

Chalkwell Hall Infant School

London Road, Leigh-on-Sea, SS9 3NL

Inspection dates 16–17 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	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.

- Pupils achieve well as a result of teaching that is rarely less than good and is often outstanding. Pupils consistently exceed national expectations in the Year 2 teacher assessments.
- Basic literacy and numeracy skills are taught thoroughly so that pupils are very well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Behaviour is good in classes. Pupils say they feel safe in school. At playtimes, when the infant and junior pupils share the crowded playground, behaviour is outstanding.
- The headteacher, deputy headteacher and governing body have built very strong links with parents and carers and have ensured that pupils have continued to achieve well.
- Parents and carers think highly of the school and appreciate the school's 'open door' policy and the ease of communicating with the school via email or text messages.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs do well because their needs are understood and they are given the right support to help them to succeed.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- On occasions, teachers do not check on pupils' understanding and adjust their teaching accordingly. That means, for example, that more-able pupils are not always set harder tasks and other pupils are not always given extra help to overcome any misunderstanding when new ideas are introduced.
- In the Reception classes, the learning activities do not always challenge the more-able children.
- Though the strategies for helping teachers to improve their practice are good, the headteacher and deputy headteacher do not set timescales to ensure improvement happens at a rapid pace.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 14 lessons and groups of pupils working with teaching assistants. They looked in on pupils during lunchtime and mid-morning break times.
- Inspectors looked closely at pupils' work from all year groups and heard some pupils from all year groups read.
- They held meetings with staff, the Chair and other members of the Governing Body, a representative of the local authority, groups of pupils from Years 2 and representatives from the Pupil Voice group. They spoke informally with many pupils during lessons and at break times.
- Inspectors looked carefully at safeguarding documentation, information about pupils' progress, self-evaluation documents and development plans.
- The views of staff and of 97 parents and carers who completed the online questionnaire (Parent View) were taken into consideration. Inspectors also spoke with 15 parents and carers.
- The lead inspector also visited the Conkers Club breakfast session.

Inspection team

Cheryl Thompson, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Matthew Klimcke

Additional Inspector

Joanna Lakey

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger than average-size primary school.
- The school shares the site with Chalkwell Hall Junior School. The two schools share the same playground and dining hall.
- There are 11 classes.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is well below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also well below average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below average. This extra funding is for looked-after children, those known to be eligible for free school meals and pupils with a parent in the armed forces.
- There have been several changes in teaching staff since the last inspection. There are three newly qualified teachers.
- The governors of the infant and junior school are jointly responsible for the Conkers Club, which provides a breakfast and after-school club.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase pupils' rate of progress even further through raising the quality of teaching from good to outstanding by:
 - always planning work for more-able pupils to make sure they have to think hard and apply what they already know to a new task
 - teachers using probing questions to judge how well, or not, pupils are learning and adjusting teaching accordingly
 - leaders checking regularly and rigorously to make sure that teachers are following their advice to improve their practice further and at a good rate.
- Refine further the teaching in the Reception classes by:
 - making even better use of teachers' good assessments to plan learning opportunities which challenge children, especially the more able, to think hard, persevere and make more effective use of their well-developed basic literacy and numeracy skills
 - planning more precisely to ensure it is clear to all staff what it is that children are expected to learn from each of the activities they undertake.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Attainment at the end of Year 2 has been consistently above average. In reading, writing and mathematics, pupils are consistently more than a term ahead of pupils nationally, and a higher than usual proportion of pupils attain levels that are above those expected for this age group.
- When children start in the Reception classes, the levels of attainment of most are broadly typical of the age group. Additionally, there are a few children whose levels of attainment and personal development are higher than those usually found.
- Excellent links between home and school and local pre-schools help children to settle happily and quickly into school. Parents and carers are valued as co-educators of their children and provided with a good deal of information as to how they can help with learning at home. Consequently, parents contribute a good deal to the progress their children make, especially in reading.
- Pupils learn well from the start of their time in school. A key feature in the Reception classes is the attention given to teaching basic skills of literacy and numeracy thoroughly. Consequently, children learn letter sounds (phonics) and how to use these to spell and read at a good rate.
- Pupils of all ages enjoy talking about the type of books they like. The school has a good range of non-fiction books which boys say they like. Pupils who find reading difficult use their phonic skills very confidently for working out how to read unfamiliar words.
- Attention to detail ensures that, from the start, children learn a correct pencil grip and to write individual letters correctly. Good attention is given to ensuring children have many practical, 'hands on' opportunities to learn to count accurately and develop a secure understanding of basic concepts such as addition and subtraction.
- In Years 1 and 2, pupils continue their good progress, especially in developing their reading, writing and mathematical skills and applying these in other subjects such as history and geography. Pupils use their information and communication technology (ICT) skills confidently when undertaking research.
- Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals achieve well. The gap between their attainment and their peers is closing year on year. In the national teacher assessments for Year 2, their attainment is now less than half a term behind that of their classmates.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress. The school works very effectively in partnership with a wide range of outside agencies, which provide expert advice which staff follow.
- Inconsistencies in the rate and depth of learning in the Reception classes occur when there is no clear expectation for what it is children are expected to learn from undertaking an activity. Opportunities are missed for adults to introduce particular vocabulary or to pose questions that encourage children to develop their understanding further.
- The proportion of Year 1 pupils doing well in the 2012 phonics screening check was lower than that found nationally. The main reason for this is that more-able pupils corrected the nonsense words they had to read. For example, instead of using their phonic knowledge to read 'steck',

