

Exeter - A Learning Community Academy

Brayford Avenue, Corby, NN18 8DL

Inspection dates 25–26 November 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Pupils' achievement requires improvement because attainment in writing and mathematics is not as good as it could be.
- The proportion of pupils making better than expected progress is not as high as nationally because work is sometimes too easy for the most-able pupils.
- Generally, the attainment of boys is below that of the girls, especially in reading and writing.
- Teachers do not expect enough of their pupils and they do not set work that is matched closely enough to pupils' different abilities.
- The quality of teachers' marking is variable and not enough helps pupils to improve.
- Teachers do not all insist on accurate spelling and use of grammar, and pupils have too few opportunities to develop their writing skills in subjects other than English.
- There are not enough resources for information and communication technology (ICT). Consequently, pupils do not have enough practice in developing skills to support their learning effectively.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to develop their creative skills in subjects like art and music.
- Governors are keen to develop their roles but they do not yet know enough about the school or about key spending decisions.

The school has the following strengths

- The school is well led by the Executive Principal and the acting headteacher, whose joint work has raised standards, rates of progress and teaching quality. As a result, this is an improving school.
- The provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good.
- Pupils behave well and have a good appreciation of safety.
- Good arrangements are made to cater for the large number of pupils who speak English as an additional language, many at an early stage. These pupils make good progress.
- Disadvantaged pupils make better progress than similar pupils nationally.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed learning in 29 lessons. Five lessons were jointly observed with either the Executive Principal or the Acting Head of Academy.
- Discussions took place with the Executive Principal, the Acting Head of Academy, members of staff, four governors including the Chair of the Governing Body, and a group of pupils.
- Inspectors heard pupils read and observed the teaching of reading skills.
- The inspectors sampled pupils' work in different year groups and examined records of pupils' progress. They read the school's own evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses and its improvement plan. A range of other documentation was examined, including that relating to safeguarding.
- The views of the six staff members who responded to a written questionnaire were taken into account.
- Inspectors examined the school's own recent survey of its parents. There were too few responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey of parents' views, for these to be available to inspectors.

Inspection team

Peter Sudworth, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Lynda Townsend	Additional Inspector
Andrew Beckett	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Exeter - A Learning Community became an academy school on 1 January 2013. It is part of the Woodnewton Academy Trust. When its predecessor school, Exeter Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to require special measures.
- This school is much larger than the average-sized primary school.
- It has a Nursery which most children attend part time, with a minority attending full time. Admission to the Nursery is staggered over the year. About half the Nursery children transfer to the Reception classes, where they are joined by children from other pre-school settings.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils of minority ethnic heritage is above average. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is double the national average. There have been 17 new arrivals of these pupils since September 2014, of whom 14 spoke no English.
- The proportion of pupils who leave or join the school at times other than the usual ones is higher than usually found. Since September 2014, there have been 32 new arrivals and 23 pupils have left.
- About one pupil in six has is disabled or has special educational needs. This is around the national average. The school has a 'Theraplay' suite for pupils with emotional problems and provides support through a nurture group.
- Just over one third of the pupils are supported by the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those in local authority care. This is above the national average.
- A children's centre is situated on the site and is managed by the governing body. This is inspected separately and was not included in this inspection.
- The governing body manages its own breakfast club and after-school care provision for pupils up to age eight. These were included in this inspection.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The academy is led by an Executive Principal, together with an acting headteacher appointed in September 2014.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching by:
 - ensuring that marking throughout the school shows pupils precisely how they can improve their work
 - matching tasks in lessons to pupils' different abilities, particularly to challenge the most-able pupils and extend their learning
 - having higher expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - making better use of questions to check pupils' understanding and to help them explain their thinking.
 - Raise pupils' attainment in writing and mathematics and increase their rates of progress by:
 - ensuring accurate spelling and use of English grammar in pupils' written work
 - extending opportunities for pupils to develop their writing and thinking skills in a wider range of subjects
 - ensuring that new learning in mathematics builds on what pupils already understand
 - improving boys' skills in writing.
 - Improve the work of the governing body so that governors are more involved in spending decisions, and more knowledgeable about the school.
 - Revise the curriculum and improve the provision for ICT so that pupils have appropriate opportunities to
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develop their skills in creative subjects like art and music, as well as in ICT.

