

Forres Primary School

Stanstead Road, Hoddesdon, EN11 0RW

Inspection dates 6–7 November 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		Good	2
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 in mathematics is adequate but standards at the end of Year 6 are not as high as they are in English.
- Teaching and planning in mathematics are not good enough to ensure pupils make good progress over time.
- Pupils who find mathematics more difficult are not always given enough support to help them to catch up.
- Standards in reading and writing are average at the end of Year 2 and Year 6.
- Leaders and managers are not always sharp enough in identifying weaknesses in teaching. They have not trained teachers well enough in planning and adapting mathematics lessons over time for pupils at different levels of achievement.
- Leaders and the governing body are not clear enough about the impact of extra funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals.

The school has the following strengths

- Children in the Reception classes are well taught and learn quickly.
- Leaders have improved the teaching of reading and writing, and pupils use these skills across a wide range of subjects and activities.
- Teachers work hard to make lessons interesting and enjoyable.
- Pupils behave well, concentrate on their work, are safe and get on well with each other.
- Pupils with complex difficulties and disabilities are well supported by teachers and other adults.
- Leaders and the governing body have set clear targets for improving the school, including for raising standards in mathematics, and check regularly on the quality of teaching and the progress that pupils are making.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 24 lessons and parts of lessons. One of these was a joint observation with the headteacher.
- The inspectors observed the school's work, looked at the work in pupils' books and heard pupils reading.
- The inspectors met with a group of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body, one other governor and school staff, and spoke to a representative from the local authority. In addition, many informal opportunities were taken to speak to pupils in classes.
- The inspectors took account of 24 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View), the school's own parental questionnaire and 22 staff questionnaires.
- The inspectors looked at a wide range of documents, including: the school's data on pupils' current progress; planning, monitoring and policy documents; the school's website; behaviour and attendance records and documents relating to safeguarding; local authority reports on the school; and governing body documents.

Inspection team

Nicola Davies, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Lynne Thorogood

Additional Inspector

Stuart Gray

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is higher than average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is higher than average.
- Most of the pupils are White British.
- Nine out of ten pupils speak English as their first language; however, the number of younger pupils learning English as an additional language is increasing.
- More pupils than average are known to be eligible for free school meals; the school receives additional funding for these pupils (pupil premium).
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the teaching of mathematics in order to increase the rate of pupils' progress so that, in 2013, 90% of children achieve expected standards in Year 2 and 90% make expected or better progress by the end of Year 6 by:
 - providing teachers with training and guidance on assessing pupils' progress in mathematics in their lessons and over time
 - ensuring that pupils spend the majority of time in lessons developing their mathematical skills and understanding
 - ensuring that individual lessons and lessons over time focus on developing key mathematical skills in a logical way
 - ensuring that pupils who have fallen behind in mathematics are provided with extra help to catch up
 - checking that pupils who need extra help are always set tasks which are at the right level
 - continuing to develop pupils' problem solving skills.
- Reinforce improvements in pupils' writing by ensuring that teachers encourage the use of good grammar, spelling and handwriting in pupils' writing across different subject areas.
- Ensure that teachers set clear and achievable goals at the start of each lesson and feedback to pupils consistently through their marking.
- Ensure that leaders make more targeted use of lesson observations to identify weaknesses in teaching and focus training on areas where teachers need more support.
- Ensure that leaders and the governing body are explicit about how extra funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is spent and monitor the impact of this funding more carefully.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Children are well taught in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children join the school from a range of pre-school settings and backgrounds with skills that are typically below the levels expected for their age. They thrive on a diet of good teaching, individual attention and exciting indoor and outdoor activities.
- The proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the end of their Reception Year rose significantly last year. Even so, only half the children left the Reception classes with language, communication and number skills which are appropriate for their age. In previous years, the proportion had been much lower.
- Early reading skills are taught thoroughly in the Reception classes and Years 1 and 2. Last year, nearly half of the children could use their secure knowledge of letters and sounds to read unfamiliar words. Those who cannot easily read unknown words are provided with extra help. This includes a higher proportion of boys.
- Standards in reading and writing are average at the end of Year 2. A whole-school focus on reading and writing has helped raise standards in these subjects. However, this year attainment in mathematics fell to significantly below average.
- Standards at the end of Year 6 are broadly average in English but significantly below average in mathematics. This is due to weaker teaching in the subject across the school. In addition, pupils who struggle with mathematics are not always provided with timely extra help so they can catch up.
- Initiatives which have been introduced by the mathematics leader are already having a good effect on pupils' mathematical understanding. These include special mathematics days which focus on topics such as solving problems, which pupils have found more difficult in the past.
- The growing numbers of younger pupils who are new to learning English receive additional support. They tend not to achieve as well as other pupils in Years 1 and 2 but, as they become fully fluent in English, they achieve at least as well as other pupils.
- Nearly a third of pupils are eligible for the pupil premium. These pupils do not always attain as well as other pupils, particularly in mathematics. The exception is pupils who are looked-after by the local authority, who achieve at least as well as most pupils.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress. Many of these pupils have complex needs. Their well-being and attainment are carefully monitored, and caring, knowledgeable staff help them to progress well educationally and socially.
- Pupils' wider understanding of the world is developed well. Pupils develop good levels of personal, social, health and economic awareness. They can talk confidently about topics and subjects they have studied as part of the school's creative curriculum.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching is lively and interesting. Teachers work hard to plan lessons which are enjoyable and hold pupils' attention. As a result, pupils are very keen to learn and work hard during their lessons.

