

Lordship Farm Primary School

Fouracres, Letchworth Garden City, SG6 3UF

Inspection dates

12–13 March 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		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils make good and sometimes outstanding progress from their average starting points. By the time they leave school at the end of Year 6, pupils reach standards that are consistently above those expected for their age.
- Teaching is good overall, with a little that is outstanding. Teachers are enthusiastic and plan activities that inspire pupils to learn well.
- Very well planned teaching of reading ensures that pupils achieve particularly well in reading in all key stages.
- Pupils display exemplary attitudes to learning, participating enthusiastically in lessons and working with great diligence.
- Pupils feel very safe and have a well-developed understanding of how to keep safe at all times.
- Leaders and governors are improving the school effectively. This is because they know the school well and as a result identify accurately the key priorities for further improvement. Their efforts have ensured that pupils' behaviour is outstanding and that their achievement and the quality of teaching are securely good.
- The curriculum offers pupils a broad range of enjoyable opportunities and experiences. It prepares them well for the next stage of their education and promotes good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- A few lessons require improvement and not enough teaching is outstanding.
- More-able pupils are not always given work that challenges them to do their best and the youngest children could write more often. Consequently, not all pupils make the rapid progress of which they are capable, especially in writing.
- Teachers' marking does not always tell pupils how to improve their work. Pupils do not routinely edit and correct their work.
- Occasionally, teaching assistants do not support learning effectively throughout lessons.
- Leaders do not check frequently enough on how planned improvement actions are impacting on the progress of all pupils.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 25 lessons taught by 17 teachers. In addition, inspectors observed the teaching of phonics (letter patterns and the sounds they represent). Many of these observations were made jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors, parents and carers, staff, including senior and middle leaders and groups of pupils. The lead inspector also held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at school documentation, including teachers’ planning, the school’s self-evaluation and development plans, assessment information, monitoring files, governing body minutes, safeguarding documentation and samples of pupils’ work.
- Inspectors listened to pupils from Years 1 to 6 read and talked with them about their enjoyment of books.
- Inspectors considered the 89 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and 18 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

David Radomsky, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Margaret Louisy	Additional Inspector
Concetta Caruana	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a much larger than average-sized primary school.
- A well below-average proportion of pupils are supported by the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children who are looked after by the local authority and the children of service families).
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is well-below average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- An average proportion of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- The school's governing body manages a range of activities in after school clubs.
- 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?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is outstanding by:
 - planning activities that always challenge all pupils to do their very best, especially the more-able
 - planning even more opportunities across the school for pupils to practise a wider range of writing types and ensure children in the Early Years Foundation Stage have plenty of opportunities to write
 - ensuring teachers' marking tells pupils the next steps that they need to take to reach the next levels in their learning, especially in writing, and that pupils are given time to edit and correct their work
 - ensuring teaching assistants are always actively involved in supporting, monitoring or assessing learning during all parts of lessons.
- Ensure leaders frequently check on how well planned actions for improvement are raising all pupils' achievement.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children enter Nursery with basic skills that are typical to those expected for their age. They make good progress in their learning because adults provide a good mix of activities that they lead, with many opportunities for children to explore and lead their own learning.
- Progress across Key Stage 1 and 2 is consistently good and is sometimes outstanding, especially in reading. Over time, overall attainment at the end of Years 2 and 6 is consistently above average. In 2012, the proportions of pupils attaining the expected National Curriculum Level 4 and higher National Curriculum Level 5, in both English and mathematics, rose to significantly above average.
- Reading is a key strength. From the start, the school places a high emphasis on teaching the key skills of phonics, key words and comprehension. All pupils read in school every day and home reading is actively encouraged. A love for books is fostered and pupils read widely. As a result, progress in reading is outstanding.
- Pupils are enthusiastic mathematicians and make good and sometimes outstanding progress in the subject, as they respond well to challenges and demonstrate perseverance. For instance, in some classes observed, pupils eagerly tackled the ‘problem of the day’ activity at the start of the lesson and stuck at it until the problem was solved. As one pupil told an inspector, ‘They say that if you make a mistake you learn more.’
- Progress in writing is good because pupils have frequent planned opportunities to write on a wide range of interesting topics across the subjects. It is not outstanding however, as opportunities for children to practise their early writing in the Early Years Foundation Stage are not frequent enough. In some other classes across the school, pupils are not always given a broad enough range of text types to write.
- The school demonstrates a strong commitment to ensuring equal opportunities for all pupils. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs and those from minority ethnic backgrounds make similar good progress to their peers. This is because of the effective one-to-one and/or group support in class and beyond which ensures individuals’ get the help and guidance they need to meet their specific needs.
- The few pupils in receipt of the pupil premium benefit from small group teaching and opportunities to enhance their personal development and make good progress like their classmates. Their attainment in English and mathematics in 2012 was above average, in line with their peers. The standards that they reached in both subjects at the end of Year 6 last academic year were two terms ahead of the pupils who did not receive additional government funding.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching over time is good. Pupils say that they enjoy their lessons a great deal and feel that they are taught well.
- The good and few outstanding lessons are typically characterised by:
 - activities that excite pupils and gain their interest and curiosity. This was seen in an Early Years session when a visitor brought a guinea pig to school. Children asked questions, for example, about what it ate and where it slept. They then played at bringing their ‘sick’ pets to the ‘vet’ for treatment.
 - cross-curricular work, such as making links between history and English, help to make learning more coherent and meaningful and also help to engage pupils well in their learning. In one

lesson seen, for example, pupils who are learning about the evacuation during the Second World War based their writing on the book, *Goodnight Mr Tom*.

