

Alban Wood Primary School and Nursery

The Brow, Watford, WD25 7NX

Inspection dates 27–28 February 2013

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.

- The headteacher is very ambitious for the school and has high expectations of staff and pupils. Her determined leadership has been instrumental in recent improvements.
- Parents and carers hold the headteacher in high regard and greatly value being able to approach her at the start of the day with any concerns they have.
- The headteacher's successful drive to improve teaching has led to accelerating progress and rising attainment across the school.
- Reading skills develop rapidly through effective teaching of letters and the sounds that they make (phonics) and opportunities to develop wider skills of research and comprehension.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school helps to generate harmony and a sense of purpose. They are very positive about their learning and keen to do well.
- Pupils feel very safe and secure in school. They are confident to approach an adult if the need arises.
- Regular, accurate and thorough analysis of assessment information identifies where individuals are in danger of missing their targets. This enables the school to focus support sharply on those who need it.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not all teaching is yet of the high quality the headteacher is aiming for.
- The outdoor areas in the Nursery and Reception do not always engage the children and encourage them to explore their own ideas.
- Opportunities are missed to link learning between subjects and ensure that literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills develop consistently across the school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 18 lessons or parts of lessons, of which eight were joint observations with the headteacher or deputy 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 47 responses to the online 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 information on the pupils' current progress, planning and monitoring documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Martin Beale, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Fatiha Maitland

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is average in size.
- Just over a quarter of the pupils are from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion who speak English as an additional language is below average, and few are at an early stage of learning English.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for funding through the pupil premium is above average. This is extra 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 above average. The proportion of pupils supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- The headteacher was appointed in September 2011 and the deputy headteacher in September 2012.
- The school does not use alternative provision for 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?

- Sustain improvements in pupils' progress by raising securely good teaching to be consistently outstanding through providing tailored individual training for teachers.
- Build on improvements in curriculum planning by strengthening links between subjects and ensuring that pupils use and apply key skills such as literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology consistently across subjects.
- Ensure that teachers make better use of the outdoor areas in the Nursery and Reception classes so that children can explore, plan and develop activities to extend their learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils make good and rapidly improving progress across the school from skills below those expected for their age on entry. As a result, more pupils than previously are working at and above levels expected for their age. Year 6 test results rose considerably in 2012 and were average. This represented rapid progress from these pupils' Key Stage 1 results. The current Year 6 class is on track to exceed this and reach higher targets.
- Basic reading skills develop well in the Nursery, Reception and across Key Stage 1. Results of the Year 1 phonics screening (checking pupils' knowledge of letters and sounds) were broadly average in 2012, which represented rapid progress for pupils given their starting points. Pupils across the school develop a genuine love of books and the well-stocked library gives them access to a wide range of modern and classical children's literature.
- Writing is another area where much progress has been made since the last inspection. Books pupils read in class are often used to stimulate their writing and their extended pieces are planned, developed and improved over time. The school has successfully raised the attainment of boys in writing by using contexts and texts they find more engaging. Handwriting, presentation and grammar have been recently receiving more attention and are improving rapidly.
- Considerable attention is paid to pupils developing key skills, but they make good progress in mathematics particularly because plenty of opportunity is also given to the application of their arithmetical skills to solving everyday problems. Girls had been attaining lower standards than boys in mathematics. Action taken to improve their mental arithmetic and calculating skills has given girls greater confidence and this gap is closing.
- The very rigorous analysis of assessment data enables action to be carefully tailored to meet individual and group needs. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs as well as pupils who speak English as an additional language make similarly good and improving progress as others. Pupils supported through pupil premium funding make good and rapidly improving progress. Their Year 6 test results rose in 2012, although they were still two terms behind others in the class. However, their attainment continues to rise so they are now working at similar levels as others by Year 6.

The quality of teaching is good

- Almost all lessons are taught well, with some teaching that is outstanding. Pupils work very hard in lessons as they try to live up to their teachers' high expectations of their work and behaviour.
- The most effective teaching drives learning forward at pace. Teachers are enthusiastic and use innovative methods and creative resources to hold the pupils' attention. Lessons are carefully planned to help all pupils to take the next steps in their learning. Teachers quickly adapt their lessons in the light of their assessment of progress and the pupils' responses to their questions. Teaching assistants are deployed well and use their skills to move learning forward without making pupils too dependent on them.
- Pupils have a very clear picture of how well they are doing and how to improve their work through their teachers' detailed marking and discussions about their work during lessons. Pupils are expected to respond to their teachers' suggestions in their marking or undertake additional

challenges to apply their learning. Year 5 mathematics is a prime example of this, where pupils are expected to apply the skills they have learnt in the previous lessons to solve a problem at the start of the next. This not only helps them to reinforce these skills but also focuses their minds on what they will be learning next.

