

The Lea Primary School and Nursery

Moorland Road, Harpenden, AL5 4LE

Inspection dates 6–7 December 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	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 achieve well and make good progress in their lessons and over time. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 is above national figures, and at the end of Key Stage 1 has risen rapidly.
- Good and sometimes outstanding teaching motivates pupils to do their best. Teachers, skilfully supported by well-qualified and experienced teaching assistants, establish a purposeful and productive atmosphere in lessons.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage enables children to make good progress. As well as effective teaching of key skills, children are helped to think about what they are learning and to develop the skill of working by themselves.
- The school is a safe and harmonious community where pupils' behaviour is consistently good. Pupils enjoy school and feel safe, valued and well looked after.
- Leaders across the school, including governors want the best for their pupils. They use data to identify pupils who could be making better progress and provide them and the staff with support to increase their rates of progress.
- Parents and carers, staff and pupils are full of praise for the school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not yet strong enough to promote outstanding progress across school. Although pupils' progress has recently accelerated, the more-able pupils do not do as well in reading and mathematics as they do in writing, particularly in Key Stage 1.
- Although some marking of pupils' work is excellent and helps them to understand how to improve, this is not yet consistent across the school.
- Teachers do not always insist on high standards of presentation of pupils' work.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 15 lessons, two of which were joint observations with senior leaders. They also made short visits to some other lessons to observe pupils receiving additional support.
- The inspection team examined pupils' work in their books and listened to pupils read. They also attended the school assemblies, and observed pupils' Christmas performances.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, two governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body, senior and middle leaders and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at documentation including policies and improvement plans, and documentation relating to staff development, pupils' achievement, teaching, the curriculum, behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.
- Inspectors took account of the 56 parents' and carers' responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View), discussions with parents and carers, and the views of staff in 11 staff questionnaires returned to inspectors.

Inspection team

Raminder Arora, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jackie Easter

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than average.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium (additional government funding) is below the national average.
- A much higher proportion than found nationally is from minority ethnic groups. One-fifth of these pupils are learning English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils supported by school action is below average, and for those on school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is much higher than average.
- The proportion of pupils joining or leaving the school other than at the usual times is higher than average.
- Around 11% of pupils come from families who belong to the locally based 'Youth with a Mission' and who do missionary work across the world. Their children attend school for varying periods of the school year.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage includes a part-time Nursery and a Reception class. The Nursery offers the flexibility of attending for three full days or five mornings a week.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The governing body manages a breakfast club.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching from good to outstanding and further accelerate pupils' progress by:
 - making sure the teachers have a clear understanding of what outstanding learning looks like
 - ensuring that all teachers' marking shows pupils how to improve, and that pupils are given the chance to improve their work by following the advice contained in marking
 - ensuring that pupils are helped to improve the presentation of their work and handwriting.
- Make sure that pupils' progress in reading and mathematics is consistently good or better by:
 - strengthening the systematic teaching of phonics (letters and sounds) and encouraging pupils to read more widely and for pleasure
 - setting real-life, problem-solving tasks that are closely matched to the wide range of pupils' abilities, experience and knowledge of mathematics.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are generally below those expected for their age. By the end of Reception, they are working at average levels. They achieve well as a result of the recent improvements that have raised the quality of teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Standards at the end of Year 2 were well above the national average in 2012. This was a marked improvement over previous years. Attainment by the end of Year 6 has improved over the last few years and is now a little above average overall. Pupils make particularly good progress in writing; many are on course to reach higher levels than those expected for their age.
- Pupils requiring extra support are identified early and receive skilful support in lessons and through one-to-one or small-group teaching to ensure that they make good progress. Those joining the school later than at the usual times catch up and make expected progress due to well-targeted support and the good checks made on their learning.
- Pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium funding and those who speak English as an additional language also make consistently good progress. This is because of good teaching, teachers' knowledge of each pupil's needs, and an atmosphere where pupils are encouraged to do their best. Pupils from the local 'Youth with a Mission' families also achieve well through effectively organised extra support.
- Most pupils develop their literacy skills well, and use them effectively in all subjects. Those who find reading more difficult do not consistently apply their knowledge of the sounds that letters make. Pupils enjoy reading and can recall favourite stories and authors. By Year 6, most pupils are confident and fluent readers, but they do not read much for pleasure or read a wide variety of texts.
- While pupils are generally confident in their number work, those capable of doing harder work are not always fully stretched in their ability to apply their skills in everyday problem solving.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers plan interesting and enjoyable lessons in which pupils are encouraged to play an active part. As a result, pupils pay attention, work hard and learn well.
- Speaking and listening skills are developed well. In the Reception class, for example, when viewing their photos on the interactive whiteboard, children talked interestingly about the work they had been engaged in earlier.
- The teaching of phonics, although regular and systematic, does not provide pupils with enough practice to use and apply their knowledge of letters and sounds learnt in the lesson.
- Teachers carefully track all pupils' progress through regularly assessing what they can and cannot do, and use this information to plan their lessons. Pupils who fall behind are quickly given extra help to catch up, particularly in numeracy and literacy.
- The teaching of reading and writing is well supported, and pupils enjoy the activities designed to

