

Micklem Primary School

Boxted Road, Hemel Hempstead, HP1 2QH

Inspection dates 9–10 October 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
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

- There is not enough good teaching to ensure pupils in all classes achieve well in literacy and numeracy.
- The teaching of writing is not strong enough in the classes for pupils in Years 1, 2 and 3 to ensure that they do as well in their writing as they do in their reading.
- The work set for more-able pupils is not hard enough in some lessons.
- Not all teachers provide enough opportunities for pupils to work with each other in lessons.
- The marking of pupils' books in some classes does not give enough guidance to pupils on what they need to do next to improve.
- Subject leaders do not play a sufficiently active role in school improvement and raising standards and the progress pupils make. This is the aspect of the school's leadership that needs most improving.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher is improving the school rapidly. She has built a strong sense of community among the staff and given them clear direction on what they need to do to improve their teaching.
- Reading is taught well. Pupils are taught the sounds that they need to know to read unfamiliar words from when they start in the Reception class.
- Children in the Nursery and Reception class learn quickly because of good leadership, effective teaching and what the school offers for them.
- Consistently good teaching in Year 6 ensures all pupils in this class make good progress.
- Pupils enjoy being at school and feel safe. They are polite and courteous to visitors and show respect towards others.
- Parents welcome the greater sense of openness created by the headteacher. They like being invited to class assemblies because it helps them understand what their children are learning in school.
- The governing body is fully involved in monitoring the work of the school to ensure all pupils make good progress.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out at short notice.
- The inspector took account of 18 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) during the inspection. Several discussions took place between the inspector and parents/carers before school. The inspector held a meeting with nine of them during the inspection.
- The inspector observed, jointly with the headteacher, seven teachers teaching a total of eight lessons and several short sessions to review the teaching of literacy and numeracy skills. The inspector also reviewed the quality of writing in the pupils' books and listened to pupils read.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior staff and those with a subject responsibility, newly qualified teachers, members of the governing body and representatives from the local authority.
- The inspector looked at a number of documents related to self-evaluation, the monitoring of teaching, safeguarding, minutes of the governing body and analysed questionnaires completed by staff.

Inspection team

Philip Mann, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than most schools of its type.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding) is well above that seen nationally.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported by school action is similar to that found nationally.
- The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs or being supported by school action plus is below the national average.
- The school has met the government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress in English and mathematics, for the last three years.
- A breakfast club is managed by the governing body.
- The school holds the Bronze Activemark award for sport.
- The new headteacher joined the school in September 2012.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it good or better by:
 - increasing teachers' expectations about what pupils can achieve
 - ensuring that the work planned for those pupils who are more able is hard enough
 - providing regular opportunities in lessons for pupils to work with each other
 - ensuring that teachers make the best use of technology and available resources to make lessons more exciting
 - making sure that all marking provides clear advice to pupils on what they need to do next to improve and is as good as that seen in Year 6.
- Ensure that all pupils in both Key Stage 1 and 2 make good progress in their writing by:
 - making sure that the teaching of handwriting and spelling is more closely linked to the teaching of the sounds pupils need to know in order to read
 - providing regular opportunities for pupils to write more in literacy lessons
 - ensuring that pupils have good opportunities to write more in other subjects.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that those with subject leadership responsibility are more involved in monitoring the quality of teaching and planning for improvement.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Standards in English and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2 have steadily risen to broadly average levels. A third of pupils attained the higher Level 5 in English in the 2012 national tests.
- The latest Key Stage 1 teacher assessments for 2012 confirm that attainment in reading and mathematics is in line with expected levels for this age group and an improvement on previous results. Attainment in writing is below average and similar to that at the time of the previous inspection.
- Most parents who responded to the on-line questionnaire consider that their children make good progress at school. However, achievement varies between classes due to inconsistencies in teaching. Tasks planned in some lessons for the more-able pupils are not hard enough.
- The achievement of children in the Nursery and Reception class is good. These children make rapid progress, from below that expected for their age group, to levels at least in line with that expected nationally for children of this age when they start in Year 1.
- Achievement in reading is good. Pupils are regularly taught the sounds that they need to know to read well. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 read often to adults and display a love of books. Pupils of all abilities use their knowledge of sounds confidently to read unfamiliar words.
- Achievement in writing is particularly inconsistent. It is best for older pupils because of a combination of previously good teaching in Year 5 and good teaching in Year 6 where pupils write in a neat joined-up style for a range of purposes. For instance, a more-able pupil began their crime story with the lines, 'Depressed, Bruce was never happy when there was a crime he could not solve so he travelled to town to take his mind off things.' There are examples of good writing in this class.
- Younger pupils are keen to write. However, handwriting skills and accurate spelling are not taught effectively alongside the sounds needed for reading. This means letters are often not formed correctly and simple words are often misspelt. Pupils in Years 1, 2 and 3, therefore, find it difficult to write simple sentences accurately in the time allowed in lessons. This slows their rate of achievement in writing.
- Multiplication and other basic numeracy skills are taught well in most classes. Achievement in more complex mathematics is less successful because, in some classes, teachers make little use of technology and practical equipment to support their teaching. When teachers make good use of these resources, such as computers, pupils make good progress, as seen in a Year 6 data-handling lesson.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs achieve well because work planned for them is at the right level. Effective classroom support from adults helps them to make good progress. Those pupils who are cared for and those who speak English as an additional language make equally good progress.
- The achievement of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is better than that found

