

Knowles Primary School

Queensway, Bletchley, Milton Keynes MK2 2HB

Inspection dates	9–10 June 2016
Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Inadequate
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Inadequate
Outcomes for pupils	Inadequate
Early years provision	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Since the last inspection, leaders and governors have not been effective in bringing about improvements quickly enough.
- Too many pupils do not attend school regularly enough. Persistent absence from school is too high. Leaders do not investigate whether these pupils are safe, including those who have been identified as at risk.
- Standards have declined, particularly in writing at the end of key stage 2. Pupils' current progress in writing is not sufficiently rapid.
- Leaders' views about the school's strengths and weaknesses are overly generous and do not consider all aspects of the school's work.
- Safeguarding is ineffective. Leaders and governors have not ensured that staff follow systems and procedures to keep pupils safe.
- Teaching does not sufficiently meet the needs of pupils of different abilities. This slows the progress that pupils make.
- The quality of teaching is too variable by teacher and by subject. The school's expectations are not consistently followed by all teachers.
- In lessons, some pupils lose interest and drift off task. Teachers do not always set and maintain high expectations and this impacts on the learning of others.
- In the early years, provision is inadequate because attendance is low and there are shortcomings in the arrangements to keep children safe.

The school has the following strengths

- The school's assessment system clearly sets out the required learning for each age group in English and mathematics. This is raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well and make good progress.
- Children enjoy their learning and behave well in the early years.

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.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that leaders and governors increase pupils' attendance at school and reduce the proportion of those who are persistently absent by:
 - analysing absence for individuals and groups of pupils
 - taking effective action to make sure that pupils are in school and ready to learn.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in reading, writing and mathematics by ensuring that:
 - tasks are consistently well matched to pupils' abilities so that there is appropriate challenge and support for different groups of pupils, including the most able
 - teachers check pupils' understanding throughout lessons and make changes where needed
 - teachers consistently meet the school's expectations for giving feedback to pupils and helping them to improve their work.
- Strengthen leadership, including governance, by ensuring that:
 - safeguarding procedures are robust
 - leaders accurately evaluate all aspects of the school's work, and prioritise and sharply focus on areas for improvement
 - governors take a full and effective role in challenging leaders to bring about rapid improvement
 - leaders at all levels contribute fully to school improvement.

An external review of the pupil premium spending should be undertaken to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

The school should not appoint newly qualified teachers.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is inadequate

- Since the last inspection, the pace of improvement has been too slow. In particular, attendance remains consistently low for all pupils, including for children in the early years. Too many pupils are persistently absent from school. Despite the support of the local authority and the availability of additional funding, actions to improve attendance have been ineffective and there is no sign of improvement.
- Standards have fallen, particularly in writing at the end of key stage 2. Recent changes are making a difference, so that now more pupils are making expected progress in reading and writing. However, this progress is not rapid enough to ensure that pupils have the skills they need to succeed in their next stage of education.
- Leaders' evaluations of the school's performance are overly generous, and lack rigour and scope. Information about the quality of teaching is interpreted too positively and does not match the findings of inspectors. Leaders do not fully consider the impact of their work on all aspects of school life. This limits their effectiveness to make further improvements.
- Subject leaders are beginning to support other teachers to improve. Progress has been made in addressing some of the recommendations from the previous inspection report, for example, in pupils' fluency with number facts. However, checking the impact of this work, for example through lesson observations and analysis of assessment information, is at an early stage.
- The social and moral development of pupils is effective. Assemblies enable pupils to reflect on values such as honesty and their own actions through story-telling. Spiritual and cultural development is addressed largely through the curriculum and teaching of religious education. Pupils' knowledge of British values is underdeveloped. This limits their preparation for life in modern Britain.
- The local authority has provided support for the school since the last inspection as a result of its concerns about attendance and pupils' achievements. It has provided additional support for leaders and, through the targeted improvement board, has focused on holding leaders accountable for pupils' progress. The board has not provided sufficient challenge to leaders to improve attendance.
- Sports funding has been used well to raise the profile of competitive sport and increase pupils' participation in activities. Membership of a local sports partnership and the use of a specialist sports teacher in school have improved the quality of teaching in physical education and increased opportunities for pupils to compete. Leaders have evaluated the impact of this spending to know where it is most effective.
- The curriculum is broad, balanced and enhanced by enriching activities. Pupils say that visits to promote writing and other subjects are fun. For example, Year 5 pupils used a studio tour as a starting point for writing when they returned to school.
- The deputy headteacher checks pupils' progress regularly and so has an accurate view of how well pupils are learning. She liaises with other colleagues to ensure that pupils get extra help when needed. This is effective for those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupil premium funding is used to ensure that disadvantaged pupils mostly achieve as well as other pupils in school. Their attainment does, however, fall well short of that of other pupils nationally.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors do not adequately monitor, evaluate or challenge leaders about all aspects of the school. For example, while they are aware of the need to improve attendance, they have limited understanding of the underlying causes of absence.
 - Governors know that pupils are now making better progress because they receive regular reports from leaders and make first-hand visits to check the accuracy of this information. They have welcomed the additional scrutiny provided by the local authority's support.
 - Governors' evaluation of the impact of the pupil premium and sports funding is effective because they have challenged leaders to provide evidence about the impact of their spending decisions.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective. Procedures are not followed rigorously. Record-keeping is disorganised, and contact with other professionals is not routinely followed up. Pupils who are identified as at risk are not receiving the support that is needed. Safer recruitment requirements are not followed closely enough. For example, some recruitment and vetting checks are incomplete. Leaders and governors do not carry out sufficient checks to ensure that staff comply with the school's policy or statutory requirements.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inadequate