help develop these skills. As a result, pupils communicate ideas effectively. For example, in the Year 1 class, pupils enjoyed creating the start of their own stories through the group role play of 'the butcher, the baker, the candle-stick maker'.

- Some teachers' marking is excellent and gives pupils a clear idea of how to improve. Pupils are then given the chance to improve their work by following the advice contained in marking. This good practice, however, is not carried out consistently by all teachers.
- Not enough attention is given to encouraging consistently good presentation of work. Some pupils find it difficult to produce neatly formed joined-up writing.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are given good support in lessons by teachers and by other adults. They encourage these pupils to think for themselves through clear explanations and skilful questioning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils is good

- Pupils consistently behave well and they are kept safe. They are courteous and well mannered, and talk confidently to visitors.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes towards learning and concentrate well. In lessons, they talk happily about their work, listening sensibly to each other's opinions and showing respect for adults.
- Pupils feel safe and have a good awareness of how to avoid dangers at all times. The importance of staying safe when using computers is well understood.
- A few pupils with challenging behaviour receive very good support so that they learn self-control. Adults show good understanding of the needs and use well-planned intervention to support pupils displaying behavioural or sometimes emotional difficulties.
- The school successfully promotes equality of opportunity and ensures that there is no discrimination. Pupils from different backgrounds play together happily at break times and they support each other very well in lessons.
- Pupils are proud of their school and keen to do well. They thoroughly enjoy learning and this is reflected in their good progress. The rate of attendance is average and improving.

The leadership and management are good

- The determined leadership and high expectations of the headteacher mean that staff, governors, pupils, parents and carers, united in their drive to improve standards in all areas of the school's work, have succeeded in improving the school's effectiveness.
- Lessons are checked regularly and feedback is provided against agreed criteria. The staff live up to the high expectations, and are appreciative of the guidance they receive and the opportunities provided for their professional development.
- Senior leaders ensure that responsibilities for checking and analysing information on pupils' progress are shared more widely among teachers. This helps them to play an active part in driving improvements and to understand that they are responsible for the progress of the pupils

they teach.

- The school benefits well from partnerships, for example, the Harpenden Consortium’s training opportunities for all staff. Continuous support is also provided by the local authority for monitoring, consultancy and advice, for example, in improving teaching and learning.
- The school curriculum is relevant and engaging. Cross-curricular links and a variety of interesting topics enthuse pupils to do their best. Additionally, museum visits, theatre groups and workshops make learning exciting and enhance pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Safeguarding, including pupils’ health and welfare, is given a high priority. Detailed risk assessments and emergency planning are kept up to date, and fire procedures are tested regularly. The trained teaching assistants on duty deal with all minor accidents quickly, reassuring and reminding pupils of the ways in which they can keep safe.
- The school’s view of its strengths and weaknesses is accurate. Self-evaluation systems are well established and rigorous. Levels of attainment have risen steadily in recent years and the school is moving forward strongly on several fronts, indicating a good capacity for sustained improvement.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are well involved in the life of the school because they make regular visits to gain a better first-hand understanding of how well the school is working. This helps to ensure that all staff maintain a tight focus on improving the quality of teaching and pupils’ progress. They ensure good systems to check teachers’ performance and have very clear understanding of the school’s strengths, how well pupils are performing and what more needs to be done to raise their achievement. Governors use information about pupils’ progress effectively to ask demanding questions of school leaders. Governors make sure that all financial resources are used well. For example, the small amount of additional funding from the pupil premium is used appropriately towards the additional support, visits and various experiences to enhance their learning. The impact of this funding is evaluated well.

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	117327
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	401663

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	168
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nigel McCarthy
Headteacher	Sharon Swinson
Date of previous school inspection	18 January 2010
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