- Nursery and Reception children are taught well. There is a strong emphasis in both classes on identifying each child's needs and providing interesting activities that engage them and move their learning forward. Teachers and support staff become fully involved in helping children as they plan and develop their own activities. However, the outside areas, particularly in Reception are not as stimulating as inside and limit the children's opportunity to investigate and explore their own ideas.
- There are no common areas where improvement is needed to teaching across the school. Each teacher has different aspects of their teaching that they are seeking to improve through carefully planned training.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils find lessons interesting and can often be seen to be enthralled by what they are hearing from their teachers or the activities in which they are absorbed. Learning from each other through discussion is particularly fruitful and builds on the collaborative skills children develop in the Nursery and Reception classes.
- Parents and carers are strongly of the view that the school makes every effort to ensure their children behave well at all times. Pupils are very courteous to visitors and kind to each other. They take care without prompting to ensure that anyone new to the school is helped to fit in as quickly as possible. Pupils move sensibly around the school and play happily on the playground.
- Attendance has improved sharply in the last two years and is now above average. A judicious mix of rewards and sanctions, including not tolerating holidays in term-time, has led to a considerable reduction in absence and, particularly, in persistent absence.
- Pupils understand that there are different types of bullying, including cyber-bullying, but are adamant that this is not a problem at this school. Peer mediators are trained to support anyone feeling worried and to resolve disputes that might occur. The school recorded some incidents of racist name-calling last year. Their frequency has dropped considerably this year as a result of the effective steps taken to help pupils understand the impact of their action on others. Hence, repeat offending is very rare.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has transmitted her high expectations to staff and has developed a culture in which teachers challenge themselves to do better. The wide range of methods used to check the performance of the school and individual teachers enables her to identify quickly where action is needed or further resources deployed. As a result, the school is well placed to build on the significant recent improvements in attainment, attendance and teaching.
- The headteacher is acutely aware of each individual teacher's strengths and where improvement is needed. She expects pupils to make at least good progress in English and mathematics in all classes and only rewards with salary increases teachers who achieve this. In order to improve teaching further, the headteacher has put in place further training, including the opportunity to work alongside some of the school's skilled practitioners.

- There is a strong commitment, shared by staff and governors, to doing everything possible to remove any barriers that might hinder a pupil's development. Pupil premium funding is carefully allocated to where it can have most impact, such as to provide one-to-one and small-group tuition. The support for pupils and their families includes opportunities for them to learn together in school and the provision for parents of courses in basic skills.
- The local authority has provided valuable support for the headteacher in helping her to identify the actions needed to bring about improvements and to check on their impact. Individual training from literacy and numeracy consultants has helped staff to improve their expertise and the quality of their teaching.
- The school seeks every opportunity to make the pupils' experiences as rich and exciting as possible and to extend their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Special events broaden their horizons and help them to appreciate the customs of others. Music is an important feature of school life, and pupils benefit from expert teaching, including from a local secondary school. Writing is promoted well through topics, although opportunities are missed at times to link subjects more closely so that pupils can apply and develop their skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology further as they move through the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors appointed the headteacher because they shared her analysis of what needed to be done and her vision for the school. The governing body is rigorous in checking that its financial decisions, such as the use of pupil premium funding, are benefiting the intended pupils. It makes sure that all staff are as committed to tackling discrimination as it is. Governors undertake regular training which, coupled with their visits to school, enables them to ask searching questions of the headteacher. Training has also resulted in a better understanding of assessment data so that governors can compare the school's performance with that of other schools and check that targets are being met in each class. This also gives them a clear picture of how teaching has improved and the actions being taken by the headteacher to improve it further. They make sure that only good and better teaching is rewarded through salary increases.

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	134685
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	402625

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	232
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mark Ford
Headteacher	Rachel Kirk
Date of previous school inspection	20 October 2009
Telephone number	01923 678240
Fax number	01923 678256
Email address	admin@albanwood.herts.sch.uk

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