- Inconsistencies in the quality of teaching have resulted in pupils making slower progress than is needed to reverse several years of low standards, especially in writing during key stage 2. Progress in books over time varies for different groups of pupils, by subject and by teacher.
- Teachers do not routinely set work at the right level for different groups of pupils. For example, sometimes reading texts are too challenging, so pupils lose interest and talk among themselves. Some older pupils say that mathematics is too easy.
- Teachers miss opportunities to check pupils' understanding during lessons. This means time is not used effectively because pupils are unsure what they have to do.
- The impact of teachers' feedback to pupils about how to improve their work is variable because it does not always guide pupils clearly enough as to how to move on. Where teachers' comments are helpful, pupils respond well by improving what they do. Pupils then say they know their next steps and work hard to move on to them.
- The quality of mathematics teaching varies. Pupils are not always sufficiently fluent with concepts before being expected to move on, resulting in misunderstandings and gaps in knowledge for some. There are too few opportunities for pupils to apply their understanding and grapple with challenging problems in depth, especially the most able.
- Teachers are increasingly providing interesting opportunities for writing across the curriculum and pupils are writing regularly. This is most effective where pupils have opportunities to refine skills and techniques before applying them to a finished piece. However, there is often insufficient challenge for the most able pupils, limiting their progress over time.
- Phonics teaching in Year 1 is effective. Teachers set work at the right level, including for the most able pupils and to interest boys. Teachers do not always insist that pupils read often enough, limiting their progress and confidence. Pupils, including the most able, say that they want more opportunities to read in school.
- Teaching assistants support pupils who need to catch up well, including disadvantaged pupils, those who have special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language. Parents of these groups of pupils say that they are happy with what the school offers and have seen their children making rapid progress.
- The school's assessment system clearly shows the skills, knowledge and understanding required for each age group in English and mathematics. This has increased teachers' expectations and is enabling them to plan more accurately what pupils need to learn. Parents also say this helps them to know how well their children are doing.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate. This is because the procedures for checking on the safety of pupils arriving late or who are persistently absent are not robust.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school and can always trust adults to resolve any issues.
- Most parents agree that their child is safe in school. A few parents shared concerns about issues relating to bullying not being followed up rigorously. Inspectors found that pupils understand different types of bullying and say that staff help them to solve problems, alongside parents and carers.
- Pupils understand how to keep safe when using the internet. Older pupils described the effects of cyber-bullying and its impact on relationships and on an individual's self-esteem.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is inadequate.
- Attendance has not improved since the last inspection. Large groups, including disadvantaged pupils, boys and those of White British origin, have very low attendance at school over time. Persistent absence remains too high for many pupils. Attendance is well below the national average. Leaders are not analysing attendance information with sufficient rigour in order to find underlying causes and tackle them.

- Leaders have yet to eradicate poor behaviour, including the use of derogatory language and aggressive behaviour towards adults. Leaders' current approach to managing pupils' behaviour has resulted in fewer behavioural issues being referred to the headteacher and fewer exclusions. Some members of staff are concerned about this. They say that behaviour has deteriorated and do not feel supported when behavioural issues persist.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are mixed. Their behaviour in lessons is well focused on learning when activities are matched to their ability and interest them. Sometimes pupils lose interest in lessons and become restless, talking to others and limiting the amount of work completed in a lesson. Teachers do not always set high expectations about behaviour, and pupils talk over one another and do not listen to responses to teachers' questions. Some pupils say that too much noise in class stops them from learning.
- Pupils move around school in a calm and purposeful way. They are generally polite, courteous and respectful to adults and other pupils.