they corrected the word and read 'stack'. School data indicate that the present Year 1 are likely to do far better this year.

The quality of teaching is good

- Reading and writing are taught well. Teachers and teaching assistants have a good knowledge of how to teach phonics. Pupils are grouped for daily teaching according to their stage of understanding letter sounds. As a consequence, pupils make good progress in applying their phonic knowledge to spelling the words they want to use in their stories or research and tackling unfamiliar words in their reading books.
- Mathematics is taught well. The school has invested in a good range of practical resources and games for pupils to play with their families. This strategy has ensured that pupils gain a good practical understanding to underpin their knowledge of basic concepts such as doubling and halving.
- Teaching for pupils supported through pupil premium funding is consistently good. 'Nurture group' activities help pupils to develop good self-confidence and social skills. A range of small groups led by experienced learning support assistants and teachers give eligible pupils extra support. For example, they have extra practice in using early literacy and numeracy skills.
- Regular checks on how well they are doing ensure that disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good or better progress. They have the right level of work and appropriate resources and support to help them succeed. The school has good links with outside agencies to call on if expert advice is required.
- In all classes, teachers have a good understanding of how well their pupils are learning. The reason that this is not outstanding is that, in a few classes, teachers do not routinely ask probing questions to check out pupils' understanding and put right any misconceptions. Similarly, if pupils are finding the work easy, opportunities are missed to ask more difficult questions to deepen pupils' understanding.
- Teachers' assessment of their pupils' levels of attainment is accurate. However, there are inconsistencies across the school as to how effectively teachers make use of this knowledge when planning lessons to meet the learning abilities of all pupils. On occasions, the work planned does not always make sure that more-able pupils extend their learning as well as they are capable of doing. In the Reception classes, the activities planned do not always make sure that children practise and make the best use of their well-developed literacy and numeracy skills.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour is good in lessons. Outside, behaviour is outstanding. At dinnertimes, when the junior school pupils are also in the playground, pupils behave exceptionally well. They enjoy the opportunities to play with older pupils and act very responsibly for their age.
- All parents and carers agree that their child enjoys school and feels safe. Pupils say that they feel safe in school. They have a clear understanding of what constitutes various forms of bullying. Older pupils are beginning to understand the personal safety issues with mobile phones and computers.
- Pupils of all ages enjoy taking on responsibilities throughout the school and do so very conscientiously.

