

Whitmore Primary School and Nursery

Whitmore Way, Basildon, SS14 2TP

Inspection dates 25–26 April 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 an inspiring presence around the school. She makes clear to everyone her burning desire for pupils to succeed and for them to believe they can be 'the best they can be'.
- The headteacher has skilfully merged the two schools; there is a strong feeling of one staff team sharing her ambitions for the pupils.
- Governors are well informed and continually challenge the headteacher to improve the pupils' attainment and progress.
- As a result of rigorous checks, coupled with further training where needed, teaching is almost always at least good.
- The headteacher is passionate about working with others, including local schools, to improve the school and education within the town.
- The staff team is fully committed to promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination. They do the utmost to identify what might hamper pupils from learning and provide thoughtfully planned support and guidance for pupils and their families.
- Pupils are keen and enthusiastic learners who enjoy school and value all that it has to offer. They make good progress from their starting points when they join the school.
- Pupils feel safe in school because they know all staff and governors are vigilant in ensuring they are well cared for and that safeguarding procedures are rigorously implemented.
- The organisation of subjects through topics makes learning interesting while supporting the pupils' literacy and numeracy development.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Boys make slower progress in writing than in reading. This is because initiatives taken to improve their reading have not been adopted in writing.
- Teaching does always not fully meet the needs of the more-able pupils.
- Teachers' marking does not always help pupils to improve their work.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 31 lessons or parts of lessons, of which nine were joint observations with senior staff.
- 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 12 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 information on the pupils' current progress, planning and monitoring documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors also listened to the reading of a sample of pupils in Years 1 and 2.

Inspection team

Martin Beale, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Bimla Thakur

Additional Inspector

Janet Watson

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is well-above average in size. Pupil numbers are rising sharply as it moves towards three forms of entry.
- The school was formed in September 2011 by the amalgamation of the former infant and junior schools. The headteacher was leading the junior school at the time of the merger.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for funding through the pupil premium is well above average. This is extra money given to schools for looked after children and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs 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 well-above average. Moderate learning difficulties (MLD) and behaviour, emotional and social difficulties (BESD) are the main reasons.
- The governing body runs a breakfast club from 7.45 am each morning; large numbers of pupils regularly attend this provision.
- The school uses alternative provision for one of its pupils. This is through the Children's Support Centre at Langdon Hills.
- 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?

- Increase the rate of progress made by boys in writing by:
 - identify individuals who are not meeting their targets and provide focused support to enable them to catch up
 - provide contexts for writing that interest and engage boys more, particularly within topic themes
 - introduce a club to develop boys' writing along similar lines to that successfully developed to promote their reading.
- Increase the pupils' rate of progress by raising the current good teaching to be consistently outstanding by:
 - ensuring that lessons are planned and taught to meet consistently the needs of the more-able pupils
 - bringing greater consistency to marking and giving pupils time to respond to teachers' comments so they can improve more quickly.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- From skills well below those expected for their age on entry, particularly in language and literacy, children make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes. In spite of this and the good progress across the rest of the school, attainment is below average by the end of Year 6 in English and mathematics. However, as teaching improves so is the pupils' progress, and as a result their attainment is rising.
- Basic reading is taught well and teachers work hard to promote a love of books. Pupils develop their understanding of the sounds made by letters (phonics) and develop other skills, such as research and comprehension, as they move through Key Stage 2. The gender gap in attainment in reading has closed by targeting boys falling behind with their reading with focused support, introducing a boys' reading club and providing books that boys find more interesting.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress, although with some variations. An early assessment of their particular needs enables the school to focus attention quickly, either through in-class support or additional activities designed to meet their individual targets. Strong team work is a feature so that pupils' needs can be met, however complex, and guidance from external agencies is sought where appropriate.
- The school uses its pupil premium funding well to support eligible pupils, including by engaging additional staff to provide small-group work and individual tuition. These pupils make good progress and, much against the national picture, their Year 6 test results in 2012 were higher than for others in the year group putting them one term ahead of others in English. Their results were at a similar level as others in mathematics.
- The school has put in place a wide range of strategies to tackle the slower progress of boys in writing. These start in the Nursery and Reception and permeate all subject areas. However, the school has identified that it has not adopted some of the actions that worked successfully in closing the gap in reading. Consequently, although progress in writing is improving it is not doing so as rapidly for boys as for girls.

