

Freegrounds Infant School



Hobb Lane, Hedge End, Southampton, SO30 0GG

Inspection dates

14–15 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		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Children make good progress across the school as a result of good and better teaching.
- Teachers benefit from good feedback on their teaching. Teaching is consequently good with increasing numbers of outstanding lessons being seen.
- Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They settle well because of the positive relationships that exist, and achieve well as a result of good teaching.
- The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding. Pupils are sociable and courteous and show high levels of respect for adults and their peers.
- Leadership responsibilities have been very well distributed and all have a role in checking the work of the school. There is good teamwork with leaders committed to focusing on improving teaching and pupils' outcomes.
- The curriculum is good. Pupils say they have exciting things to do and that they benefit from imaginative 'hooks', such as trips, which get their early attention and motivate them.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- There is still room for further improvements to teaching so that even more outstanding teaching is seen. Insufficient attention is given to how the external area in the Early Years Foundation Stage can reinforce childrens' literacy and mathematical skills.
- Additionally, there are missed opportunities for pupils to interact with aspects of information and communication technology. There is also a need for teachers to remind pupils of and give them opportunities to apply, their knowledge of linking sounds and letters (phonics) in all subjects.
- Not all leaders and managers have sufficient knowledge of assessment data to give them an overview of pupils' attainment and progress. This makes it difficult for them to identify where the curriculum should be adapted to best meet the needs of pupils. Leaders do not always identify clear and specific criteria against which they can more easily measure the success of any changes they introduce. Leaders do not always feed back to learning support assistants after checking on their work.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning and teaching in 16 lessons.
- The inspection team listened to the reading of a sample of pupils from Years 1 and 2.
- The inspection team took account of 103 responses to the online Parent View survey and the most recent school parent survey.
- The completed questionnaires from school staff were also considered.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at progress and attainment data, the school's development plan, curriculum plans, governing body documentation, and policies and procedures. Those relating to health and safety and safeguarding of pupils were carefully scrutinised.
- Discussions were held with senior and other leaders, teachers, the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors, teaching assistants, parents and carers, pupils, and a representative from the local authority.

Inspection team

Michael Pye, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Linda Rowley

Additional Inspector

Victor Chaffey

Additional Inspector

Full report



Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average sized infant school. There are more girls than boys when compared to the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported under pupil premium funding, which provides additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and looked after children, is well below the national average. There are no service family pupils at the school.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is below average. Similarly, there is a below average proportion of pupils at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs. The main needs of these pupils relate to speech, language and communication needs.
- The majority of pupils come from a predominantly White British background. The next largest minority ethnic group consists of pupils who come from an Asian-Indian background.
- Since the last inspection the school has appointed a new headteacher who is currently taking a leave of absence and is expected to return shortly.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the amount of outstanding teaching by ensuring all teachers:
 - use information and communication technology in a more interactive way to motivate pupils and enhance their learning
 - give pupils more opportunities to apply their phonics knowledge and skills in all subjects
 - in the Early Years Foundation Stage develop strategies to promote literacy and mathematical skills and knowledge in the external area.
- Maximise the impact of subject leaders through ensuring that they:
 - analyse data to gain an overview of standards and progress in their area of responsibility, and use that information to develop the curriculum to meet pupils' needs
 - use focused success criteria against which they can measure progress towards any development actions planned
 - give feedback to learning support assistants after monitoring their learning sessions, so that they can help pupils to improve their work.