- Pupils offer thoughtful responses when given the opportunity to reflect on spiritual or moral issues in lessons. For example, the need to take care of the 'food chain' for creatures they are finding out about, such as owls and hedgehogs, otherwise they could become extinct.
- All staff, parents and carers have very positive views about behaviour in school. Pupils respond very well to the expectations set for them to be kind, courteous and respectful. In lessons, their behaviour mirrors the quality of teaching. Where teaching is outstanding, so is pupils' behaviour.
- In the main, pupils work hard in lessons and take care with their work, responding thoughtfully to their teachers' marking or comments about how to improve. On the rare occasions where teaching is less than good, pupils take time to settle to work and they talk too much.
- Most pupils attend regularly and arrive punctually to school and lessons. Attendance is broadly average. It is improving over time as a result of the school's good range of strategies to encourage and reward regular attendance. The school works closely with the junior school so that both schools take a firm line in not authorising unnecessary absence.

The leadership and management are good

- Since the last inspection, the headteacher, deputy headteacher and governors have maintained their clear vision and ambition for pupils' success. In spite of several staff changes, including newly qualified teachers, good levels of achievement and pupils' personal development have been sustained.
- All staff share a strong commitment to making sure that all groups of pupils have an equal chance to do well and there is no discrimination. Through the strong working links between the infant and junior schools, this commitment ensures pupils are well prepared for their start in the junior school.
- The headteacher and senior leaders have an excellent understanding of the school's strengths and areas where they believe they can improve further.
- Excellent management systems are at the heart of the school's success. The school tracks the progress of individual pupils rigorously. Senior leaders and teachers know exactly how well individuals and different groups of pupils are learning.
- The headteacher holds teachers to account for the progress their pupils make. Senior leaders provide good role models in their own teaching. They give effective support to teachers at the early stages of their careers and to experienced staff.
- A good 'coaching' system is in place to help staff improve and refine their practice. Teachers are encouraged to consider the impact of their teaching on pupils' learning and how they can improve this. The reason that this good system does not have an outstanding impact is because the senior team are not setting tight timescales for checking that staff are following the advice they are given and so further improving their practice.
- The range of learning experiences the school provides is good. A particular strength is the focus on pupils learning and practising basic literacy and numeracy skills.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. Older pupils can

discuss their visits to a synagogue, a mosque and a local church, and respect the differences. For their age, pupils have a good understanding of the main celebrations of cultures other than their own.

- The headteacher and governing body value parents as co-educators of their children. All parents and carers who voiced their views to inspectors had extremely positive views, especially about the school's 'open door' policy. Almost all 97 responses from parents and carers on Parent View agreed that they would recommend the school to other parents and carers.
- There is a strong commitment to the community. The headteachers and governing bodies of the infant and junior schools work together to run the Conkers Club, which provides good before- and after-school care for the pupils of both schools.
- The local authority provides appropriate support and challenge which is valued by the school.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are thorough in making sure that they perform their legal duties, including the safe recruiting and vetting of staff. They ensure that all requirements for pupils' safeguarding are fully met. They make good use of their individual professional expertise in supporting the school and asking searching questions. The recent re-constituting of the governing body allows for co-opting others with particular expertise should the need arise. Governors visit frequently and have a good understanding of what performance information tells them about how pupils' achievement compares with schools nationally. There is no complacency. They are well aware of the quality of teaching and the strategies used for helping teachers to make further improvement, such as linking pay closely to pupils' achievement and dealing with any underperformance. Governors check on spending decisions carefully, including the use and impact of pupil premium funding.

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	114719
Local authority	Southend-on-Sea
Inspection number	413348

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	314
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Joe Mellor
Headteacher	Elaine Palmer
Date of previous school inspection	16 October 2007
Telephone number	01702 478533
Fax number	01702 471420
Email address	education@chalkwellhall-inf.southend.sch.uk

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