

St Catherine's Hoddesdon CofE Primary School

Haslewood Avenue, Hoddesdon, EN11 8HT

Inspection dates

6–7 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	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 teaching of early reading is not consistently good. Some members of staff do not have a secure enough understanding of how to teach the sounds that letters make.
- School improvement is largely driven by the co-headteachers. Many leaders with other responsibilities are very new and have yet to make any significant impact.
- Activities and lessons in the Reception classes are not always well enough thought out to meet the range of children's needs and interests.
- Pupils currently in Years 5 and 6 have a lot of ground to make up to overcome underachievement from when they were in Years 3 and 4.

The school has the following strengths

- The co-headteachers and the governing body have overcome the considerable inadequacies found at the last inspection.
- Other leaders are enthusiastic and effective teachers who are ready to take on more responsibility.
- While the quality of teaching varies too much to be good overall, there are many classes where teaching is good or better.
- Pupils enjoy school a great deal and work hard in their lessons.
- Pupils' behaviour is good and they feel safe in school. Pupils and staff get on well together.
- Pupils are catching up following previous underachievement. The pupils in Years 5 and 6 are making rapid progress, particularly in English. They are on track to reach broadly average standards of attainment.
- Pupils' progress in Years 3 and 4 is stronger than it was in the past so pupils in these year groups are less likely to fall behind.
- Leaders have built a very positive ethos. The school is in a strong position to build on recent improvements.
- Leaders understand the improvements needed and have started to work on important aspects, such as the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 26 lessons. Several of these were joint observations with senior leaders.
- Inspectors observed the school's work. They scrutinised data about pupils' attainment and progress, information about school improvement, local authority reports and documentation relating to pupils' safety and safeguarding.
- Inspectors held meetings with the co-headteachers, other leaders, teachers, governors and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors talked formally to a group of pupils and spoke informally with several more groups of pupils around the school and in some lessons.
- Inspectors took account of 18 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and talked to groups of parents and carers at the end of the school day.
- The lead inspector took account of the findings of his monitoring visit in September 2012.

Inspection team

Michael Sheridan, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Teresa Kiely

Additional Inspector

John Mason

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Information about this school

- This is a larger than average-sized school situated in the centre of the market town of Hoddesdon.
- The school is led by two co-headteachers. One works four days a week and the other works full time. These co-headteachers both share the roles and responsibilities of headship.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium, additional government funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, is higher than average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is much lower than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below average. Most pupils are White British with the next biggest ethnic group coming from other White backgrounds.
- The governing body has management responsibility for the children's centre that shares a site with the school. This is subject to separate inspection arrangements.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which are the minimum levels expected for pupils' attainment and progress.
- At the time of the previous inspection, the school was deemed to require significant improvement and was given a notice to improve. This was chiefly concerned with issues of leadership and governance.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching throughout the school and the curriculum in the Early Years Foundation Stage to take better account of pupils' needs and interests by ensuring that:
 - pupils are given plenty of opportunities to develop language and literacy skills, including those who start school with lower than expected skills in communication and literacy
 - sufficient support and challenge are planned for individual pupils
 - assessment information is accurate and is used to plan activities that help pupils to make rapid progress.
- Ensure that all pupils learn to use the sounds that letters make (phonics) effectively for reading and spelling by ensuring:
 - all staff are highly trained and effective in teaching pupils the skills they need
 - less-able readers in Key Stage 2 are given the support they need to decode words.
- Improve the leadership of teaching by:
 - making sure phase and subject leaders are sharply focused on continually improving the quality and consistency of teaching
 - sharpening school improvement plans to reflect the precise improvements needed to develop

the skills of teachers

- improving the use of data so leaders, governors and teachers can quickly react to how well different groups of pupils are performing throughout the school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils in Years 5 and 6 did not make the progress that they should have done when they were in Years 3 and 4. Many have a lot to do to make up this lost ground, particularly in mathematics. Increasingly good teaching and significant amounts of additional support are leading to rapid progress so this gap is closing, although some pupils are unlikely to catch up sufficiently to make the progress expected over time.
- While progress is improving, it is uneven across classes. This is because some teachers are more effective than others.
- Children get off to a slow start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Not enough is done to take account of their different needs. Too many children make insufficient progress and this means that they are less well prepared for Key Stage 1.
- Pupils across Key Stages 1 and 2 are making better progress than in the past. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 are making expected progress now and this means that the gaps in skills, knowledge and understanding seen with pupils currently in Years 5 and 6 are not set to be repeated.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similar progress to their classmates. Support and extra help for these pupils is carefully thought out by teachers. Teaching assistants provide useful support in many lessons.
- Pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding leave school with attainment that is lower than the rest of the class. Last year, these pupils were, on average, two and a half points behind their peers (each point is equivalent to the average progress pupils are expected to make each term). These pupils make similar progress to all other pupils in Key Stage 2 but are already behind their peers by the time they enter Year 3.
- Less-able readers in Key Stage 2 struggle to read unfamiliar words. This is because they have not been taught how to work out the sounds that letters make. The support for these pupils in developing these skills is not effective enough.
- Early reading and the sounds that letters make are not taught consistently well. Some teachers are exceptionally skilful at teaching children how to read. However, a small number of adults have poor subject knowledge and this confuses pupils when they are trying to work out how to read unfamiliar words.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching varies considerably. The best teaching is outstanding and provides a very strong model for others to learn from. Much of the teaching that requires improvement has good elements because the school has been working on improving teaching over time and this is beginning to have an impact.
- There are several features seen in the teaching which is not yet good.
- Some teachers do not think carefully enough about what pupils need to learn to be able to make progress. This means that work is sometimes too easy or too hard. Sometimes, these lessons