- Teachers use an imaginative variety of techniques and resources to help pupils understand their lessons. These include the good use of displays, videos and digital equipment. Teaching assistants and other adults play a useful part in helping groups of pupils to understand and make progress during lessons.
- Mathematics is not taught well enough across the school. Many of the weaker aspects are evident in the planning, which is not clear or specific enough about the mathematical skills which are to be taught. As a result, although pupils are busy during lessons, they are not always using the time to acquire or practise new mathematical skills or understanding.
- Teachers set goals for pupils to achieve in each lesson. Sometimes these are too general. When this happens, it is hard for teachers to know whether pupils have really made progress or to make helpful comments when they mark pupils' work.
- Sometimes teachers do not act early enough to correct misconceptions or to adapt work to provide additional challenge or support. This means that sometimes groups of pupils work diligently on a task which they have only partially understood. This is particularly the case in mathematics, where teachers are less clear on what their pupils already know and understand.
- Reading is confidently taught. The sounds that letters make are routinely taught to younger children, who use these sounds to help them read unknown words. These skills are reinforced through extra, small-group activities for some pupils.
- The teaching of writing has improved. Teachers have developed their skills in the teaching of writing through expert training and a whole school focus. Opportunities are missed to make sure that the skills pupils are developing in their English lessons are consistently used in their writing in other subjects.
- Pupils have the opportunity to immerse themselves in particular topics or themes. This has had a positive effect on raising standards in English but is less suited to improving standards in mathematics. On occasions, the links to the theme reduce the focus on the mathematics to be learned, which can mean that pupils are not focusing sufficiently on developing necessary skills in a logical order.
- Teaching in the Reception classes is consistently good or better. Teachers know how to teach early reading and number skills and plan interesting activities. These activities help all children to learn, including disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and those who enter the Reception classes with skills which are advanced for their age.
- Teachers across the school have warm relationships with the children in their classes. Pupils like and respect their teachers and the other adults who help them. Teachers model mature and considerate behaviour which pupils emulate, making classrooms friendly but purposeful places.
- Classrooms are attractive. Teachers often use their termly topics as a starting point for creating areas which excite pupils' interest. One lively example was the recreation of a Tudor apothecary's shop featuring mysterious potions and jars.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They behave well in class and are keen to make sure they do their best. They respond positively to the tasks teachers and other adults set for

them.

- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Teachers encourage pupils well to understand themselves and those who are different to them. This is extended successfully through the school's strong links with a school in Nepal.
- Pupils have a good understanding of bullying, including using language which discriminates against others or makes them feel unwelcome. Pupils are confident to report serious incidents to an adult. School records indicate that such happenings are rare. Pupils develop many strategies to resist peer-group pressure and older pupils act as peer mediators. As a result, they feel safe in school.
- Pupils behave well around the school and in the extensive outdoor areas. Breaks are happy and energetic interludes within the school day. Pupils make the most of opportunities to play with others or take part in activities organised by the midday supervisors. The school also provides small group activities for children who have difficulties interacting with others.
- Attendance is above average. Pupils are keen to come to school and most arrive punctually. Pupils enjoy the wide range of extra activities the school provides.
- The school works hard to develop positive relationships with parents. On-line questionnaires indicate that all parents who responded feel that the school is a safe place where their children are well looked after. Responses to the school's own annual surveys indicate that the overwhelming majority of parents and carers feel the school makes them welcome and values their contributions.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- The headteacher and senior staff are well aware of what the school needs to do to improve. Their plan sets this out clearly with challenging targets to be met over this academic year. This plan focuses on: standards in mathematics; continuing to improve the quality of teaching; and making sure that teachers make greater use of information about pupils' progress across the subjects they lead, to highlight strengths and areas for support.
 - The teacher responsible for mathematics has already undertaken work to improve the standards and progress pupils make in the subject. Exciting mathematics days, popular 'taster' sessions for parents and regular small group sessions for pupils who are particularly able have already begun. The teacher has also produced a useful 'teacher friendly' guide showing how pupils' skills in mathematics should develop as they mature.
 - Since the last inspection the headteacher and senior leaders have developed a thorough system to monitor the quality of teaching and measure its impact on pupils' progress. This includes lesson observations and regular meetings with teachers to discuss pupils' learning. This process is used to help senior staff monitor the performance of teachers in the school.
 - This process is clear and is followed through by senior staff. However, until this year it was not used with sufficient sharpness to identify and improve weaknesses in particular subjects. As a result, the school has not yet provided appropriate training for teachers in the teaching of mathematics.
 - Last year the school spent the bulk of the additional funding it receives for pupils eligible for the pupil premium on small group activities. The impact of this has not been evaluated to pinpoint
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precisely whether this funding made a difference for eligible pupils.

- The local authority has provided effective training. This has included help in improving the teaching of English and some additional support has now been offered for the teaching of mathematics. Governors have also found the local authority helpful.
- The school's curriculum is wide. It includes strong provision for science and physical education. A further strength is the school's programme for personal, social, health and economic education.
- Partnerships with other organisations are good. The school works particularly well with specialist agencies which help pupils with special education needs or disabilities. One example is the school's work with the consortium providing support and training for teaching visually-impaired pupils.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - is focused on making sure the school raises pupils' standards of attainment further. The committee that concentrates solely on this issue includes knowledgeable governors who are asking the right questions about the performance of particular groups of pupils, how this relates to the quality of teaching and the link with performance management. However, governors are not clear what the impact has been of activities financed through the additional pupil premium funding.

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	117284
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	405696

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	298
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Charlotte Marson
Headteacher	Susan Camp
Date of previous school inspection	5 May 2011
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