

Maple Grove Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	135221
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	381843
Inspection dates	8–9 March 2012
Lead inspector	George Logan

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	218
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Parr
Headteacher	Geoff Allen
Date of previous school inspection	24 June 2009
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

George Logan

Additional inspector

Clementina Ogunsanwo

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors spent seven hours and 35 minutes visiting 15 lessons taught by nine different members of staff. They held meetings with the Chair of the Governing Body and other governors, and with staff and two groups of pupils. The inspector took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, listened to pupils reading and looked at the school's documentation, which included records of teaching, the main improvement plan, records relating to safeguarding and extracts from the school's tracking of pupils' progress. A scrutiny of pupils' written work was also undertaken. The inspector analysed 59 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, together with 11 questionnaires from staff and 91 from pupils.

Information about the school

Maple Grove Primary School is an average-sized primary school. The great majority of pupils are of White British heritage. There are a few pupils from the Traveller community. A small minority of pupils speak English as an additional language, although very few are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is above average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average. The school meets the current floor standard. The school provides accommodation for an independently-run pre-school. This is inspected separately. It also offers before- and after-school care clubs and a lunch club for 3 to 4 year olds. The school hosts a local authority service base, providing training for thirty local schools in the support of pupils with specific learning difficulties. The school has gained a number of awards since it opened, following school amalgamations, in September 2008. These include the Active Mark and Hertfordshire Quality Mark status.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school. It has significant strengths in being an extremely cohesive, highly-regarded community, which provides extensive and effective support for pupils and their families. It is not good overall because the progress of older pupils in particular is not yet consistent or rapid enough.
- Good progress in Nursery and Reception, and increasingly rapid progress in Years 1 and 2, underpin average, but rising, standards at the end of Year 2. Progress in Years 3 to 6 is more erratic, although standards at the end of Year 6 are currently broadly average. Progress in mathematics in 2011 was greater than in reading and writing, reflecting the success of an initiative to boost learning in mathematics. Science has insufficient prominence in some classes.
- Teaching is satisfactory and some good teaching was observed. However, teachers' expectations of pupils, including the quality of pupils' written work and their handwriting, are not always high enough. Teachers' marking of writing gives pupils clear guidance for improving their work. However, this approach is not consistently applied elsewhere. Pupils develop worthwhile skills in, for example, music and information and communication technology (ICT).
- Behaviour, safety and pupils' personal development are good. Pupils have very positive attitudes towards their learning. Provision for pupils' welfare is good and pupils feel very safe. Incidents of poor behaviour are now rare. Attendance has improved and is now securely average.
- While many aspects of leadership and management are good, ensuring a clear direction and well-embedded systems, the leadership of teaching is not always sufficiently focused to ensure consistent expectations and higher outcomes. The curriculum, including extra-curricular provision, provides well-developed learning experiences which engage pupils' interest well.

Schools whose effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by

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Ofsted before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate the pace and consistency of pupils' learning across the school and raise their attainment by the end of Year 6, by:
 - more analytical evaluation of the quality of teaching and implementation of strategies to ensure consistently effective classroom practice
 - setting higher expectations for the quality of pupils' handwriting and the presentation of their written work
 - ensuring that the positive attributes of teachers' marking in indicating the next steps in learning, currently evident in the marking of writing, are more consistently applied across the other subjects.
- Ensure that pupils have more frequent and challenging opportunities to extend their knowledge and skills in science.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Parents and carers feel that their children make good progress. Inspection evidence indicates, however, that pupils' achievement, while satisfactory overall, is inconsistent, particularly in Years 3 to 6. Children's skills on entry to Nursery are below age-related expectations. Although outcomes at the end of Reception dipped in 2011, in general children make mostly good progress in Nursery and Reception. Increasingly accurate assessment has enabled staff to focus particularly on crucial aspects of personal and social development and communication and literacy skills so that children develop confidence and become more independent in their learning. Outcomes are generally good. There are good opportunities to extend learning through challenging interactions with adults. In consequence, children typically enter Year 1 with literacy and numeracy skills at least at the expected level. While attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2 is typically broadly average there is a trend of improvement in reading and writing, reflecting recent initiatives in these areas. Effective teaching and better embedding of reading skills are helping to accelerate learning. For example, a challenging literacy lesson in Year 2, exploring a character's thoughts and feelings, was successful because of the good questioning skills of the teacher and the effective use of talk partners which elicited thoughtful responses from pupils.

Progress in Years 3 to 6 is also satisfactory, supporting broadly average attainment by the end of Year 6. Progress and attainment in mathematics improved significantly in 2011, although the impact looks to be less strong currently. On the evidence of pupils' written work, provision for science is underdeveloped in some year groups. Overall, progress is constrained because of variable expectations of what pupils should be achieving. This was evident, for example, in a science lesson observed,

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where a well-shaped introduction was followed by a written task which only required pupils to complete simple information sentences. However, in another science lesson, in Year 6, pupils were given a wide range of opportunities to investigate forces and responded well to these opportunities, so that their learning was good. Other lessons observed, particularly in mathematics, also had a relatively brisk pace, although introductions are sometimes lengthy. In general, more rigorous tracking, greater accountability of staff and a stronger focus on learning are having a positive impact. Progress in reading is increasingly secure, with focused sessions to promote pupils' knowledge of phonics (the linking of letters and sounds) and to develop their reading skills. Attainment in reading is broadly average by the end of Year 6.

Generally good provision to meet the needs of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs ensures that they make at least satisfactory progress, with many making good progress. This is in large part a reflection of the impact of the well-trained support staff. Pupils who speak English as an additional language, and those from minority ethnic groups, also make mostly satisfactory progress. The progress and attainment of Traveller pupils generally reflects the length of time they have been in the school and the frequency of their attendance. In general, those who have been in the school for an extended time, and attend frequently, progress as rapidly as other pupils.