are not interesting enough to fully engage pupils, particularly in the Reception classes.

- Some teachers talk for too long, often with pupils sitting on the carpet. In these lessons, teachers do not check often enough on pupils' understanding and they miss opportunities for pupils to practise new skills.
- Sometimes, adults are not confident in their own subject knowledge. This is particularly noticeable in the teaching of reading and early spelling. Where this is the case, adults sometimes confuse pupils with inaccurate information.
- While teaching requires improvement overall, there is much that is good and outstanding. These lessons are characterised by learning that is sharply focused because the teacher has planned activities with a secure understanding of different pupils' needs and abilities. In these lessons, pupils make rapid progress and enjoy their learning a great deal.
- In almost all lessons, pupils work hard. Teachers and pupils get on noticeably well with each other.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' behaviour has improved. The challenging behaviour reported at the last inspection has been eradicated. Pupils enjoy school, work hard and try to please their teachers.
- Attendance is improving. Fewer pupils take regular time away from school. Pupils understand the importance of attending school and want to be there because they enjoy their lessons.
- There is a very positive ethos within the school. Pupils are thoughtful and considerate of each other. Relationships between pupils and staff are very positive and help to create a purposeful environment where pupils are comfortable working hard.
- The safety issues reported at the last inspection have been resolved. New systems are in place to ensure that health and safety concerns are identified quickly and taken care of. The school building is in much better shape and plans are in place for continued maintenance and improvements.
- Pupils say they feel safe. They understand how to stay safe in a range of situations and talk sensibly about the need to work with their teachers to take care of their safety and the safety of others.
- Pupils say that there is little bullying or poor behaviour and that any problems are dealt with quickly. They trust adults to help them if they have a problem and feel secure knowing that they can talk to someone and be taken seriously.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The senior leadership team have tackled the most important areas for improvement with speed and determination since their appointment. They have successfully dealt with the critical issues which led to the school failing its last inspection.

- The co-headteachers work well together. They make a strong team and are motivating those around them to lead the school in rapid school improvement. These leaders know their school well and are in a strong position to lead the school to becoming good.
 - There have been significant changes, both in terms of staff and processes. Decisions around these have been taken with the long-term future of the school in mind. The school is on the right tracks to continue improving.
 - Many leaders with other responsibilities are new to their posts and are having only limited impact on improving the consistency of teaching and learning. This means that senior leaders drive and put into practice much of the school improvement agenda, with support from local authority advisors and colleagues from outstanding schools.
 - Performance management systems have been introduced so teachers are held to account. Teachers talk positively about the opportunities they are given to improve their skills. However, some adults have specific gaps in their professional knowledge that limits their effectiveness and these are not always identified precisely enough in the school's improvement plan.
 - Pupil premium funding is being used to help pupils catch up in Key Stage 2 and provide support for pupils who would not otherwise be able to access the full range of activities in school. The use of this additional funding is believed to be making a difference but the arrangements for tracking different groups of pupils has only recently been developed so leaders and governors are unable to check or show the impact this is having.
 - The local authority has provided support to the school in overcoming previous inadequacies. It continues to work with the school, for example, in improving the Early Years Foundation Stage. Senior leaders have been supported in developing their role by a national leader in education. Additional funding has been provided by the local authority to ensure urgent works were completed in a timely fashion.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has improved its systems for monitoring the school. Previous inadequacies have been eradicated. Governors know what is going on in school and have a clear understanding of their statutory duties. They have had support from the local authority in understanding what data about pupils' progress is telling them and can talk confidently about the next steps in the school's improvement journey. Governors know about the performance of different groups of pupils in previous years but the school's systems to show how well different groups of pupils are doing are very new. They do not yet provide appropriate information for governors about different groups currently in school. Governors regularly visit the school and have been very supportive of leaders and staff through challenging times. However, they are sometimes reluctant to ask the most challenging questions and tend to focus on the progress made rather than the work yet to do. Governors have made sure that performance management systems are in place for all teachers and that these challenge weak performance and reward teachers whose performance is good. Governors have set appropriate targets for senior leaders. They make sure that safeguarding requirements are fully met.
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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	133773
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	399727

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	326
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Chair	James Harvey
Headteachers	Mandy Staiano and Angela Wallis (Co-headteachers)
Date of previous school inspection	11 January 2012
Telephone number	01992 463214
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