

# Pixies Hill Primary School

Hazeldell Road, Hemel Hempstead, HP1 2BY

**Inspection dates** 30–31 January 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
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

- Some teaching requires improvement across the whole school. Progress is not always good enough across Years 3 to 6.
- Pupils, and especially the more able, are not always given demanding work.
- There has been inaccuracy in the past in how the school has assessed pupils' progress at the end of Key Stage 1 leading to inaccuracies in judging the rate of pupils' progress. However, leaders have now introduced a more accurate system.
- Learning opportunities in the Reception class do not always have a clear purpose in helping pupils to focus on solving problems independently.
- Teachers do not always make enough use of day-to-day checks on how well pupils are progressing to plan learning in lessons which gives pupils work at the right level in varied activities which make best use of support staff.
- Governors do not use information about pupils' attainment well enough to evaluate the school's strengths and weaknesses because they have not had enough training in the use of data on pupils' progress and attainment.

### The school has the following strengths

- Pupils in the Reception class and Year 1 make good progress in reading.
- Assessment of pupils' standards in Year 2 is now matched closely to national standards and provides a much better baseline for measurement of progress.
- The school is improving as a result of the leadership of the headteacher and senior staff who, with governors, have produced an accurate evaluation of the school's work.
- Teaching in several classes is now good or better.
- The behaviour of pupils is good, both in lessons and around the school. They feel safe, and show a good understanding of how to stay safe. Their attendance is just above average.
- Supported by a special project, the school promotes good relationships. Pupils learn to respect one another and the adults they work with, improving their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 12 lessons, covering all year groups. Three lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher. Inspectors also made several shorter visits to lessons, and analysed the work in pupils' books.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read, and met with a group of pupils. They spoke with the deputy headteacher, subject coordinators and the teacher responsible for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. Discussions were held with the chair of the Governing Body and the chair of the school improvement committee, and with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors observed the school's work. They looked at a wide range of documentation including data on pupils' current progress, school development planning and checks on progress towards priorities, and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.
- Inspectors took account of 41 responses to the online Parent View survey, a telephone call from a parent and held brief discussions with parents when they brought their children to school.
- Inspectors also visited out-of-school activities, including the Karate club.

## Inspection team

David Lewis, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Joanna Jones

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Pixies Hill Primary School is of average size, and has fewer boys than girls.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. Few speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion of those supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also below average.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives additional government funding (those eligible for free school meals, looked after children and those with a parent in the armed services) is below average.
- Provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is in the Reception class.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- After a period of many staff changes, the senior leadership group was formed in 2011. They were joined by the headteacher when he took up his post in September 2012.
- The school does not use alternative provision for its pupils offsite.

