

Ley Hill School

Ley Hill, Chesham, Buckinghamshire, HP5 1YF

Inspection dates 18–19 October 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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 school has maintained the high levels of pupils' attainment since the previous inspection. Pupils make particularly good progress in reading and mathematics.
- The headteacher and senior leaders have concentrated on making sure teaching and pupils' progress are good in the majority of cases, but want to make them even better.
- Children have an excellent start to their schooling in Nursery and Reception classes.
- By the time pupils leave pupils reach levels in national tests which are well above average.
- Pupils enjoy being in school and their attendance is well above average. They say that they feel safe and cared for well.
- Behaviour is good and pupils show respect for each other and for the adults in school.
- The headteacher leads the school effectively and is well supported by other key staff who have taken on leadership and management roles.
- The governing body provides good support and challenge and knows the strengths and areas for improvement of the school very well.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not all teaching makes sure that pupils' learning is consistently excellent, particularly for those pupils who are capable of doing harder work.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to write in different subjects and complete longer pieces of writing, particularly in Years 3, 4 and 5.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 18 lessons, of which six were joint observations with the headteacher. Nearly every class was observed at least twice.
- Meetings were held with two groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and one other governor, several staff members including senior and middle leaders, and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 48 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View). Other parents' views were sought at the start of the school day. Account was also taken of 22 staff questionnaires.
- The inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a number of documents including the school's own information on pupils' current progress, planning and written checks on progress, records relating to behaviour and attendance, documents relating to health and safety, and minutes of various meetings.

Inspection team

Nigel Grimshaw, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Marianne Phillips

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is about average in size.
- The vast majority of the pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The school receives a very small amount of additional funding called the pupil premium and used for specific groups of pupils, particularly those who are eligible for free school meals. This is well below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is well below average. The proportion of pupils supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also well below average.
- The school meets the government's floor standard, which sets minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the consistency of teaching so that all teaching is good or outstanding before July 2013 by:
 - making sure that teachers give more time for pupils to do their work in lessons
 - making sure that the work set is matched more closely to the abilities of all pupils
 - giving staff the chance to observe excellent practice within the school to aid improvement in their own teaching, as already planned by the school..
- Improve pupils' writing confidence and abilities by:
 - providing lots of opportunities for pupils to use their writing skills in other subject areas
 - providing more motivation and time for pupils to complete longer pieces of writing, especially in Years 3, 4 and 5
 - making sure that the more-able pupils are set harder work so they really have to think how to complete it.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children start school with skills and knowledge that are around those expected for their age. The outstanding teaching in the Nursery and Reception classes means they settle well into school life and are well prepared for their move into Year 1, especially in gaining social, basic communication skills and and number understanding.
- This good start is maintained across the school because senior leaders have successfully focused on keeping teaching and learning at good levels. Consequently, pupils continue to achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics. There are some examples where individual lessons are extremely well taught.
- Results in reading are particularly good. Pupils say that they love reading. This is because the teaching of reading skills is particularly effective and most pupils have great confidence in their reading ability. Pupils say that they read for pleasure both within and outside school.
- Results in mathematics have improved because of a focus on improving the teaching of mathematics and pupils now reach levels much higher than average.
- Senior leaders keep a close watch on how pupils make progress and hold meetings regularly with their teachers to spot those who are falling behind and to give an extra boost to their learning.
- Disabled pupils, and those with special educational needs, make good progress because key staff check their progress closely. The work is, therefore, then set at the right level and they receive good-quality support.
- Senior leaders, ably supported by all staff, have worked hard to ensure that the more-able pupils are challenged in their work, but this is not yet consistently well done across the school. Pupils like the simple targets set for them which focus their efforts in English and mathematics. However, despite the improved teaching of the sounds that letters make (phonics), pupils' progress in writing is slower than found in reading and mathematics.
- Pupils enjoy learning, particularly noticeable in an outstanding literacy lesson in Year 6 where pupils extended their spoken and written vocabulary. Words like 'devouring', 'distraught', 'intimidating' and 'exhilarating' reflected their ability to think of exciting words. However, in the small number of less well taught lessons, the pace of learning is variable and not enough time is given for pupils to complete their tasks. Work is not always set at the right level to provide a greater challenge for the most-able pupils.
- An overwhelming majority of parents responding to the on-line questionnaire indicated that their children make good progress. This was also evident from discussions with parents at the start of the school day.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers plan work for the pupils that is interesting and enjoyable, and which motivates them to do learn well. Expectations are usually high, particularly in terms of behaviour, and pupils respond well. This was particularly true in the Reception class where the children were having fun ordering numbers to ten and the teacher then extended this to an addition activity which really made them think carefully before working out the right answer.
- In the best lessons, the pace of learning is brisk and the teachers use probing questions that make the pupils think carefully about their answers. Pupils are encouraged to work in pairs or small groups so that they can talk about their learning and share good ideas.
- In the small number of less effective lessons the pace of learning is more variable. Occasionally teachers spend too much time talking to the pupils when introducing the lesson and not enough time is then given to the pupils to complete their work.
- Resources are well prepared, including the effective use of information and communication technology (ICT) in lessons. The motivating resources help enliven and extend pupils' learning.

