

# Strathmore Infant and Nursery School

Old Hale Way, Hitchin, SG5 1XR

**Inspection dates** 11–12 September 2012

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Requires Improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires Improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires Improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires Improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires Improvement	3

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Pupils' progress is sometimes limited, particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Year 1 because of a lack of clarity in learning outcomes and too few opportunities for pupils to review their learning or understand how to improve.
- Teaching does not always stretch some of the higher attaining pupils sufficiently or make sufficiently strong links to promote writing and mathematics skills in other subjects.
- Monitoring by the school leaders, including governors, is not rigorous enough to determine why pupils do not make more rapid progress.

### The school has the following strengths

- Senior leaders are committed to raising achievement and are clear about how to do so. Teachers' performance is managed effectively and this is increasingly leading to improvements across the school.
- Standards in reading have improved. The progress of pupils on the school action and school action plus registers and others with special educational needs is well supported and these pupils are increasingly meeting national expectations.
- Teaching and the wide range of activities offered by the school have a positive impact on pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development.
- There are exceptionally secure arrangements to ensure pupils are safe. Pupils are happy and enjoy school and their attendance is improving.
- The school has good partnership links with feeder and link schools and very beneficial links with local schools organisation.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 14 lessons of which two were joint observations with senior leaders. In addition, the inspection team made a number of other short observations of learning support assistants teaching or working with small groups.
- Inspectors made visits to classes to look at displays and observe individual pupils and groups at work, and to listen to pupils read.
- Meetings were held with two groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body, the local authority Improvement Partner and school staff, including subject coordinators and senior managers.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work and scrutinised samples of pupils’ work, teachers’ planning, the school’s systems for tracking pupils’ progress, and documentation relating to management, the curriculum and safeguarding.
- There were informal meeting with parents during the inspection. Inspectors took account of 57 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and considered 45 staff responses.

## Inspection team

Raminder Arora, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Isobel Randall	Additional inspector
Alan Jarvis	Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Strathmore is average in size.
- The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic heritages is higher than many schools. Of these, over an above-average proportion speaks English as an additional language. The largest groups are of Indian and Bangladeshi origin.
- The proportion of disabled pupils, and those who are supported at school action and school action plus, is below average. Their needs are predominantly related to moderate learning difficulties and behavioural needs. Currently, there are no pupils with a statement of special educational needs.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage has a morning and afternoon Nursery class and two Reception classes. There is no afternoon Nursery class this term. The school runs a breakfast club for its own pupils and those of a neighbouring school.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is about average.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the proportion of good and better teaching by ensuring that:
  - planned activities in lessons are invariably challenging for all groups of pupils, especially the more able
  - teachers consistently use assessment to design tasks in lessons that match the needs of pupils with different interests and abilities
  - there is appropriate training to help teaching assistants teach phonics accurately
  - feedback, including marking, is consistent in telling pupils how to improve their work.
- Improve the achievement of pupils, particularly in writing and mathematics, by:
  - providing more opportunities for pupils to develop their practical mathematical skills through activities that keep them actively engaged and interested
  - consistently providing for pupils' writing development in a range of subjects
  - systematically developing pupils' knowledge of letters and sounds (phonics), correct letter formation and skilful use of interesting vocabulary.
- Improve leadership and management by:
  - strengthening subject leaders' ability to share good practice, and to analyse, interpret and use effectively performance data to aid pupils' learning and progress
  - ensuring that the governing body has a sharper understanding of how the school is doing, and uses rigorous monitoring and evaluation to hold leaders and managers to account.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Most children begin school with attainment that is broadly in line with national expectations. Results over the past three years have been average by the end of Year 2, although the proportion gaining the higher levels varies and overall results fell slightly in mathematics.
- Reading is improving due to the introduction of one-to-one support and daily sessions teaching letters and the sounds they make (phonics). However, some sessions taught by teaching assistants are not always as effective as they need to be because they have not had specific training on how to teach children to link letters to sounds effectively.
- Progress has improved this year and is most marked in Year 2, where tasks are generally well planned and interesting. However, inspectors' observations of pupils' work in class and in books confirm that too few pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs and those who receive additional help are well supported and gaps in their learning are closing. Pupils who speak English as an additional language progress in line with their peers. The more able pupils are not making good progress, and too few pupils reach the higher levels as a result of a lack of consistent challenge and high expectations in some lessons.
- Children's progress in some Early Years Foundation Stage classes requires improvement because learning outcomes are not sufficiently clear to ensure well-organised learning, and there is not always an appropriate balance between teacher-directed and children's self-initiated activities.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Too few lessons are good or better. In those which are, teachers ensure that there is a range of interesting activities and a clear match of tasks to ability. Their skilful questioning, such as in one outstanding reading lesson, encourages children to think clearly and develop ideas. In Year 2, the teacher used her assessments very well to plan the lesson, and had high expectations of pupils' ability to apply and extend their numeracy skills.
- Lessons requiring improvement do not proceed at a good pace or capture the interest of pupils and ensure that they are keen to learn. The purpose of lessons is not always explained clearly or discussed with pupils in order to identify how they can succeed. Number skills and the use of numbers in problem-solving tasks are not developed sufficiently to have a positive impact on achievement. Teachers in these lessons do not always manage pupils' behaviour well enough and marking does not always help pupils to improve their work.
- Most teachers have good subject knowledge and teach pupils' basic skills in literacy and mathematics well but their planning to develop these skills progressively is not sharp enough throughout the school. There is appropriate use of opportunities to develop pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development.