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

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leaders have worked successfully to improve standards and raise rates of progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Although boys made better progress than girls in Key Stage 2 in 2014, there is still a gap in attainment between boys and girls. This is because boys are not given enough encouragement to read more widely and because leaders do not pick themes and topics which capture the interests of boys and encourage them to write.
- New leadership arrangements are driving the school forward. Senior staff have clearly defined roles which support the successful fulfilment of their responsibilities. The support of a senior staff member for each subject leader is developing their skills in leading subjects.
- Regular reviews of different aspects of teachers' work contribute to improvements in teaching. Arrangements for teachers' annual performance are well organised, and teachers are set clear and realistic targets to improve their work.
- School improvement planning has the right priorities. Actions to reach the objectives are clearly set out, and with clearly measurable success criteria. They are helping to increase rates of pupils' progress.
- The sports grant is successfully deployed in helping staff to improve their teaching of physical education. It has been used to enhance inter-school sports competitions and extend the range of extra-curricular activities. It has improved pupils' well-being.
- Pupil premium funding has been used effectively for disadvantaged pupils. They attained higher than similar pupils nationally and have been doing better than the school's other pupils.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements. Guidance to staff is practical and staff take good care of the pupils.
- There is no evidence of discrimination. This school strives to treat all pupils equally, although the most-able pupils are not always given work that stretches and challenges them to make best possible progress.
- Some aspects of the curriculum, such as philosophy lessons, are effective in encouraging pupils to prepare well for life in modern Britain. Pupils are also trained to develop thinking skills which help them tackle problems and appreciate the views of others. However, the curriculum does not offer sufficient creative opportunities for pupils; for example in art and music or in ICT. Pupils are not able to develop their skills sufficiently well in these subjects.
- The school works well with the local community and also works to involve parents so that they are better able to support their children's education.
- Good links with other schools enable staff to learn from one another and develop the quality of their teaching. The Academy Trust has arranged consultancy support for the school which has been helpful in setting its priorities for improvement and in identifying the specific actions needed in planning the way forward.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is not sufficiently effective. Recent training about achievement and progress data has helped governors to understand data better, helping them to ask questions and challenge the school, but it is too soon to judge the impact of this training.
 - Governors do not have a clear picture of how the sports grant and pupil premium funding have been spent although they know that these have benefited the pupils.
 - Governors have agreed priorities with the Executive Principal on the school improvement plan and they visit periodically to check progress towards them. Visits provide them with information about the quality

of teaching. They arrange working parties to follow up on specific matters.

- The safeguarding governor meets with school staff to keep up to date on any child protection matters.
- The breakfast and after-school care clubs are well managed.
- Governors know the system for setting annual performance targets for teachers and recommend pay increments with the Executive Principal, although it is the Trust that is responsible for the final approval of any pay award.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils' attitudes to learning are mostly good. They respond well to teachers' expectations of behaviour and so lessons proceed uninterrupted. Pupils are orderly around school and courteous. They play constructively with others during breaks. Pupils' behaviour at the breakfast club is good.
- Attendance has improved significantly. It is currently around the national average. Punctuality has also improved, enabling lessons to start promptly.
- Pupils enjoy lunchtime and after-school activities and engage well in them. Pupils present their work with pride in their books. They are keen to please.
- Pupils develop thinking skills as part of the curriculum. These enable pupils to develop strategies to think around problems. They also help them to appreciate the views of others and this supports their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- Occasionally, pupils can be inattentive in lessons. Pupils who have persistent behavioural or emotional problems are helped to improve through the nurture group or play therapy.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. The pupils have confidence that the school site is secure and so they feel safe. All visitors to school are vetted and the school's arrangements for safeguarding and child protection fully meet current national requirements.
- All pupils are supported to take responsibility for their own safety. They are aware of safety issues such as road safety and e-safety. They demonstrate knowledge of how to assess risks and to avoid danger.
- Pupils know how to avoid conflict and are confident that, if they have any worries, they can talk to a member of staff. Pupils understand the different forms that bullying can take but agree that bullying is rare at this school. Pupils are confident that any incidents are dealt with quickly.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teachers do not have high enough expectations of pupils so that, sometimes, too little work is done in lessons. Pupils' writing in subjects other than English is often limited to short, simple answers that do not promote pupils' own thinking and writing skills sufficiently well.
- Some good examples of marking were seen that gave pupils clear guidance on what they needed to do to improve their work. However, this is not a consistent feature of marking in all classes. Pupils do not always know from the teacher's written comments how they can improve their work or what next steps they need to take to move their learning on.
- Not all teachers teach spelling rules and grammar effectively and so some pupils make elementary errors. Insufficient ICT provision prevents teachers from developing pupils' technological skills sufficiently well.
- Work in books and from lesson observations show that, often, the same content is covered by all pupils.

