

Harlowbury Primary School

Watlington Road, Old Harlow, Harlow, CM17 0DX

Inspection dates 27–28 September 2012

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| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Satisfactory | 3 |
| | This inspection: | Good | 2 |
| Achievement of pupils | | Good | 2 |
| Quality of teaching | | Good | 2 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | | Good | 2 |
| Leadership and management | | Good | 2 |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The progress of pupils in reading, writing and mathematics has improved rapidly over the last two years.
- Pupils achieve well from very low starting points and make good progress across the school. Those in the Speech and Language Unit make outstanding progress.
- Teaching is usually good and there is some outstanding teaching. There are effective systems for checking the progress made by every pupil.
- There is a strong focus on providing high-quality care for all pupils.
- Pupils enjoy being at school and get on well together. They feel safe in school. Any attempts at bullying are swiftly dealt with.
- Leadership across the school is strong. Leaders have demonstrated the ability to improve teaching over time.
- Staff have been well supported by training and development so that they are consistent in the way they teach.
- Governors are skilled at offering the right balance of challenge and support to improve the school.
- Weaknesses in the Early Years Foundation Stage identified at the previous inspection have been tackled successfully.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough teaching is outstanding and the pace of teaching in some classes is not brisk enough to maintain pupils' interest.
- Learning tasks in some lessons are too easy or too hard so that more able pupils, in particular, do not do as well as they could.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in every class. They visited 20 lessons led by eight teachers, including those in the Speech and Language Unit. Some observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with staff and with members of the governing body. The lead inspector had a telephone discussion about the work of the school with a senior adviser from the local authority.
- A range of documents were looked at including plans for school improvement, arrangements for safeguarding, and monitoring records of teacher performance. The most recent data on pupils' achievement, together with pupils' written work saved from the previous year, were also reviewed.
- Pupils' views informed the inspection and were gathered through informal conversations at break and lunchtime, and during lessons. Inspectors met formally with pupils and discussed their reading habits. They also heard some pupils read.
- Inspectors took account of the 17 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the views of parents and carers expressed in meetings, as well as in written responses.
- Responses from 24 staff questionnaires were taken into account.

Inspection team

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| Susan Thomas-Pounce, Lead inspector | Additional inspector |
| Mina Drever | Additional inspector |
| Cheryl Thompson | Additional inspector |

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than most primary schools. Numbers have increased since the previous inspection. Classes up to Year 4 are now taught in single-age groups with only pupils in Years 5 and 6 taught in a mixed-aged class.
- Nearly a third of pupils join or leave the school between key stages.
- There is specially resourced provision for pupils with special educational needs. This consists of a Speech and Language Unit in the school with 20 places for children aged 4 to 11 from other parts of the county.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is below average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or through a statement of special educational needs is nearly three times higher than the national average. Pupils' needs relate mainly to moderate learning difficulties, behaviour, and emotional and social difficulties, with the highest proportion having speech, language and communication difficulties.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds and the vast majority speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by:
 - making sure that activities in all classes proceed at a fast pace to maintain pupils' interest
 - using information on pupils' progress more consistently in all classes to plan activities tailored to pupils' needs so that a greater proportion of pupils, including those who are more able, make outstanding progress.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Achievement across the school is good; it is outstanding in the Speech and Language Unit because of the outstanding teaching and high-quality care pupils receive there. The proportion of pupils making or exceeding expected progress has accelerated over the last year and continues to rise.
- The school has very positive partnerships with parents and carers, who feel well informed, respected and valued. This partnership has a positive impact on pupils' good achievement.
- Disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs, those for whom the pupil premium provides support and those who join the school at other times during the school year, make good progress. They are very well supported in lessons. Interventions and the work set are well matched to their needs.
- Children make good progress from very low starting points in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Pupils continue to make good progress and, when they leave at the end of Year 6, attainment is broadly average. Pupils across the school enjoy their learning and are keen to respond to the advice they are given on how to improve their work.
- The school has put in place a structured approach to teaching early literacy skills. Well-planned activities and effective adult intervention ensure children's skills in reading and writing are much better than they were in the past.
- The focus on the development of reading skills has promoted a love of reading across the school. Those who are not yet reading with confidence are able to use their knowledge of the sounds that groups of letters represent to read unfamiliar words.
- Occasionally the pace of learning in classes is not fast enough. Some of the more able pupils find the work too easy. Teachers do not always use the information they have of pupils' prior learning to move them quickly on to more demanding activities.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching has improved and is usually good in all subjects, including in English and mathematics. Teaching is outstanding for those pupils who attend the Speech and Language Unit.
- In classes where teaching is consistently good, teachers have high expectations of pupils and use questioning well to support learning and encourage independence. This was observed in a mathematics class where pupils were studying graphs with great enthusiasm.
- The checking of pupils' progress is regular and accurate. However, this assessment information is not always used effectively to devise activities with a higher level of challenge for more able pupils.
- Pupils confirm that they understand the next steps that they need to take to improve their work. They are given the time to make improvements.
- Very well-trained teaching assistants work well with teachers and provide increasingly high-quality learning experiences for disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and those supported by the pupil premium.