- Pupils have useful targets to guide improvements in English and mathematics and which help motivate their learning. Pupils, particularly the older pupils, like assessing their own progress and understanding in lessons. The marking by teachers is helpful and consistently applied. Time is often given for the pupils to correct their work and say how well they are understanding it, but this is not the case in all lessons.
- Teaching effectively promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This is evident in lessons and around the school. Pupils work together well, value the opinions of others, and lessons are very rarely disrupted through bad behaviour. Careful lesson and longer-term planning ensures that disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are taught well, often in small groups led by very effective learning support assistants.
- The well devised curriculum helps teachers to plan work that offers a range of experiences, including residential visits. Useful links between subjects enhance pupils' learning, and teachers provide a good range of opportunities for pupils to apply their basic literacy and numeracy skills. However, in some classes there are not enough activities which help them to use or extend their writing skills in other subjects.
- A very high proportion of parents indicated that their children are taught well and inspection findings fully support this view. Parents and carers feel that Ley Hill is on the right track to get even better. One parent spoken to said how much their child enjoyed learning at school. 'He can't get here quickly enough!'

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The vast majority of pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They are keen to do well. They concentrate and persevere in completing the work set for them. In a very small number of lessons, some pupils find the work lacks challenge. One more-able child said, 'I sometimes spend time doing things I can already do.'
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around school. They work and play together harmoniously. Not surprisingly, pupils are really enjoying attending. They say that they feel safe and well cared for by the adults in school. They are extremely polite, confident and very welcoming. Parents and carers support this view.
- Routines are well established in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The children show consideration for others, take turns and share equipment. These qualities, that are learnt at an early age, carry on through school as they grow older.
- School records indicate that there are very few incidents of bullying, a view reinforced in discussions with pupils and parents. Pupils have a good understanding of different forms of bullying and they say that bullying is very rare and is dealt with promptly and effectively by the adults in school. Racial discrimination incidents are even less common because the pupils show mutual respect for each other. The school's hard work to inform pupils about the dangers of using the internet means that they are clear about how to stay safe when using it.

The leadership and management are good

- The positive leadership of the headteacher, ably supported by other key staff and governors, provides a clear focus on efforts to improve the quality of teaching further. The headteacher actively models good classroom practice. Although teaching is occasionally less effective, good-quality teaching has been maintained over time. This has made sure that pupils continue to make good progress, achieve well and results in them doing very well in national tests. Decisions about pay rates are based on the quality of teaching.
- Staff are eager for improvement and now have more direct responsibility for improving the pupils' learning. However, not all have enough opportunities to observe the excellent practice of others to guide and improve their own teaching and pupils' learning.
- The highly successful induction programme, for children and their parents, initiated by the enthusiasm and skill of the Early Years Foundation Stage leader, works exceptionally well. This

ensures that children settle quickly and make an excellent start to their school life.

- Teachers have clear steps set for improvement. Staff questionnaires indicate the staff value the training organised for them to aid further improvement. Teachers are now more actively involved in checking the achievement of pupils in their classes so they are better informed when planning the pupils' work.
- The curriculum creates opportunities for enjoyable learning and also for pupils to apply their reading skills when studying other subjects. Opportunities for pupils to use their writing skills in other subjects is not as well developed. There are many opportunities planned for pupils to learn about other cultures which helps widen their understanding of others. A good range of lunchtime and after-school clubs and activities helps broaden their experience.
- The local authority provides good support and has been particularly helpful in aiding improvements in pupils' reading.
- Parents say they are well informed and like the guidance the school gives to help their child learn better. This is aided by the school's particularly informative website.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have a clear view of the strengths and areas for improvement of the school, particularly how well pupils make progress in literacy and mathematics. This helps them to ensure that staff focus on the right things to do.
 - The school's leaders, including governors, would like the school to be even better and have succeeded in improving pupils' progress in reading and mathematics. The learning environment has also been improved. Given how well the school's good performance has been maintained, leaders have the capacity to improve further.
 - Governors have a good understanding of how the pupil premium has enabled small-group work and one-to-one adult support to help pupils achieve well. They check that the funds have been allocated to good effect.
 - The health and safety of pupils, including checks on staff appointments, is high profile as staff and governors have received the appropriate training. Governors are keen to ensure all pupils are treated equally and that there is no discrimination.

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	110243
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	403110

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	234
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Eleanor Garth
Headteacher	Nigel Hoff
Date of previous school inspection	27 March 2008
Telephone number	01494 784205
Fax number	01494 784055
Email address	office@leyhill.bucks.sch.uk

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