

Great Leighs Primary School

Aragon Road, Great Leighs, Chelmsford, CM3 1RP

Inspection dates 30–31 January 2013

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

- The new leadership team has not had sufficient time to bring all teaching to the quality needed to lead to consistent and sustained good progress in English and mathematics. Pupils' progress is inconsistent and requires improvement.
- Activities in lessons are not always sharply matched to the next steps in pupils' learning, particularly in mixed-age Key Stage 1 classes.
- Pupils do not have sufficient opportunity to apply their mathematical skills in other subjects.
- Teaching for Reception children does not promote consistently good learning across the two classes. Outdoor learning is not always used effectively to support the learning taking place indoors.
- Teachers' marking does not always help pupils to improve their work. When it does, teachers do not give pupils sufficient time to respond to their comments.
- Support staff in Reception do not always have the necessary skills to move children's learning forward quickly.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher and governors are leading change well by building a stronger leadership team and helping staff to see how they can improve their teaching. There is more good and outstanding teaching at Key Stage 2 which is leading to the acceleration of pupils' progress.
- Reading is being well taught and pupils are making good progress in the development of the skills needed to be able to tackle difficult words and texts.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning as is reflected in their well above average attendance and good behaviour. Such is their keenness that many arrive before the start of the day for sports clubs or extra reading.
- There is a warm and welcoming atmosphere in the school because pupils get on well together, show respect for others and are very polite and friendly.
- Pupils feel safe because they know staff and governors are doing their utmost to care for them.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 18 lessons or parts of lessons, of which four were joint observations with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, school staff, members of the governing body, including the Chair of the Governing Body, and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 40 responses to the on-line parent questionnaire (Parent View) and held informal discussions with parents and carers at the start of the school day.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school's own data on current pupils' progress, planning and monitoring documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Martin Beale, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Lynn Lowery

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is below average in size.
- Almost all pupils are White British, and very few speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for funding through the pupil premium is well below average. This is additional government money given to schools for looked after children, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children of service families.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is average. The proportion of pupils supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- Most children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in a Reception class. Some older reception children are taught with the younger Year 1 pupils. There is a further mixed-age class for the rest of Year 1 pupils with younger Year 2 pupils.
- The headteacher was appointed in September 2012, having been the deputy headteacher before then. All other senior leaders were new in post at the same time.
- The school does not use alternative provision to educate its pupils.
- 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?

- Strengthen teaching, particularly at Key Stage 1, so that pupils in all classes make good progress by ensuring that:
 - activities in lessons and the pupils' targets are properly matched to pupils' capabilities and their next steps in learning
 - teachers check carefully what learning has taken place in each lesson
 - pupils have plenty of opportunities to apply their mathematical skills in other subjects.
- Increase the children's progress in Reception by:
 - planning more outdoor activities that effectively consolidate and extend the learning done indoors
 - train support staff so that they have the necessary skills to be able to intervene more effectively to move children's learning forward.
- Ensure that when teachers mark pupils' work they give clear points on how to improve it and provide sufficient time to respond to their comments.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Attainment is broadly average by the time pupils leave Year 6. However, given that children enter Reception with skills at the expected level for their age this represents no better than the expected progress over time for most pupils, including those who are disabled or have special educational needs. Year 6 test results have fluctuated in recent years and fell to below average in English in 2012 because of weaker results in writing. This was largely because too few pupils were judged to be writing at the higher National Curriculum level in the subject. Nevertheless, most of the oldest pupils last academic year made the expected progress between Years 2 and 6.
- The children's experiences in Reception have improved since the last inspection, but their progress requires improvement because some shortcomings in provision remain. Their attainment when they leave Reception is broadly in line with the expected level of development for their age. Outdoor activities do not always link with learning inside, and the children's movement between the two areas are limited. Furthermore, at times teaching assistants spend too long assessing children's learning instead of interacting with them to move learning forward.
- The action taken by the headteacher is beginning to lead to more rapid progress, particularly at Key Stage 2, but this is not yet sustained across all mixed-age classes. As teaching improves, more pupils are working at levels above those expected for their age, and they make better progress.
- Pupils apply their number skills to solving problems in mathematics, but not consistently across other subjects. They have many opportunities, particularly at Key Stage 2, to enhance and extend their writing across topics. Pupils make good progress in reading, through well-taught sessions to develop their understanding of phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) and carefully planned activities to develop their wider reading skills. Pupils who fall behind in reading are helped to catch up quickly through regular reading at home and in school, including attending the early morning reading club.
- The headteacher's commitment to equality of opportunity is reflected in the careful mapping of how pupil premium funding is allocated. Pupils attracting this additional funding are now making good progress compared to their classmates, through well-targeted individual and group tuition. They are starting to close the gap between their attainment and all pupils nationally based on average point scores (which show the total of their national assessment results). Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make the expected progress, which is in line with others. They have developed strong relationships with staff supporting their learning and the guidance received has a positive impact on their personal and emotional development.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- In the less effective lessons, pupils' learning does not move forward quickly enough. Pupils sometimes go over what they already know or are faced with work that is beyond them. This is particularly the case in some mixed-age classes where insufficient account is taken of the pupils' prior learning. Furthermore, teachers do not always check with pupils the learning that has taken place at the end of each lesson so that they know clearly what to do next.
- Marking is an area the headteacher has identified for action. Marking is regular but often only praises for what has been done. The most effective feedback indicates what pupils have done well, and comments indicate how they could do better. However, time is not always provided for

pupils to respond and so improve their work. Furthermore, pupils' targets are not routinely referred to during lessons and are not then an aid to learning.

