastically in their

learning.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 131250 |
| Local authority | Gloucestershire |
| Inspection number | 10037844 |

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

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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 | 180 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Pippa O'Connell |
| Headteacher | Kirsti Ashman |
| Telephone number | 01242 525616 |
| Website | www.hestersway.gloucs.sch.uk |
| Email address | head@hestersway.gloucs.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 6–7 November 2012 |

Information about this school

- Hester's Way Primary School is a smaller-than-average sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below the national average. The proportion of pupils whose first language is not, or believed not to be, English, is slightly lower than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils receiving special educational needs support, or supported by a statement of special educational needs or education, health and care plan, is well above the national average.
- The school meets the government's floor standard, which is the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in all classes across the school. Several of these were observed jointly with either the headteacher or the deputy headteacher.
- The inspection team had several discussions with the headteacher and other senior leaders throughout the inspection. Inspectors also held a meeting with governors and spoke to the local authority adviser on the telephone.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents provided by the school, including the school's improvement plans and leaders' evaluations of their work. Inspectors also reviewed safeguarding documentation, attendance and behaviour records.
- The inspection team took account of the school's latest assessment information and undertook a focused work scrutiny with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and English subject leader.
- Inspectors observed teaching assistants listening to pupils read and held a meeting with a group of pupils to gain their views of the school.
- During the inspection, the inspection team met with several parents to gauge their views of the school. They reviewed four responses to the online survey, Parent View, and 30 responses to the school's two most recent parent questionnaires. Inspectors also took account of five staff responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire. However, during the inspection, other staff encountered a technical problem with accessing the survey, which prevented them from responding.

Inspection team

Catherine Beeks, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Jan Isaac

Ofsted Inspector

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