

Weston C of E VC Primary School

Maiden Street, Weston, Hitchin, SG4 7AG

Inspection dates

29–30 November 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.

- Pupils in all key stages make good progress and, by the end of Year 6, reach above average standards in English and mathematics.
- Most of the teaching is good.
- Pupils behave well and know how to keep themselves safe.
- Attendance is above average.
- The recently appointed senior leaders and the governing body work together effectively to improve outcomes for pupils and to raise the school's profile in the community.
- Procedures for checking how well pupils are progressing have been tightened up.
- Senior leaders know exactly what needs to be done to improve the school further and have the support of the staff to bring about changes.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils are not developing their reading skills quickly enough.
- Teachers do not make clear what they expect of pupils at different stages during some lessons.
- Pupils are not given enough opportunity to find things out for themselves.
- The governing body does not look closely enough at the spending of pupil premium funding and its impact on pupils' progress.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed seven lessons, of which two were joint observations with the headteacher. In addition, the inspector made a number of other shorter visits to lessons.
- Meetings were held with members of the governing body, staff, groups of pupils, and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation, including the data the school has collected on pupils' attainment and progress, procedures for keeping pupils safe and the school development plan. He heard some pupils in Years 2 and 6 read.
- The inspector took account of the 23 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in making the judgements.

Inspection team

David Wynford-Jones, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- All pupils speak English as their first language.
- The proportions of pupils supported through school action, and at school action plus or through a statement of special educational needs, are broadly similar to national averages.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or in the care of the local authority, is well below the national average for primary schools.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher have been in post since September 2011.
- The school's part-time Nursery operates five mornings a week.
- In addition, the school hosts a privately run afternoon pre-school/nursery. It was not included in this inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Help pupils make quicker progress in reading by:
 - ensuring all teachers teach the sounds that letters make effectively
 - encouraging pupils to read more widely
 - reviewing the way reading sessions are conducted.
- Ensure more pupils make outstanding progress by:
 - making certain that teachers give all pupils sufficiently demanding work at every stage of a lesson, especially when introducing it
 - giving pupils more opportunities to find out things for themselves.
- Make sure the governing body looks more closely at how the pupil premium funding is spent and its impact on how well eligible pupils are progressing in their learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils make good progress and achieve well. The use of more accurate assessment information and the focus on improving outcomes in writing and mathematics is evident in all year groups. Standards are rising rapidly.
- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and knowledge broadly in line with those expected for the age. By the end of Year 6, standards are usually above average in writing and mathematics. In reading they are not quite as high.
- The youngest children are happy to come to school and eagerly join in the activities in the Nursery. They are developing their self confidence well and transfer easily to the Reception class, where they are joined by many children who are starting school for the first time. They quickly form good relationships and make good progress in all areas of learning.
- By the end of Year 2, most pupils read with skills similar to those expected for their age. More-able pupils know how to find the meaning of words in a dictionary but are not able to talk sufficiently confidently about the books they are reading.
- When writing, pupils use a good range of vocabulary and use basic punctuation accurately. They write for a range of purposes and in different styles. For example, the story of 'Little Red Riding Hood' was presented in play script format.
- In mathematics, pupils are developing their understanding of number well. They talk about their work confidently and use an appropriate range of mathematical terminology. They explained the concept of halves, quarters, eighths, tenths and sixteenths accurately.
- By the end of Year 6, pupils are reading at levels at least in line with those expected for their age. They talk confidently about their favourite authors, hypothesise how stories might develop and say why they like the style of writing. However, most pupils are not very confident in the use of phonics (the sounds letters make) to help them read unfamiliar words. Pupils do not make sufficient use of reference books to find things out for themselves and many do not read widely enough. Consequently they do not make as rapid progress as they do in writing and mathematics.
- Pupils are developing their writing skills well and have responded enthusiastically to the recent emphasis on promoting writing throughout the school. They use a good range of vocabulary reflecting the emphasis placed, in all classes, on developing the pupils' speaking and listening skills. Pupils write for a range of audiences and are consolidating their writing skills effectively in other subjects.
- In mathematics, pupils are developing their skills well in solving mathematical problems. For example, pupils calculated how many different combinations they could have using three different flavoured ice-creams.
- In some classes, pupils are starting to develop their skills in finding things out for themselves. This is not yet consistent throughout the school.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress in relation to their starting points and needs. This is because the work set for them is matched closely to their ability levels and they receive good help and guidance.
- Pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium achieve well because the money is spent on employing additional staff to run small-group work. Assessment records show that eligible pupils are making good progress and the gap in performance between them and other pupils is closing.

