

# Earls Colne Primary School and Nursery

Park Lane, Earls Colne, Colchester, CO6 2RH

**Inspection dates** 5–6 December 2012

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
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 quality of teaching is good. Some teaching is now outstanding.
- Children make a good start in the Nursery and Reception classes.
- Pupils' progress has increased across the school. Standards are currently above average in all year groups.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are well supported and make good progress.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They help to choose the topics they study.
- Attendance is above average.
- Behaviour is good in lessons and around the school.
- Pupils feel safe.
- The school is led and managed well.
- The senior leadership team has worked effectively with governors and subject leaders to improve teaching and increase pupils' progress.
- Governors offer good support and challenge to the school and its leaders.
- All safeguarding requirements are met.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Opportunities for teachers and learning support assistants to improve their practice by sharing what they do best in teaching within the school and through visits to other schools are still developing.
- In a few lessons, teachers do not enable pupils to progress rapidly to even higher levels by first assessing what they already know, nor do they challenge them by putting a time limit on activities.
- Pupils have limited opportunities to apply their information and communication technology, literacy and numeracy skills at the highest levels in a few of the other subjects they study.
- Although the school has good systems for the collection and analysis of data about pupils' progress, these data are not used effectively enough when planning activities to close the few remaining gaps in attainment.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed 23 lessons taught by 12 teachers.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, governors, staff, a representative from the local authority and groups of pupils.
- Inspectors took account of the 54 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning and carrying out the inspection, and also spoke to parents and carers in the playground.
- They observed the school's work and looked at the school improvement plan, assessment data, monitoring and self-evaluation procedures, a range of policies, and arrangements for safeguarding.
- They looked at pupils' books in lessons and in a separate work scrutiny with senior staff.
- Inspectors listened to pupils reading.

## Inspection team

Michael Sutherland-Harper, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Fatiha Maitland	Additional Inspector
James McAtear	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is larger than average.
- The very large majority of the pupils are White British. The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and of those who speak English as an additional language are below national averages.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is below the national average, as is the proportion of those supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium (additional government funding) is below the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

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

- Improve the quality of the teaching so that all of it is at least good and an increased proportion is outstanding by:
  - using data more quickly and effectively when planning activities to close any remaining gaps in attainment and learning
  - increasing opportunities for pupils to apply their information and communication technology, literacy and numeracy skills in order to reach the highest levels in all the other subjects they study
  - developing opportunities for teachers and learning support assistants to improve their practice by observing what is best in teaching and learning in this and other schools
  - adding additional challenge for pupils by putting a time limit on activities.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with knowledge and skills which are typical for their age. Close links between the Nursery and Reception classes ensure that staff know the children and address their needs effectively. Children develop a broad range of skills in these classes and make good progress in almost all areas of learning; their mathematical development is a little weaker but is above national averages.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage leader has put good systems in place, for example, to develop children's understanding of letters and sounds. This understanding is reinforced in Year 1 and beyond, leading to excellent results in the Year 1 screening check for phonics (the sounds that letters make). Provision in Reception is matched closely to children's abilities by dividing classes into smaller groups for phonics.
- Pupils make good progress as they move through the school. The setting of pupils by ability for mathematics and phonics was introduced in Key Stage 1 in September 2011. Initiatives such as booster groups, and the employment of two specialist mathematicians have also helped pupils to make good progress in mathematics. Increased numbers are on track to reach the highest levels this year and next. These strategies follow similarly effective work in English, for example, through the development of 'talk partners' in lessons and modelling of expected writing skills.
- Pupils' information and communication technology skills are less well developed because some teachers have taken insufficient account of pupils' starting points when teaching them how to use new technology.
- The number of pupils in Year 6 in 2012 was smaller than usual; pupils in this year also had a wide range of additional learning needs. Only a minority had been in the school since the start of the Reception Year. Carefully planned interventions ensured these pupils made more than the expected progress in all subjects, but standards fell below the national average, especially in mathematics. Data for the current Years 5 and 6 show pupils are making better than average progress. Results rose in all areas in 2011 prior to the 2012 dip and are predicted to rise again this year.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively to provide extra support across both key stages through more resources and learning support assistants. All groups of pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, make similar progress to their peers.
- Pupils read confidently, with expression and at appropriate levels. Their clear interest in books is reinforced by awards like 'Reader/ Writer of the Week'. Pupils' reading skills continue to develop well in Key Stage 2 where pupils read with increasing fluency, tackle complex words and read for meaning.

### The quality of teaching is good

- The very large majority of parents and carers who responded to Parent View believe their children are taught well. Pupils agree. The large majority of teaching observed during the inspection was good and some was outstanding. No inadequate teaching was observed.
- In a very few lessons, teaching requires improvement because teachers take insufficient account of pupils' previous knowledge as their starting point, for example in information and

communication technology. They also miss opportunities for pupils to fully apply and develop their literacy and numeracy skills across subjects when they pitch activities at too low a level. In these lessons, teachers occasionally talk for too long. In the best lessons, the balance of teacher- and pupil-led activities leads to rapid progress and provides plentiful opportunity for extended writing.