- Teaching is consistently more effective at Key Stage 2 than at Key Stage 1. Where learning is most rapid, teachers use imaginative methods and stimulating resources to fire the pupils' imaginations. Film clips, such as *'The Piano'* are used to get an emotional response from the pupils in order to enhance the quality of their writing. Work is carefully matched to the next steps in each pupil's learning with demanding work for the more able. Teachers adapt what they are doing in the light of pupils' responses. This was particularly effective in a Year 5 mathematics lesson where the more able pupils were moved swiftly on to challenging work on lowest common multiples because they quickly understood what the teacher had planned.
- In reception a range of adult-led and child initiated activities are provided, however, learning done indoors is not always consolidated and extended outdoors. The rate at which children learn; the organisation of teaching and the use of teaching assistants could be better.
- The methods used to teach pupils to read are effective and pupils are acquiring reading skills at a good rate. The teaching of phonics is good and this means pupils that pupils have the necessary skills, knowledge and understanding to tackle unfamiliar words with confidence and success. Plenty of opportunities are provided to read in school and at home.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are provided with suitable support in class activities and where necessary additional guidance is given to individuals or groups to move their learning on. Provision enables pupils to make at least the expected progress academically and the attention that they receive suitably boosts their self-confidence and self-esteem.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Lessons take place in calm and well-ordered classrooms where pupils are keen to do well, work hard and share their ideas with each other. They are confident to answer and speak up in class because others listen to what they have to say and adults show how much they value their contributions. There is minimal disruption in lessons, although on rare occasions pupils can become distracted when teaching lacks challenge.
- Teachers and support staff are consistent in the way that they manage behaviour so pupils know exactly where they stand. As a result, pupils are well-behaved around the school and on the playground. They are keen to take on responsibility in lessons and around the school. The pupils thrive on praise and rewards, and are keen to recognise, through 'Fish Philosophy' when others have done something well. The house system also promotes team spirit and valuing the achievement of others.
- Pupils report how safe and secure that they feel in school. Pupils and parents say bullying is not an issue. On the very rare occasions when something happens, it is taken seriously and dealt with quickly so that it is not repeated. Incidents of unacceptable behaviour, including rare examples of racist name-calling, are recorded carefully and are dealt with swiftly and effectively.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The new leadership team has not been together for long enough to bring about consistent and sustained improvements in teaching across all parts of the school. Furthermore, the commitment to promoting equality of opportunity has yet to be fully met because of the variation in

experiences and the outcomes for pupils of the same age in mixed-age classes.

- The performance of teachers is regularly checked alongside evaluating their impact on the progress of pupils in their classes. Teachers are expected to meet challenging targets and are being given guidance through coaching and observing others to help them improve their teaching. This is having greater impact at Key Stage 2 where many lessons are well taught than at Key Stage 1.
- The headteacher is giving the school a very clear direction. With a strong governing body and an increasingly effective team of senior leaders, the school is well-placed to improve further. The headteacher's priority of developing the leadership skills of the new team is beginning to bear fruit as they take more responsibility for driving forward improvements in their areas. Rigorous monitoring is giving everyone an accurate view of the school's performance from which to plan for its further improvement.
- The local authority has provided valuable support for the new headteacher. A recent review of the school has given a useful evaluation of the impact of the new team's actions so far and helped to identify future priorities.
- The school successfully promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through subjects, visits and additional activities. Topics on subjects such as the 'Rainforest' help pupils understand environmental issues as well as how to look at both sides of an argument. Assemblies are used effectively to give pupils a deeper insight into world religions and the customs of others in a way that promotes tolerance and harmony. Discrimination is not tolerated. Pupils support a wide range of charities and respond to worldwide events. In addition to opportunities to learn an instrument the school band has performed with a symphony orchestra and the choir has sung at the Albert Hall and Westminster Cathedral.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - In making the appointment of the new headteacher, governors were clear about the direction in which they wanted her to lead the school. Regular visits to school and reports from the headteacher mean they know teaching is improving and where more action needs to be taken. They are happy with the way the headteacher intends to reward teachers only for good performance. Governors take full advantage of training available to develop their expertise, and through this they have a clear understanding of assessment data and the school's performance relative to other schools. This enables governors to challenge senior leaders, clarify priorities and check on the school's progress. The governing body is fully involved in financial planning and governors understand the benefit pupil premium funding is bringing to those for whom it is intended.

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	114852
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	405545

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	216
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tim Hancock
Headteacher	Janis Waters
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2011
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