nationally. This is because government funding is used carefully to ensure that these pupils get the extra support they need in class and in other school activities. As a result, gaps in both their academic and social development are narrowing.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Past inconsistencies in teaching have led to inconsistencies in pupils' achievement. There is still too much teaching in the school that requires improvement to ensure that this underachievement is eliminated quickly enough. Teaching in several lessons lacks pace. Tasks are not always set at the right level for more-able pupils in literacy and numeracy. As a result, weaknesses in these basic skills are not tackled quickly enough.
- Teaching for children in the Nursery and Reception class is good. All adults working with these children provide a wide range of interesting activities to stimulate the curiosity of these children. The planned learning experiences in the outdoor play area are purposeful and encourage all children to explore the world around them through play and adult support.
- Teaching is good overall for pupils in Year 4 and 6. Common features observed include effective lesson planning, good use of technology and good involvement of pupils in activities to encourage them to talk about their work with others. In these lessons, all pupils found the work interesting and, consequently, their behaviour and attitudes towards learning were good. These teachers have high expectations of the pupils and so they make good progress.
- The teaching of the sounds that pupils need to know how to read is good in all classes. These sessions move along at a brisk pace and teachers make good use of resources such as puppets and letter sound cards to reinforce new sounds that these pupils need to know to help them read successfully.
- Support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is good. Classroom assistants work closely with these pupils in class discussions and specific work is matched to their ability. Caring support and guidance are given to children who speak English as an additional language or who find it difficult to work with others.
- Teachers' assessment and marking of pupils' work requires improvement. The progress of children in the Nursery and Reception class is monitored in great detail. Information is used well to ensure tasks are set at the right level for all children. The marking of pupils' work in other classes is more variable. It is good in Year 6 where the teacher's careful comments provide clear guidance to pupils and encourage corrections of mistakes to ensure continuous improvement. This is not yet the case in all other classes.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- Behaviour requires improvement. This is because pupils do not always get the chance to work effectively with each other in some lessons to solve problems. In the weaker lessons, some pupils find it difficult to concentrate on their work or listen to the teacher.
- The vast majority of pupils are keen to be in school but some are persistently absent despite the

efforts of the school to encourage better attendance. As a result, attendance is improving but is below the national average overall.

- Behaviour in class and around the school is generally good. Pupils are courteous and polite to visitors. Relationships are positive between pupils and adults and pupils themselves. They play happily with each other in the playground and say that they feel safe. This is backed up by the school's own surveys and discussions with the school council. Pupils say that when any bullying occurs they know who to go to and are reasonably confident that it will be dealt with by staff quickly.
- The breakfast club provides a good start to the day for all those who attend. It is successful in encouraging children who find it difficult to be in school to attend regularly.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- A high turnover of staff has led to weaknesses in some aspects of school leadership. Some teachers with subject leadership responsibility are relatively new in post and have yet to play a major role in school improvement and raising standards further.
- The new headteacher has rapidly created a sense of teamwork among the staff. Together, they have created a positive climate for learning within the school community to eliminate underachievement and give all pupils the opportunity to succeed.
- Discussions with parents confirm that the expectations set by school leaders are now much higher and communication between home and school has improved.
- Self-evaluation is accurate. The headteacher has quickly identified what needs to be done next to tackle inconsistent achievement in writing and raise standards further. A detailed improvement plan is in place to tackle these weaknesses.
- The headteacher has acted swiftly to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Performance management builds adequately on that administered by previous leaders. The support and further training for newly qualified teachers is effective. A good programme of training for teachers in partnership with the local authority is in place.
- The school has the capacity to improve further because it can demonstrate a trend of improving standards in English and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2. The good quality of education for children in the Nursery and Reception class has been maintained through good leadership. Support for pupils who are disabled and those with special educational needs is good.
- The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Class assemblies provide good opportunities for pupils to develop their presentation skills as they explain what they have learnt in class to their parents. For example, pupils in Year 6 taught French words learnt in class confidently to a mixed audience of pupils and parents.
- There is an appropriate balance between the different subjects taught. Activities after school, visits and residential trips provide further opportunities for pupils to work with others and develop a range of creative and sporting skills.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- monitors the work of the school well and asks challenging questions of school leaders
- has been successful in recruiting new staff to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' progress
- makes efficient use of the extra government funding through the pupil premium, and other resources, to close gaps in achievement between different groups of pupils
- ensure all safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements.

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	117231
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	401655

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	141
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Amanda Wickens
Headteacher	Elizabeth Ormonde
Date of previous school inspection	4 February 2010
Telephone number	01442 408964
Fax number	01442 401962
Email address	admin@micklem.herts.sch.uk

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