

Wheatfields Junior Mixed School

Downes Road, St Albans, AL4 9NT

Inspection dates 17–18 January 2013

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 make good progress in all subjects and attain well above average standards in English and mathematics.
- The school is successful in setting challenging targets for pupils, tracking their progress and providing additional support where it is needed.
- Teaching is good in most classes with some examples of outstanding practice. Lessons are well planned and work is set at the right level so that pupils consistently make good progress.
- The school organises a range of additional activities which greatly increase pupils' enjoyment and enrich their experience of school.
- The majority of pupils behave well and feel very safe in the school.
- Attendance is well above average and reflects parental support for the school and the pupils' enjoyment of learning.
- The headteacher and senior leaders are providing good leadership, which is supporting the considerable improvements in the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.
- Governors are very effective in their supporting and monitoring roles.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not all teachers provide enough opportunities for pupils to work independently.
- Teachers' marking does not always show pupils what to do next to improve their work.
- Teaching assistants are not used effectively in all classes.
- Teachers do not display pupils' work enough in their classrooms.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 26 lessons, of which four were joint observations with senior leaders.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body, an additional governor, a local authority representative, senior leaders, staff and groups of pupils.
- Inspectors took account of the 64 responses to the Parent View online questionnaire and the 20 responses from the staff questionnaire distributed for the inspection.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of evidence including the school evaluation form, the school improvement plan, the system to track pupils' progress and records relating to behaviour and attendance. They also looked at records of lesson observations by senior staff, performance management information, safeguarding documentation, and a sample of pupils' work.

Inspection team

Stephen Walker, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Bimla Thakur	Additional Inspector
Gillian Walley	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized junior school.
- It is situated in the northern part of St Albans and takes pupils from across the town.
- The school shares the same site as an infant and secondary school.
- The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. There is a small minority of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- A smaller-than-average proportion of the pupils are known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in local authority care, pupils from armed services families and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, who are supported through school action, school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs, is broadly average.
- No pupils are presently attending any off-site alternative provision.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- There has been a recent restructuring of the staff in the school, involving the appointment of a deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher, business manager and leaders of literacy and numeracy.
- The school has received Activemark, ICT Mark and Eco School Silver awards and achieved Investors in People status.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is outstanding and never less than consistently good across the school by:
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to work independently
 - ensuring that all teachers across the school mark pupils' work in the same way and make clear to them what they have to do to improve their work
 - displaying more pupils' work in classrooms in order to celebrate their progress and demonstrate expected standards
 - making more effective use of the teaching assistants to support pupils' learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils make good progress during their time at school, as parents and carers agree. Attainment at the end of Year 6 is typically well above average, which demonstrates good progress from pupils' above average starting points. The quality of learning in lessons and work in pupils' books confirm that progress is good throughout the school. Most pupils make expected progress and an increasing number exceed expectations, particularly in reading and mathematics.
- Reading is a key priority in the school, and pupils read regularly in school and at home each day. Pupils make good progress in reading so that attainment is well above the national average by the end of Key Stage 2. The school is very effectively using a structured reading programme so that the large majority of pupils are highly proficient in reading and gain the higher levels in Year 6.
- The more practical approach in mathematics and the greater emphasis on investigation are leading to considerable improvements across the school. Expectations are now higher in this subject and more pupils are gaining the higher levels and making more than the expected amount of progress.
- The school is improving the quality of writing for both boys and girls by providing pupils with more structured plans for writing. The greater emphasis on writing across the different subjects and the clear guidance on what is expected in successful writing are leading to a significant improvement across the year groups.
- Systems for tracking pupils' progress are used quickly to identify any who need extra help and staff make sure that extra support is provided for them. The school is using additional funding very effectively to narrow the gap between the attainment and progress of pupils eligible for the pupil premium and other pupils, so that their achievement is now similar. Money is principally allocated for extra teaching assistants for individual support in reading, writing and mathematics, because these were the areas where the school found pupils needed the greatest help. This is enabling them catch up with their learning.
- The school is determined to increase further the proportions of pupils making more than the expected progress from their starting points. Targets for pupils and staff have been raised so that more pupils are aiming to make better than average progress and achieve their full potential. Analyses of progress records in all year groups indicate that more pupils are on track to exceed expected progress in both English and mathematics.
- Most disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress in line with their peers. Weaknesses in their learning are tackled and work is usually well matched to their needs. The progress of pupils from minority ethnic groups is as good as that of other pupils.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching in most classes is good, with examples of some outstanding teaching. As a result, most pupils make good progress and achieve well over their time at school. The vast majority of parents and carers feel that their children are taught well and pupils agree.
- Pupils learn well because activities are set at the right level for them. Teachers are conscientious

in their planning of lessons to make sure that the tasks are achievable but sufficiently challenging for each pupil. Teachers make sure that pupils are clear about what they are meant to learn and know exactly what they have to do in lessons.