- The accuracy of teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment and progress is improving. However, pupils are not sufficiently encouraged to set their personal targets with their teacher or to regularly review their own progress carefully and agree what they need to improve next.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** requires improvement

- Senior managers have worked hard to make significant improvements and introduce very clear expectations and procedures. Some of these measures have not had enough time to have the impact the school is seeking, for example, the introduction of the Social, Emotional, Aspects of Literacy (SEAL) programme. Nonetheless, there have been notable improvements in pupils' behaviour and the recognition on teachers' part that more needs to be done to maintain a consistent approach to managing pupils' behaviour throughout the school.
- Pupils feel very safe in school. Procedures to safeguard children and keep the site secure are exemplary. The school is generally a calm, well-ordered and welcoming environment.
- Behaviour in most lessons makes a positive contribution to pupils' learning but, occasionally, lessons are disrupted because pupils lose interest in their learning.
- Instances of bullying are rare. Pupils from many different cultural backgrounds learn and play together cooperatively and that enhances their spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school. Attendance is in line with the national average and punctuality has improved.

### **The leadership and management** requires improvement

- The senior manager, governing body and the staff share the headteacher's clear vision and commitment to promoting continuous improvement. The school has become more stable following a period of staff changes in recent years and the current team of teachers and support staff are keen to do well for the pupils in their care. School leaders are becoming increasingly successful in promoting equality of opportunity and discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.
- The school benefits greatly from the strong partnership with the parents' association, the Friends of Strathmore School. The partnership with the consortium of local schools and the extended schools' arrangement has been very beneficial in supporting the curriculum and care for pupils.
- There is a continuous focus on improving the quality of teaching to make it consistently good. The good use of performance management is leading to an effective programme of professional development for all staff which, in turn, is helping pupils to make better progress.
- The monitoring role of subject leaders is insufficiently developed. There has been insufficient training to equip these staff with the skills needed to analyse and interpret data for pupil progress. However, leadership at all levels is gaining in effectiveness.

- The school is benefiting from the helpful support provided by its local authority Improvement Partner in, for example, school self-evaluation, developing teaching and learning and training subject leaders to develop their roles.
  - The school successfully promotes pupils' spiritual, moral and social development through the imaginative use of topics and themes. Over time, there have been insufficient opportunities for literacy skills and writing to be applied across a range of subjects and, until recently, boys' writing was an issue across the school. However, new teaching programmes being developed by the school are making a difference to pupils' achievement and to their enjoyment of learning.
  - The school's self-evaluation is accurate and clearly focused on the correct priorities. It stems from an effective programme of monitoring and evaluation. The school's systems for tracking pupils' progress are increasingly enabling it to more quickly identify pupils in danger of slipping behind so that they can be given appropriate or additional support. This demonstrates that the school has the capacity to sustain improvement in the future.
  - **The governance of the school:**
    - fully ensures that all regulatory requirements for the safeguarding of pupils and staff vetting procedures are fully in place
    - has governors who are knowledgeable about the school's work and are well informed about its strengths and areas for improvement
    - is not always sufficiently active in steering the school's development and choice of priorities, or in evaluating its effectiveness.
-

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	117114
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	401647

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	227
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The Governing Body
<b>Chair</b>	Mary Quinn-Halliday
<b>Headteacher</b>	Bernadette Holmes
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	18 March 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	01462 459558
<b>Fax number</b>	01462 459558
<b>Email address</b>	head @strathmore.herts.sch.uk



Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit [www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk), or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store St  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

© Crown copyright 2012