Inspection judgements



The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils, including those from minority ethnic backgrounds, achieve well.
- Attainment by the end of Year 2 has traditionally been high. The cohort leaving in 2012 had high numbers of pupils with special educational needs. Attainment dipped to average with reading standards remaining high; writing was the weakest subject. However, given their starting points the pupils made good progress.
- The work seen in pupils' books confirms this picture of good progress. The work in Year 2, together with the school's tracking data, shows that pupils are on track to attain at above average levels.
- In 2012 the girls did better than the boys in writing. This gap has now closed and is closing rapidly in reading and mathematics. This is the consequence of a focus on providing more topics that appeal to boys which motivate them to write.
- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and knowledge in line with expectations. They make good progress and leave with almost all having met, or achieved beyond, the expected learning goals.
- In the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 in 2012, the school attained at broadly average levels. Data suggest strongly that this will improve this year as a consequence of the changes introduced by the school, such as introducing different teaching methodologies.
- Pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs are progressing in line with their peers. In Year 1, there is evidence of some of these pupils progressing better than their peers.
- In the 2012 teacher assessments, pupils eligible for free school meals supported through the pupil premium were some eight months behind their peers in English and mathematics. There was one pupil in the care of the local authority in Year 2. In the current Year 2, the gap has closed in writing and these pupils are within three months of their peers in reading and mathematics.
- Pupils say they enjoy reading and that they read regularly in school. During the phonics sessions they recognise sounds on flashcards and practise writing the words. The school has recognised that pupils have difficulties applying this knowledge when working in sentences and that there is a need to remind pupils of these skills and give opportunities for them to practise them in all subjects.

The quality of teaching is good

- There are increasing numbers of outstanding lessons. In these lessons an impressive range of resources is used to motivate and challenge pupils. This was seen in a mathematics lesson in Year 2, where a range of weighing scales, using different measures, was used to raise pupils' awareness and to test their measuring skills.
- An English lesson in Year 1 showed outstanding teaching resulting from the teacher's high expectations, excellent knowledge of the individual pupils' levels, good focused questioning and targeting of challenge to meet the pupils' needs. The pupils showed enjoyment at the challenge of writing a recount of their trip to the seaside. Pupils with special educational needs were able to achieve well because of the small steps and time targets given to them.
- Good pace to lessons was seen in a Year 1 mathematics lesson where the pupils were challenged well during a 'mental maths' session. In Reception, the children were challenged well by the teacher asking questions about what they knew about animals and how they might spell unusual words such as 'gosling'.

- The pupils know what they are expected to learn because teachers clearly set out the learning objectives. Pupils are expected to self-assess their work. In a Year 1 lesson based around two-digit addition problems, the pupils were asked to rate their understanding by using the red, amber and green strategy. They did so willingly with good understanding of what was required to make that judgement. They receive good feedback in marking where the next steps in pupils' learning are made very clear.
- The teachers' good subject knowledge is evident in lessons. This allows them to build on the answers from pupils and further challenge them. Pupils are willing to give answers and risk being wrong because of the strong relationships in lessons.
- Not all teachers are adept at giving pupils opportunities to interact actively with the interactive whiteboards and hence enhance their learning.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage the internal area is stimulating and challenging. However, in the external area there are missed opportunities for pupils' literacy and mathematical skills and knowledge to be similarly reinforced.
- Learning support assistants are deployed well but are not given enough formal feedback on how they can improve their practice.
- Throughout the school, teachers promote communication skills through the use of talk partners and small-group work. This undoubtedly contributes well to the personal and social development of pupils.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils display some exemplary attitudes to their learning. For example, during talk partner work they willingly accept the need to talk about the task rather than use the opportunity to speak of other things.
- They really enjoy school with one Year 2 pupil saying, 'It's such a good school that I don't want to leave this year!' Attendance is above the national average.
- Pupils say they feel very safe in school and that they know who to go to if they have a problem. All the parents and carers who responded to the online survey agreed that their children are safe. The vast majority believe behaviour to be good and that the school deals well with any incidents.
- The pupils say there is the very occasional incident of misbehaviour but that the school deals with it very well. They have a very secure knowledge of the different forms of bullying.
- The behaviour policy is very consistently applied, with pupils knowing about the 'on a cloud' strategy where they are required to reflect on their behaviour.
- The pupils also have a strong understanding of how to stay safe and have a secure understanding of the dangers relating to e-safety. They learn about these things through firework and other safety lessons.
- The school learning values, such as independence, contribute extremely well to the pupils' spiritual, moral, and social development. These are excellently developed by the good opportunities they have to accept responsibility whether as class monitors or as school councillors.
- The pupils' behaviour is outstanding. They show high levels of respect, are naturally polite and listen to their peers and the adults during lessons. There have been no exclusions in the past two years, no racist incidents and parents and carers confirm that there have been no concerns about the behaviour in the playground.
- The children in the Early Years Foundation Stage have similarly very high levels of behaviour. In one learning session they showed high levels of cooperation and obvious enjoyment at building towers together and then comparing them.