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

- Make sure that all teaching is at least good by:
  - leaders at all levels checking the work of teachers more closely, making better use of opportunities for the professional development of staff, and sharing expertise more effectively with other schools within the local authority
  - planning lessons where learning always matches the range of pupils' abilities, particularly those of the more able, and is fully explained to pupils at the start of the lesson
  - assessing what pupils can and cannot do and using this information to plan the best use of support staff to help pupils to overcome barriers to learning.
- Improve the achievement of all pupils by ensuring that teachers:
  - always assess pupils' attainment accurately in line with national standards at the beginning of each key stage, to provide a baseline for measuring pupils' progress
  - check pupils' progress frequently and rigorously, and use this information to plan what is to be taught through the school.
- Improve the effectiveness of school leaders and the governing body by:
  - making sure that the governing body always asks leaders to account for the quality of teaching
  - providing more training for governors so that they better understand information about pupils' achievement, and are able to compare how well different groups of pupils are doing in relation to those in other schools nationally.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- When pupils come into the Reception class their standards of attainment are typical for their age group. They enjoy their time in school, and develop their independence, both in the classroom and in the outdoor area. They quickly learn to recognise letters and to match them to the sounds they make, and their reading is above average by the end of the year.
- Pupils in Year 2 can read fluently and are able to follow instructions. They are able to explain what they read and say what they understand from their reading. Most of them say that they often read for pleasure.
- Progress in Years 3 to 6 has varied considerably as a result of a period of long-term staffing instability, when children were taught by temporary teachers. Assessment of the rate of pupils' rate of progress at the end of Key Stage 1 has also been a weakness in the past, leading to inaccurate evaluation of how well pupils achieved in Key Stage 2. However the school has addressed these difficulties and pupils' progress in Years 3 and 4 is now accurately assessed as broadly as expected for their age.
- In response to good and, sometimes, outstanding teaching, pupils in Years 5 and 6 are fully engaged with work and find it interesting. They are on track to achieve at least in line with others nationally when they leave the school.
- The progress identified in the Ofsted monitoring inspection of 2012 has been maintained, and pupils' reading in Years 1 and 2 is now above average. Children in Year 6 were seen making excellent use of sophisticated language in writing letters of complaint that also demonstrated their ability to be creative.
- The more-able pupils do not always have sufficiently difficult work to do in lessons, and teachers do not always respond as well as they could to pupils' answers that show understanding beyond the ordinary. These pupils do not make as much progress as they could in all lessons.
- The school makes good use of additional government funding for children eligible for the pupil premium. These pupils respond well to the additional help they receive from the extra funding and improve their work. For example, in 2012, Year 6 pupils eligible for free school meals attained slightly higher results in the national tests in English and mathematics than most other pupils in the school.
- Across the school, the progress of pupils with special educational needs is carefully tracked and, from a low base in 2011, is steadily improving to be in line with that of other pupils.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- While teaching and learning in seven of the 12 lessons observed was at least good, with some outstanding, consistently good teaching that results in sustained good progress has not been established practice over time and is not yet evident throughout the school.
- There is too much variation in the quality of teaching in different classrooms. The most-able pupils are not always given work that is demanding enough. Teachers do not always check closely enough on how well pupils are progressing, and adapt learning well enough to all pupils'

different abilities.

- The use of additional adults in class and the withdrawal of pupils, some of whom have special educational needs, from mainstream classes for extra help in reading, writing and numeracy are not having full impact on the progress of the lower-attaining pupils. Teachers' assessment of what pupils can and cannot do is not always accurate enough to direct the extra help to individual pupils from additional adults. Consequently, the help these pupils get is not always matched well to the learning priorities of each individual.
- Too much teaching involves a series of activities planned by the teacher, but the purpose of the learning is not made clear to the pupils. In these situations, pupils lose interest because they do not know what they should be able to do by the end of the lesson, so cannot help themselves enough.
- The most effective teaching clearly communicates to pupils what learning is to be achieved by the end of the lesson, checks progress constantly and accurately, and makes work demanding for all pupils.
- There is some good teaching of literacy, especially reading, and of mathematics. Most teaching applies what pupils have learned in English and mathematics in other lessons and this improves their learning.
- Most lessons start with a period when pupils sit together in front of the teacher, and some good questioning was seen in nearly all these sessions, helping pupils to piece together ideas and to communicate them well.
- Marking is usually regular, and identifies clearly what pupils can do to improve in order to reach their targets.

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

- Pupils generally behave well around the school and are welcoming to visitors. They are polite to adults and to one another. Lunchtime in the dining hall is a good social occasion when pupils can chat to one another amicably. Nearly all pupils behave well in the school playground.
- Pupils enjoy taking on responsibility, for example as members of the school council. Members of Year 6 regularly run assemblies for younger children. These assemblies are evaluated by other Year 6 pupils who, in turn, are responsible for leading the next assembly.
- The school has adopted a scheme to promote values through education, and pupils participate in a variety of activities to increase their sensitivity to the feelings of others. This sensitivity pervades the work of the school and makes a good contribution to unfailingly good-humoured relationships, in which pupils listen to the views of others and respect their opinions. Pupils have a keen sense of right and wrong and understand the consequences of their actions.
- In some lessons, pupils' behaviour is excellent, and they become absorbed in their learning. They show curiosity, for example in science investigations, and take a real pride in their work. In such lessons, this excellent behaviour makes a good contribution to their enjoyment and to the quality of learning.