- opportunities for pupils to work together in pairs or groups further develops pupils' social, speaking and writing skills. This was observed in a science lesson on observing changes. Having done a variety of experiments such as melting a fizzy tablet in water and capturing the gas, pupils worked together to discuss things, write up the experiment, draw a diagram of what they had seen and agree what conclusions could be derived.
- challenging activities that encourage pupils to stretch themselves and persevere. This was seen, for example, in a mathematics lesson where pupils were challenged to design their own triangular shapes that would consistently appear symmetrical as the paper on which the shapes were drawn was rotated.
- Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning through the effective support they offer to pupils. On a few occasions, particularly during, teachers' exposition to the whole class, the teaching assistants are sometimes passive and do not support, monitor or assess learning. This lost opportunity slows learning for some pupils.
- Teachers' marking of pupils' work tells them how well they are doing. It does not always tell them clearly enough what they need to do to improve, especially in extending their writing skills. Evidence in books shows that pupils are not routinely given time to edit and correct their work.
- In the best lessons, teachers prepare different activities that are well suited to the learning needs of all pupils, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs who, in addition, receive effective support from teaching assistant during lessons. In some instances, however, the work is not difficult enough, especially for the more-able, so they do not make the outstanding progress of which they are capable

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils are unfailingly polite and welcoming to all. This was summed up perfectly by a pupil who said that, 'We appreciate each other's ideas and never laugh when someone makes a mistake.'
- The behaviour of pupils in lessons and around the school is typically exemplary. Pupils are eager to get on with their work because of their excellent relationships with staff. They work calmly and productively and so achieve well. Pupils participating in the various after school clubs feel safe and secure, and the activities provided make a good contribution to further developing pupils' personal development.
- Pupils are fully aware of different forms of bullying including racism, harassment and cyber-bullying. They report that bullying is rare and any instances are quickly resolved. As one pupil told the inspectors, 'It is not on the headteacher's list to be mean!.' Pupils feel confident to talk to an adult if they have any concerns.
- There have been no reported racist incidents or exclusions for years. Pupils' attendance is above average and they arrive to school and lessons punctually.
- Pupils are very proud of their school and willingly take on responsibilities. For example, older pupils act as buddies to support younger children and the school council is helping in the design of a new playground.
- Pupils are well aware of how to keep themselves safe in and out of school, including all aspects associated with using the internet safely.

The leadership and management are good

- The dedicated leaders and members of the governing body have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have accurately identified the school's priorities for further development. Resulting actions from initiatives undertaken are not always monitored

frequently enough to determine if they are successfully bringing about the desired improvements to secure pupils' outstanding achievement across all subjects.

- Leaders observe lessons frequently and give teachers feedback on how to improve. Through these observations and annual appraisal reviews, teachers are held to account for the progress that their pupils make. The headteacher uses information about the quality of teaching well when developing the training programme for staff, and when considering awarding pay increases. Staff receive appropriate whole school and personal training and, in addition, learn from best practice in other successful schools. The school also provides and hosts joint training for staff from many local schools.
 - The school has recently increased the frequency with which it uses data for checking the progress of individual pupils. The information is used to identify any areas of underachievement and provides additional individual support when required.
 - The curriculum meets pupils' needs well and they enjoy the topics and the way subjects are linked together. For instance, when learning about the Amazon, pupils do not only learn the geographical facts, but learn about other cultures and do activities where they have to consider their responses through the perspective of different people such as the gold miners. They also valued the opportunity of talking to a native inhabitant via an internet link. Such activities and the many opportunities to participate in after school clubs, visits to places of interest, playing musical instruments and receiving visitors to school for example, ensures that their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.
 - The local authority provides light touch support for this good school.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are effective and bring a wealth of experience and expertise and are playing a central role in shaping the strategic future of the school. The governing body are well informed about pupils' achievement and how this compares to other schools, and about the quality of teaching in the school. They provide a good balance of support and challenge to the headteacher to secure further improvements. Governors are informed about the outcomes of the school's annual appraisal processes, including decisions on salary progression and promotion which are determined on the basis of teacher performance. Governors ensure value for money and that after school provision is well managed and further enhances pupils' academic and personal education effectively. They agreed the use of pupil-premium funding and are beginning to monitor how well it ensures that all pupils make at least good progress. Governors ensure that arrangements for safeguarding and other statutory duties are securely implemented.
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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	117330
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	403317

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	414
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sally Hughes
Headteacher	Ben Parry
Date of previous school inspection	21 January 2008
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