The quality of teaching is good

- Most of the teaching is good. Teachers have responded well to the initiatives to improve their professional skills and have adopted many of the suggestions made at courses and whole-staff training sessions. This has resulted in pupils making good progress, particularly in writing and

mathematics.

- Teachers usually convey high expectations of work and behaviour. Assessment information is used effectively to plan lessons. The group tasks are carefully aligned to the pupils' level of attainment and their learning needs. Most lessons proceed at a quick pace and pupils make a full contribution to the lesson. Teachers use questioning skills well to challenge pupils' thinking.
- Planning is not as thorough for the parts of the lesson when all the pupils are taught together, for example at the start and the end of the lesson. Very occasionally, the pace at the start of the lesson is too slow. The teachers do not make it clear what is expected of pupils working at different levels of attainment. As a result, too little is expected of some pupils, especially during the introduction to the lesson.
- Teachers listen to pupils read on a regular basis but do not consistently make the best use of the time allocated for the development of pupils' reading skills or teach phonics in sufficient depth.
- Pupils receive regular detailed feedback on their work. Very helpful comments in pupils' books provide clear guidance on the next steps they need to take in order to reach their targets. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on how well they have understood their learning and are given opportunities to comment on their friend's work. This good practice is helping them to improve their own work.
- Potentially vulnerable pupils, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are fully included and have equal access to the same learning opportunities as other pupils.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' behaviour is good. They are polite and routinely demonstrate good manners as they move around the school.
- Pupils are proud of their school. They celebrate the closeness of the school community and get on well together. One pupil said 'It's like a big family. We all look after each other'. They ensure that displays and equipment are treated with respect and kept in good order for others to use.
- Incidents of bullying of any kind, such as name-calling, fighting, racial, religious and cyber-bullying, are very rare. No racist incident or serious misbehaviour has been reported since the last inspection. There have been no exclusions. Pupils say that if an incident occurred, they are confident that it would be dealt with quickly and fairly by the headteacher and members of staff.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves and others safe and have a good understanding of potential dangers, for example when cycling on local roads or when using computers to access the internet.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and taking responsibility. Their attendance is above average.

The leadership and management are good

- Senior leaders and the governing body work together effectively. Information about the school and pupils' attainment and progress are discussed in detail. This has led to a shared understanding of the school's performance and has helped correctly identify the areas needing improvement.
- Staff work together well as a team. They appreciate the improvements made in the school since the appointment of the headteacher and are fully committed to ensuring that these improvements are built upon. The school development plan provides a good structure to take the school forward. The school has a much higher profile in the local community and is, once more, becoming the centre of village life.
- Senior members of staff meet with all staff on an individual basis to review their performance and check on pupils' attainment and progress. This has led to an improvement in the quality of teaching and pupils making quicker progress, noticeably in writing and mathematics. The headteacher uses this information to help the governors decide if individual teachers should

receive a salary increase.

■ Middle leaders are developing their roles well. They support colleagues and check the pupils' work to make sure they are making sufficient progress.

■ The local authority has provided minimal support to the school because it is performing better than many schools. The attached adviser has formed a good working relationship with the headteacher and the Chair of the Governing Body.

■ **The governance of the school:**

– The governing body supports and checks most of the work of the school well. Governors are increasingly frequent visitors and are developing their skills through regular attendance at courses. The governing body has responded promptly to the recent changes in teacher appraisal and capability procedures. The related policy was updated for the start of the autumn term and the governing body has ensured that the performance of staff, including the headteacher, has been reviewed. Governors have a good understanding of the quality of teaching and school data, and know how well the school is doing in comparison with similar schools. The school's budget is checked regularly. Governors are satisfied that the headteacher is managing the budget well. They are aware of the additional money the school receives through pupil premium funding but do not check closely enough how the money is spent and the impact of the expenditure on pupils' attainment and progress. The governing body makes sure the school meets national requirements for safeguarding pupils.

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	117413
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	403320

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary Controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	146
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Standing
Headteacher	Elsbeth Shaw
Date of previous school inspection	7 November 2007
Telephone number	01462 790317
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