- When faced with less effective teaching, pupils can become distracted, but teachers manage behaviour well, and poor behaviour is never a barrier to learning.
- Pupils feel safe in school, and those who may be insecure receive effective pastoral support, either within school or through appropriate agencies.
- The school takes any reports of bullying very seriously. Often such reports refer to relatively minor incidents of name-calling or falling out, but all are investigated and appropriate records kept. The school analyses these records carefully and follows up any patterns that may emerge.
- The school is meticulous in following up pupils' absence from school, for their own safety and to ensure that their learning does not suffer. The few cases of persistent absence are followed up in school and through appropriate agencies.

### **The leadership and management** requires improvement

- The headteacher has moved quickly to accurately evaluate the work of the school in the light of the previous inspection report of May 2010, and the subsequent letter following an Ofsted monitoring visit in February 2012.
- It has been his priority to establish comparisons between the school's progress and attainment data and national standards. A robust system for matching the work of the school to national standards has been implemented, but there has not yet been time for the system to give leaders all the information they need to accurately judge progress across the school.
- Working with senior staff, the headteacher has correctly identified that the assessment of pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 has been overgenerous in recent years. This information has made it seem that pupils are not making enough progress in Key Stage 2. This error has been corrected.
- Frequent checking on the quality of teaching now takes place. However, this work is still in its early stages. Checks on the quality of teaching are beginning to focus more sharply on how effectively teaching promotes learning and progress so that teachers' pay and promotion are always fully justified. However, teachers are being helped to identify how they can improve.
- The local authority has arranged support by a Literacy consultant and joint annual review visits.
- The Headteacher has made good use of a partnership with another school to help correctly set Early Years Foundation Stage entry data. He is currently developing links with three other local schools.
- This work is beginning to have an impact on assisting teachers' professional development, but the full impact has not yet been felt, and the crucial role of subject coordinators is not yet having full impact on teaching quality.
- The school rightly regards the social development of its pupils as very important, and has adopted a scheme to develop values through education. Pupils gain greatly in confidence and self-esteem, so that they work harmoniously with their colleagues and with adults, and make the school a secure and friendly place in which to work.

- The range of subjects and topics taught is broad and balanced. Pupils greatly enjoy attending clubs and out-of-school activities, which include the chess club, karate, and various sporting activities. Residential visits are very well managed, and are a popular part of school life.
  - Although parents of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are generally pleased with the support that the school provides, they occasionally express concerns that not enough is being done for their children. Inspectors found that the school increasingly takes any matters raised by parents very seriously, and does everything it can to meet their concerns.
  - The school is meticulous in meeting statutory requirements in relation to safeguarding and child protection. All required training is up to date, and pupils and parents know whom they should go to if they have concerns.
- **The governance of the school:**
- Governors understand the school’s weaknesses, and know what is being done to tackle them. However, they have not challenged the school well enough in the past or held leaders and managers to account for its performance and the quality of teaching, relying too heavily on leaders’ evaluation. Most teachers have joined the school relatively recently, and have been allocated to appropriate pay scales, but it is, as yet, too early to judge whether pupils’ progress matches the pay awarded. Governors have had insufficient training about how to evaluate pupils’ progress using robust data, and this has prevented them from being as effective as they could be in working with the school to raise attainment and improve progress. These issues are now being fully addressed, but it is too early to evaluate the impact of more effective governance. The governing body has approved the use of the pupil premium funding and, in line with its robust financial policies, is checking more rigorously on the impact of spending on the achievement of pupils who are supported by it.

## 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>	117256
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	401658

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>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	212
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Jean Garner
<b>Headteacher</b>	Martin Smith
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	25 May 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	01442 251793
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