Quality of teaching

Parents and carers, and pupils, feel that the quality of teaching is good. However, inspectors found that, while much teaching seen was indeed good, the impact of teaching over time has often been erratic, resulting in mostly satisfactory, though improving, progress. Teachers promote pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development well. They encourage cooperative working and a readiness to share. The teaching of phonics is supported by a good range of activities accurately matched to individual needs. Although improvements in the Early Years Foundation Stage have ensured good progress in that phase, teaching elsewhere has not always provided sufficient challenge to secure consistently good progress. That said, an increased focus on pupils' learning, and more challenging teaching, are driving more rapid progress in particular classes. For example, in a well-paced Year 6 science lesson, motivating presentation, the teacher's good subject knowledge and enthusiasm and engaging practical tasks, ensured that progress was good. In other lessons, the slow pace inhibited learning, leading to missed opportunities to challenge more-able pupils. Support for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is generally effective. Teaching assistants benefit from very good opportunities for training and professional development, are well-prepared and have a positive impact upon pupils' learning.

Across the school, progress in implementing a range of assessment strategies, including self-assessment by pupils and the use of individual targets, has been good, although their impact on pupils' learning remains inconsistent. The marking of pupils' work in literacy mostly identifies the next steps they need to make in their learning. This approach is less evident elsewhere. Insufficient priority has been given to

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improving pupils' handwriting, so that written work and presentation are sometimes untidy. Overall, the curriculum is beginning to support better progress in pupils' core skills.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Parents, carers and pupils are right to acknowledge the good quality of behaviour and safety in the school. Close, trusting relationships between adults and pupils, and the wide range of extra-curricular activities, engage pupils well and help shape the very positive community spirit. Pupils are enthusiastic about their school and are motivated, engaging learners. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good, for almost all pupils. Pupils, and most parents and carers, have very few concerns about behaviour. Almost all pupils say that they feel very safe, and virtually all parents and carers feel that their children are safe in school. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage behave well and conduct themselves safely both indoors and in the outdoor area. Pupils have a good understanding of risk, supported by the school's input on road safety and personal safety. Pupils understand the purpose of the school's efforts to keep them safe when using the internet. There are clear and effective procedures for managing pupils' behaviour. As a result, there are few recorded incidents and only isolated pockets of occasionally inappropriate behaviour. School records confirm the good quality of pupils' behaviour over time. The ethos of the school is highly inclusive, providing for pupils with a wide range of needs. There have been few exclusions since the school opened. There are no reports of bullying of any type. Good procedures are in place to manage any issues that might arise. Attendance has risen and is now securely average. Pupils mostly arrive at school punctually. Good provision in the breakfast club supports the prompt arrival of a few pupils who might otherwise have punctuality issues.

Leadership and management

The headteacher and other senior leaders have worked tirelessly to ensure that the school meets the needs of the local community. The establishment of the pre-school, extensive care arrangements, well-supported opportunities for family learning and investment in learning mentor and inclusion support have helped the school to gain the trust of its community. The school strongly supports the personal development and well-being of pupils and this is rightly recognised by parents and carers. Senior leaders and the governing body ensure that safeguarding arrangements are effective. The school is active in tackling discrimination and is genuinely committed to promoting equality.

The headteacher, well supported by his deputy and by middle managers, recognises that the school is well-placed to drive more rapid progress academically. A robust tracking system and rigorous data analysis facilitate close monitoring of pupils' progress and careful targeting of input. However, the monitoring of teaching is not always incisive enough to ensure that teachers' expectations are consistently high. Arrangements for the support of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are effective. Provision for the support of Traveller pupils, and the efforts

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made to meet their needs, is a significant strength. Attendance is now consistently around the expected average.

In many respects, the curriculum is good. Through its extensive extra-curricular programme and its commitment to the individual, the school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Pupils' awareness of cultural diversity is promoted well through active links with a school in Uganda. The curriculum draws upon the International Primary Curriculum. Though still satisfactory in its enhancement of pupils' basic skills, this provides a good framework within which to drive standards up.

School self-evaluation indicates that school leaders have accurately judged what still needs to be done. Capacity for improvement is securely satisfactory. The governing body has a realistic view of the school's strengths and actively supports its work, although the full extent of their challenge is not always reflected in meeting minutes. Governors recognise that there is still work to be done to improve pupil outcomes.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.

12 March 2012

Dear Pupils



Inspection of Maple Grove Primary School, Hemel Hempstead, HP2 7BG

Thank you for making us welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you, spending time in lessons and hearing your views. Thank you to those who completed our questionnaire. We found that yours is a satisfactory school and it is improving steadily. Our main findings are listed below.

- Standards are broadly average by the end of Year 6 but your progress is inconsistent across the school.
- Provision in Reception has improved after a dip last year and progress is now good, so that children have average skills in reading, writing and mathematics when they enter Year 1.
- Teaching has improved and is often good. While you learn well in many lessons, your handwriting and written work is often untidy. Marking in subjects other than literacy does not always give you enough guidance.
- You have very positive views about school, have good attitudes to learning and behave well. Attendance has improved and is now average.
- Senior leaders are really helping the school to move forward. They have made tremendous strides in ensuring that younger children and families are really well supported. They are working hard to ensure that your academic progress is more rapid. The curriculum offers many interesting activities.

To help you to do better, we have asked the school to:

- ensure that the monitoring of teaching is more thorough and that teachers have higher expectations of your handwriting and presentation and mark your work more rigorously
- ensure that you get more opportunities to explore science and build your scientific skills and knowledge.

All of you can help by continuing to work hard and doing your best. We hope that you will have every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

George Logan
Lead inspector

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