This means work is too easy for some and too hard for others. In mathematics, in particular, the most-able pupils are not stretched enough and pupils are not helped to build on what they already know and can do.

- The teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) is improving. Reading recovery sessions are effective in accelerating progress for pupils who have fallen behind with their reading.
- While some teachers question the pupils well, good questioning is not widespread enough so that staff can gauge pupils' understanding or enable them to explain their thinking.
- Pupils who are at an early stage of speaking English receive good support. The use of resources, including everyday objects found in the home, enables pupils to learn new vocabulary quickly and make rapid progress in learning English.
- Staff have good relationships with pupils and manage them well. These good relationships help to create a good atmosphere for learning.
- Teachers prepare lessons well using resources effectively to help pupils understand. Activities are well planned so that no time is wasted. When writing, pupils are provided with a list of reminders that they should include and this helps them check that they have included the essential points.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs receive good support. Early identification of their difficulties helps to ensure that these are tackled quickly.
- Teaching is good in the Early Years Foundation Stage because the activities are well matched to what the children know and can do and so they move their learning forward. The learning activities are stimulating and engage the interest of all the children.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Despite a greatly improved picture in 2014 in Key Stage 2, pupils' attainment remains well below average in reading, writing, and mathematics. They were the equivalent of around two terms behind pupils nationally.
- Results at the higher level in writing in 2014 at Key Stage 1 were above average but otherwise, proportions of pupils reaching the higher level in both key stages were below average. This reflects the fact that in some lessons, tasks are not matched to pupils' different abilities.
- Boys, in the main, do less well than girls, particularly in reading and writing.
- The proportions of pupils who made expected and better than expected progress in writing and mathematics in Key Stage 2 in 2014 were below the national average. However, they were much closer to the average than they had been the previous year, and were above average in reading.
- Key Stage 1 results in 2014 were broadly average, but were below average in reading. Results in the Year 1 screening check in phonics were slightly below average, although much better than those of the previous year due to improved teaching in this area.
- Current data indicate further improvement. Assessments of current Year 6 pupils are in line with expectations for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. This indicates that these pupils have made good progress in relation to their starting points.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language include several who are very new to English. Nevertheless, their progress is good.

- In 2014, the attainment of disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 compared very favourably with that of similar pupils nationally. These pupils were more than two terms ahead of their classmates in reading, writing and mathematics. When compared to all pupils nationally, the disadvantaged pupils in this school were around a term behind in mathematics and half a term behind in writing, but they were ahead of pupils nationally in reading. The picture in Key Stage 1 was equally positive, with disadvantaged pupils attaining at least as well or better than their classmates.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress. Pupils in the nurture group and who attend play therapy are helped to overcome their emotional problems, which has improved their attitudes to learning.

The early years provision is good

- On starting school in the Nursery and in Reception, children's skills are well below those typical for their ages. Children of all abilities and backgrounds make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Activities are organised for them that develop the key skills they need for the next stage of their education. On leaving the Reception class, attainment is below average in communication and language skills because several children speak little English. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development in 2014 improved from the previous year, moving much closer to the national average.
- The early years provision is well led and managed. Staff track children's progress rigorously so that gaps in development and learning are quickly identified and addressed. Staff involve parents, including in assessing the children's development, and they help them to support their children's learning at home.
- The teaching is good. The well-trained staff have a clear understanding of the children's needs and how to get the best out of all groups of children, including those who speak little English. Assessments are accurate and used to ensure that children's individual learning needs are met. Children are encouraged to be independent and to look after their own needs; for example, by pouring their own drinks and dressing themselves.
- Staff have high expectations of good manners and behaviour which promote good relationships among the children.
- The outdoor learning area is well resourced and arranged. It provides a stimulating learning area where children can practise their skills in various contexts.

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	139119
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	447824

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	2–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	562
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jezamin Lindsey
Principal	Ellen Wallace (Executive Principal) Richard Smyton (Acting Head of Academy)
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01536 204765
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