The leadership and management are good

- The distribution of responsibility to other leaders, together with the regular use of progress meetings, has resulted in more accountability. However, it also demonstrates through the actions of those leaders and teachers the commitment to improve the school. This vision of improving teaching to outstanding and hence accelerating pupils' progress has been well shared by senior managers, as the positive staff questionnaires demonstrate.
- Senior, subject and other leaders take a full part in checking the work of the school. Strategies such as lesson observations, work scrutiny, checking planning and talking to pupils enable them to build an accurate picture of the effect of any actions on pupils' outcomes. The school promotes equality of opportunity well, fosters good relationships and ensures any form of discrimination is not tolerated.
- The English leader filled a perceived gap through providing training for learning support assistants. The mathematics leader did a similar thing when conducting training in how to make the end of lesson sessions more effective in reinforcing pupils' learning.
- On occasions, the subject leaders' overview of progress and attainment is not sufficiently deep to enable them to accurately propose appropriate changes to the curriculum to fill any gaps.
- Lesson observations take place regularly and teaching is improving. Leaders provide some good levels of feedback that allow teachers to develop their skills, although there is an insufficient focus on the progress of pupil groups in the records.
- Subject and other leaders are involved in development planning. The school evaluates accurately and identifies very appropriate improvement priorities. At subject level, some action plans are insufficiently linked to the whole school plan. There is also a need for starting points to be identified so that any successes can be judged more accurately.
- Performance management is well established as part of the school's routine, and teachers see the process as a valuable time for reflection. The challenging targets are well linked to pupils' outcomes and professional development is appropriately used to support staff. For example, 'moving from good to outstanding teaching' is one course that has been fed back into school.
- The well-established curriculum presents good opportunities for pupils to enjoy their learning, practise their basic skills and develop their cultural and multicultural understanding. The topics, such as dinosaurs, have a greater appeal to boys, who increasingly have improved their levels of writing.
- There exist some excellent partnerships which benefit pupils within the school. Parents and carers have responded well to the new Parent Forum, which provides them with an informal way of communicating with senior leaders within the school. There has been good and appropriate support for the school from the local authority, especially regarding guidance for leaders and managers.
- Links with external partners deliver special events for those pupils with gifts and talents. Another link with an estate agent led to the pupils developing their own 'house for sale' drawings, advertisements and pamphlets. The strategies the school develops for 'writing for a purpose' are very strong.
- Good leadership and management exist in the Early Years Foundation Stage where good teaching helps ensure that the children achieve well.
- Safeguarding arrangements are secure.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body employs a wide range of strategies to check the work of the school. Through written reports, visits and analysis of data it builds a good knowledge of the school. This enables governors to raise questions of the school and hold its actions to account. They have a good focus on the effect of actions on pupils' progress. However, commendably, the governing body goes further. It annually investigates the impact of such things as behaviour and the learning values; this involves them visiting and talking to pupils, staff and parents and carers. Governors use training well to keep themselves up to date. The budget is secure. The well-established performance management system is used well to promote improvement. Staff are under no illusion that promotion is based around classroom performance. This, together with reports and visits, enables the governors to have an accurate understanding of where teaching is best and the areas where development is required. Governors know the

groups who qualify for pupil premium funding, and have an overview of the progress of these pupils. They have less detailed knowledge of the effect of the expenditure of the budget on individual interventions and support on pupils' progress and are seeking to address this issue. Statutory responsibilities are met with special attention given to safeguarding and health and safety issues.

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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	115918
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	412596

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	270
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gillian Wright
Headteacher	Karen Russell (acting)
Date of previous school inspection	16–17 May 2007
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