- Teaching promotes high-quality, nurturing relationships with pupils. As a result, pupils show a good level of self-confidence and clearly enjoy their time in school.
- The varied and interesting teaching strategies used by most staff ensure that pupils remain motivated, engaged in their learning and make good progress. However, it is not always at a fast enough pace for pupils to make outstanding progress.
- Staff make effective use of 'talking partners'; this supports the development of the good social skills pupils display. The well-planned curriculum and good teaching promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils are polite and courteous. They work and play well together and display a clear understanding of the school's positive approach to managing behaviour.
- The school manages the behaviour of a small number of pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties very well. Committed and effective adult support minimises disruption to learning. This has a positive impact on the progress pupils make.
- Pupils explain with confidence that they feel safe in school. Through the well-planned curriculum, they have a good understanding of different types of bullying including that associated with prejudice, the internet and mobile phones. Inspection evidence shows that incidents of bullying do not often occur and are always dealt with effectively.
- The emphasis on making a positive contribution to the school through a wide range of roles and responsibilities means that younger and older pupils get on well together. The pupils who attend the Speech and Language Unit in the morning enjoy integrated activities with their peers every afternoon.
- Attendance is average and improving. The school works hard to promote the importance of being at school regularly.
- The school is an exceptionally inclusive community. Parents and carers who spoke with the inspector valued this ethos and the model provided by the headteacher and her staff. Almost all parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire felt that their children were well looked after and kept safe.

The leadership and management are good

- The quality of improvement work carried out by the school since the previous inspection, including the systematic setting of targets and training for teachers, has successfully improved the overall effectiveness of the school. Senior teachers model and share excellent practice and staff are receptive to training and development to improve their own practice.
 - Leadership and management responsibilities are shared widely and focus on evaluating the work of the school accurately. Strategies that the school has introduced are proving effective in raising attainment.
 - The local authority has worked closely and effectively with senior leaders to support their priorities. The school makes good use of the expertise of external support to promote pupils' good progress.
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- Pupils at risk of falling behind and those who join the school part way through the year are accurately assessed. Their needs are identified effectively and they are provided with well-targeted support.
 - Disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and those for whom the school receives additional funds, make the same good progress as their peers as the result of a range of well-matched interventions. This provides strong evidence of the school's determination to tackle discrimination and allow equality of opportunity.
 - The Head of the Speech and Language Unit leads with clear vision and a very strong direction. Teachers in the Speech and Language Unit share and extend their knowledge, experience and skills in a number of working groups and networks which help them to keep up to date with current developments.
 - Subject leaders have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in their areas of responsibility. Subject action plans and the school's development plan identify suitable priorities and activities. Year-on-year improvements in the quality of teaching have had a positive impact on learning and progress.
 - Since the previous inspection, school leaders have put in place a good system to monitor pupils' progress. Monitoring has less impact on ensuring that all the more able pupils are sufficiently challenged to reach the highest possible levels in English and mathematics.
 - The broad and balanced curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual moral, social and cultural development effectively through a good range of visits and out-of-school activities. Well-planned cross-curricular links ensure the development of skills in literacy, numeracy and communication.
- **The governance of the school:**
- is well informed
 - makes good use of the wide range of experience and skills of all of its members
 - keeps abreast of developments in the school, ensuring informed decisions on spending
 - makes sure that pupils have access to good quality resources
 - makes certain that all safeguarding procedures are securely in place and rigorously applied.

What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
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| 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

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| Unique reference number | 115056 |
| Local authority | Essex |
| Inspection number | 401486 |

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 | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 160 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Joan Morgan |
| Headteacher | Sheila Lewis-Smith |
| Date of previous school inspection | 29 March 2010 |
| Telephone number | 01279 423444 |
| Fax number | 01279 453202 |
| Email address | admin@harlowbury.essex.sch.uk |

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