Outcomes for pupils

are inadequate

- Since the last inspection, standards at the end of key stage 2 have fallen below the government's current floor standard. Attainment by the end of Year 6 is below national averages for reading and writing. Progress in reading and writing has declined to be among the lowest of all schools nationally. Far fewer pupils make better than expected progress in reading and writing in key stage 2 than is found nationally.
- For current pupils, progress in writing remains low. The school's information shows that over the last year, progress in writing is slower than that in reading and mathematics overall. Too many pupils in Year 6, including disadvantaged pupils, have not made expected progress in writing from their starting points. For other pupils, progress in reading and mathematics is broadly in line with expectations. Pupils have not made sufficiently rapid progress to catch up, reflecting the slow pace of the school's improvement work.
- Attainment at the end of key stage 1 is below average in reading and writing. In mathematics, pupils achieve slightly better. Achievement during key stage 1 is a mixed picture. Progress during Year 1 is typically below expectations, while in Year 2 it is above them. Most-able pupils in Year 2 make rapid progress in mathematics but not in reading, reflecting the variability in teaching.
- The proportion of pupils who achieve the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check has increased year on year. However, lower attaining pupils in Year 2 and Year 3 have less well-developed phonics skills.
- Disadvantaged pupils typically make the same or better progress than other pupils in school, especially in reading. This is not enough to close the gap with other pupils nationally.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language make good progress through the school, reflecting the extra guidance they receive. They do not, however, catch up with their peers in reading, writing and mathematics.

Early years provision

is inadequate

- As in the rest of the school, safeguarding arrangements in the early years are inadequate, meaning the overall effectiveness of the early years provision is inadequate.
- Although children are well cared for and safe when in school, procedures to ensure that this is the case are underdeveloped. For example, there are no formal risk assessments of the environment, either indoors or outdoors. This limits the effectiveness of the checking of safety by adults.
- Since the previous inspection, attendance remains very low in the early years because leaders have not worked effectively with parents and carers to help them understand the importance of regular attendance for their children from an early age.
- Many children enter with skills, knowledge and levels of understanding that are typically below those expected for their age. Attainment at the end of the early years is improving and many children make better than typical progress.
- The improvement seen at the end of the early years is not, however, the case for all children. Boys' attainment is lower than that of girls and the gap has widened in recent times. This is especially noticeable in reading. Too few boys develop the skills and understanding they need as they move to Year 1.

- The early years leader has clear ideas for improving the provision in the early years. Supported by the deputy headteacher, she has an understanding of children's progress and has made sensible adjustments to the curriculum and provision. However, the use of assessment information to judge the impact of these changes is at an early stage.
- Children enjoy learning and teachers plan enjoyable and engaging activities for them. For example, children made written props to retell a familiar story and used their phonics knowledge well to have a go at spelling descriptive words. Other adults support the language development for individuals and groups, including those who have special educational needs, by skilfully balancing periods of independence with intervention where necessary. The most able children are encouraged to write using sentences and increasingly credible spelling attempts.
- Children behave well, cooperate and learn independently. They respond quickly to the requests of adults if needed. Relationships between children are supportive and all children are willingly included by their peers in play activities.
- Work to strengthen the partnership between home and school is developing steadily. Children's learning journeys are available to take home and parents contribute, including their own observations of 'wow' moments.

School details

Unique reference number	136679
Local authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	10009200

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	488
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lucy Crudge
Headteacher	Gi Sierant
Telephone number	01908 373588
Website	www.knowlesprimaryschool.org.uk
Email address	office@knowlesprimaryschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	13–14 February 2014

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school. The number of pupils on roll is rising as the school grows to become a three-form-entry school.
- Pupils come from a range of ethnic backgrounds, with the largest groups being British and Bangladeshi. Around half of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities who are supported at school is above average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, which is those supported by pupil premium funding, is above the national average. The pupil premium funding is additional government funding to support those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority. There were no children in the latter category at the time of the inspection.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school does not meet the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 24 lessons and parts of lessons, four of which observations were conducted jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors discussed reading with pupils in Years 2, 3, 4 and 6 and listened to them read.
- Pupils' work in books was scrutinised. Inspectors also spoke informally to pupils at breaktimes and to groups of pupils in more formal discussions.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, staff, pupils, five members of the governing body, including the chair, and a representative of the local authority. Inspectors considered 47 responses, including nine comments, to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors spoke to parents on the playground and took into account 17 responses, including 11 comments, to the online questionnaire, Parent View.
- A range of documents was looked at, including development plans, the school's information about pupils' achievement, records concerning pupils' attendance, behaviour and safety, and school policies and safeguarding documentation.

Inspection team

Peter Dunmall, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Frances Bartlett	Ofsted Inspector
Steph Fawdry	Ofsted Inspector

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