The quality of teaching

is good

- A striking feature of teaching is the positive atmosphere in almost all lessons, based on constructive relationships and the consistent implementation of behaviour strategies. This enables teachers to get on with their teaching without distractions. Classrooms provide an inviting and stimulating environment in which displays and 'working walls' support learning and celebrate the pupils' achievements. Teachers show their secure subject knowledge through the enthusiasm and confidence for learning that they generate in the pupils.
- The good teaching in the Nursery and Reception classes is characterised by high expectations and skilled questioning that moves the children's learning forward when working independently or in adult-led activities. Detailed assessment means that adults know the children well and they use this information to provide activities both inside and out that interest them and make sure their learning progresses at a good pace.
- Teachers make sure that support staff are clear about their role in all parts of each lesson. Teaching assistants are skilled in building constructive relationships with the pupils they support. This is one factor in the good progress made by individual pupils who have special educational

needs.

- Teachers pitch activities at different levels, often from their evaluation of learning in the previous lesson. While some lessons provide appropriate challenge for the more-able pupils, this is not always the case and at times work is too repetitive and slows their learning.
- Following recent training, there are examples of effective marking that supports learning well. Here teachers provide clear indications for pupils on how to improve their work and check that these are being adopted. However, this is not yet consistent across the school and this has been identified by school leaders as the next step in training for individual teachers.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The pupils' attitudes to work and school are positive because all members of staff strive to raise their aspirations and make them feel good about themselves. They are continually encouraged to see that they can be successful, and so strive to live up to their teachers' high expectations. They work hard, trying to make sure they lose none of their 'Golden Time' through misbehaviour.
- Pupils behave well around the school and at playtimes. Rewards such as 'Going for Gold' and the competition of collecting team points mean they are continually trying to do their best. Most are polite and show respect and consideration for others.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of the different forms of bullying. They report there are very few incidents and any that occur are dealt with swiftly by staff. They are proud of their role in promoting better behaviour as prefects, playground leaders and peer mentors.
- The school successfully supports pupils with complex behavioural needs, enabling them to stay focused in lessons. They are helped to adjust their behaviour through guidance from the school's 'Inclusion team' that focuses on their specific needs and utilises advice from other agencies as appropriate.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has high expectations of everyone and constantly challenges herself to find ways to improve the school further. She is given valuable support by senior and subject leaders in successfully raising the aspirations of pupils and their parents. They have succeeded in their aim of making this a school the community is proud of and one to which parents are happy to send their children.
- Teaching is good and improving because of the headteacher's relentless drive and determination that pupils should not have to put up with anything less than the best possible. Where her expectations are not met, further training and support are provided. Teachers learn from each other or by observing expert practitioners, and are set challenging targets for their improvement. Only by meeting these are they rewarded with salary progression.
- The headteacher is strongly committed to working with others as she sees great benefits for the school and the local area in sharing skills and expertise. She seeks continual challenge from the local authority as well as good support from their consultants to assist in the drive to improve teaching. She plays a leading role in the Basildon Education Service Trust, so making a

considerable impact on developing schools across the town.

- Each pupil is known as an individual, including their circumstances, so that support can be carefully tailored to their particular needs. This includes working closely to support families directly or to point them towards local agencies. Large numbers access and greatly value the service provided by the breakfast club, which has helped to improve attendance to broadly average, punctuality and the pupils' readiness each day for learning.
- Pupils have many opportunities to develop their writing through topics and subjects such as science, although the school recognises more can be done to find contexts for writing more interesting for boys. The pupils' experiences are extended widely through clubs, educational visits and challenges organised through the trust. The annual 'Arts Week' including music, dance and drama makes a considerable contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are sharply aware of the school's improvement in recent years and are fully involved in planning for its future. They take a long-term view of the school's development and think carefully about key decisions such as only appointing a deputy headteacher when a suitable candidate appeared. They maintain their expertise through training including in understanding what assessment data says about the school's performance. Their regular visits and valuable information provided by the headteacher give them a clear picture of the school's performance. They recognise how teaching has improved and the action being taken by the headteacher to tackle any that is still not good enough. This includes how teachers are only rewarded if pupils in their classes make at least good progress. They keep a tight rein on financial matters including ensuring that pupil premium funding has the maximum impact on the attainment of eligible pupils.

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	114819
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	400239

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	454
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sandra Jagger
Headteacher	Iris Cerny
Date of previous school inspection	17 September 2008
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