- Pupils want to do well and teachers have high expectations for both work and behaviour. Lessons involve a range of interesting activities so that pupils normally display enthusiasm and sustain high levels of concentration.
- All pupils have daily periods of literacy and numeracy, and this greatly supports the teaching of basic skills. The more structured teaching programme is ensuring that pupils make good progress in English and mathematics. Teaching actively supports the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils.
- Outstanding teaching is seen when teachers regularly check pupils' understanding, make sure that tasks provide enough challenge and encourage pupils to rely less on adults and more on themselves when learning. For example, Year 5 pupils made rapid progress in their work on *Wind in the Willows* as the teacher used questioning well to challenge them and encouraged them to work both independently and in pairs to complete their writing tasks. Similarly, pupils worked in pairs in Year 3 and made rapid progress in their understanding of multiplication by solving practical problems in the classroom.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are benefiting from the extra support they receive. The use of additional adults in class and the regular withdrawal of pupils for extra help in reading, writing and numeracy are helping these pupils overcome their difficulties and make good progress. However, teaching assistants are not always used effectively to benefit more pupils in the classes.
- Many teachers are skilled in questioning and encouraging pupils to think about their work. However, not enough teachers encourage pupils to take more responsibility for their own learning. In a few lessons, teachers talk for too long and sometimes do the problem solving for the pupils.
- Marking is supportive but there are some inconsistencies in its quality across the classes and subjects. Feedback from teachers does not always help pupils to recognise their next steps in learning. In too many classrooms, there is insufficient evidence of pupils' work on display in order to celebrate their progress and demonstrate expected standards.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The majority of pupils behave well in lessons, and this contributes to a calm and orderly environment for learning. There are clear expectations of behaviour and consistent systems to deal efficiently with any misbehaviour. Most parents and carers are positive about behaviour in the school.
- A good level of supervision during morning break provides a clear framework for pupils. Behaviour, though still good, is more boisterous during the lunch break than at any other time. Pupils are developing their skills in managing their own behaviour and older pupils are increasingly encouraged to act as monitors during break times.
- Pupils are considerate, polite and respectful to staff and each other and this contributes well to their learning and personal development. Pupils generally respond well to teachers' good use of praise and encouragement to promote high standards of behaviour. However, a few pupils lose

concentration in some lessons when the work does not fully engage them.

- Parents, carers and pupils confirm that bullying is very rare in the school. Pupils say that any unkind behaviour such as name-calling or 'falling out with friends' is dealt with quickly and effectively. They are aware of the different forms of possible bullying such as cyber-bullying and prejudice-based bullying related to sex, gender, race and disability.
- Pupils say they feel very safe in the school and display a good understanding of issues relating to safety such as crossing the road, using the internet and talking to strangers. Even though the school is larger than the average-sized school, each pupil is valued as an individual and given ample opportunity to fulfil their potential.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and senior leadership team provide strong and effective leadership, which is driving significant improvements in the school. They have successfully introduced rigorous systems to ensure a greater emphasis on improving the quality of teaching and speeding up pupils' progress. The headteacher is well supported by the deputy headteacher and other leaders in the development of the school.
- The school's self-evaluation reflects an accurate understanding of its strengths and areas for improvement. The school improvement plan is a comprehensive working document, with clear actions and targets that are focused on improving the quality of teaching and the rate of pupils' progress.
- Teachers are set challenging targets and held accountable for the progress of their pupils. Performance management and decisions made about teachers' salary progression are clearly based on the quality of teaching and the progress of their pupils. School leaders, including the literacy and numeracy leaders, regularly observe lessons and are clearly focused on the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and progress.
- The local authority adopts a demanding, yet supportive approach to the school and ensures that advisers provide a range of effective training for teachers and support staff. Professional development for teachers and support staff is effective in encouraging them to reflect and improve on their practice.
- The curriculum is clearly relevant to pupils' needs and supports the systematic development of skills across subject areas. It provides a variety of activities including recent mathematics and enterprise days. A range of visitors and outside visits provides effective extension to the work in lessons, as do the large number of additional activities particularly in music and sport, which greatly increase pupils' enjoyment and experience of school.
- The broad range of experiences and a strong emphasis on the school values, contribute well to pupils' achievement and to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school is fully inclusive and pupils from different backgrounds integrate well.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is well informed about the strengths of the school and areas for improvement. Its members are fully involved in monitoring progress and in holding leaders and staff to account. They have also been instrumental in developing a long-term plan for the school and encouraging the appointment of the business manager. They are aware of the quality of teaching and understand the data regarding the progress of pupils in the school. They are able to make informed decisions on teachers' salary increases, make sure that good

teaching is rewarded and tackle underperformance when required. Robust procedures for safeguarding meet statutory requirements. There is a strong commitment to promoting equal opportunities and tackling discrimination. Governors are active in overseeing the use of the pupil premium funding and ensuring that it is effectively spent to support eligible pupils. Governors ensure they receive the professional training they need to develop their roles further and arrange 'awareness raising days' in school.

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	117212
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	403308

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	359
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Neil Stewart
Headteacher	Lyndon Evans
Date of previous school inspection	23 June 2008
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