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and make good use of electronic technologies to stimulate learning, for example, by downloading colourful visual materials linked to the subject. Teachers use questioning well and ask for opinions and reasons. They make frequent reference to subject guidance on class displays or 'learning walls'.
- Lessons are generally well planned to meet the needs of all groups of learners. In a good lesson for pupils in Years 1 and 2 on instructions, teachers and learning support assistants used dinosaur puppets who indicated whether pupils' ideas about pet dinosaur care made sense to them. Lesson objectives and success criteria were clear. Pupils developed good skills because of links across subjects, in this case, English, history, and personal, social and health education (PSHE).
- Learning support assistants work well with teachers to support pupils' learning and ensure that disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similar progress to their peers. Teachers and learning support assistants do not yet have sufficient opportunity to improve their skills by sharing their best examples of teaching or through links with other schools.
- Individual target sheets, which pupils are expected to consult in lessons, help them to make good progress. Whenever a target is reached, a new target is set so that pupils know their next steps.
- An emphasis on correct spelling and good writing skills ensures high standards of presentation. Regular marking includes opportunities for pupils to assess their own and their peers' work orally.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. As 'talk partners' in lessons, they become confident, articulate young people ready to promote their school's values, which include a strong emphasis on learning. In interviews, pupils spoke enthusiastically about what they learn and would like to do next as opportunities for independent learning expand.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school, and work well with each other and adults. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 support younger children as playground 'buddies' and monitors.
- Clear behaviour management systems help pupils understand that they are in school to learn. Regular assemblies and personal, social and health education lessons reinforce the importance of good behaviour.
- The behaviour of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is good because they enjoy strong relationships with teachers and learning support assistants, whose good resources and strategies support their learning.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school and that an adult is always nearby to help them. The vast majority of parents and carers believe their children are safe in school.

- Incidents of racism and bullying are rare. Pupils say that incidents are dealt with quickly, should they occur. Extremist language or behaviour is not tolerated because the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination well. Pupils have a good understanding of different types of bullying, including cyber-bullying, and know about internet safety.
- Attendance is above average. The school ensures high attendance rates through quick contact with parents and carers if unexplained absence occurs. There have been no exclusions for three years. Pupils are punctual to school, not least because they say they enjoy learning.

### **The leadership and management are good**

- The headteacher has a vision of a school which inspires all pupils to create and achieve and is working effectively with staff, governors, parents and pupils to implement it. Under her leadership, standards and pupils' progress have improved.
- Senior leaders have improved the quality of teaching through clear expectations, careful checking of classroom practice, regular observations, work scrutiny and staff professional development. Regular meetings to discuss pupils' progress are followed by adjustments to teachers' planning which ensure pupils meet or exceed their targets.
- Subject leaders have developed their roles. They plan in detail what they need to do each term to improve teaching in their subject and evaluate the effectiveness of these actions. Subject and senior leaders are increasing the frequency with which they analyse results to eliminate any remaining underachievement rapidly.
- The school offers a good range of subjects. Pupils say that helping to choose the topics has increased their desire to improve. However, opportunities for pupils to develop their information and communication technology, literacy and numeracy skills to the highest levels are sometimes limited by the way in which the topics are addressed, for example, in science.
- Opportunities to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. The school has strong links with local churches. Resources used encourage pupils to use their imaginations. On the recent Viking Day, a 'real' Viking discussed why his countrymen might want to explore England. Pupils have a clear sense of right and wrong and apply this in good relationships with each other and adults. The school is exploring ways to enhance pupils' understanding of other cultures through South African links, but is also aware of its rich local history.
- Safeguarding is good. A comprehensive single central record is in place. Staff and governors are regularly trained in safeguarding and safer recruitment procedures.
- The local authority has light touch links with the school. An advisor works effectively with staff and governors so teaching continues to improve. Staff are accountable for results through strong performance management procedures and application of the 'Teachers' Standards' to their work.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governance is good. Governors contribute a good range of appropriate skills, including knowledge of the local community. They have a good understanding of data relating to attainment and progress and how these compare to other schools as part of their professional development. The Chair of the Governing Body leads by example with regular visits to the school and meetings with the headteacher to discuss progress. Governors have an accurate understanding of the quality of teaching through the visits they make and ensure that pay

increases reward good teaching. They know the amount of pupil premium that it is being spent on extra staffing and resources which are now helping to eliminate any gaps in attainment, and are reviewing how increased funding will be used.

## 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>	115312
<b>Local authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	401510

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>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	297
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Tracy Fortescue
<b>Headteacher</b>	Melanie Vine
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	24 March 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	01787 222205
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