

# Earls Hall Junior School

Carlton Avenue, Westcliff-on-Sea, SS0 0QN

**Inspection dates** 4–5 June 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
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 make good progress from their original starting points. By the end of Year 6 standards are consistently above average in both English and mathematics.
- Pupils with disabilities and/or special educational needs make good progress. This is because of the good individual support and guidance that they receive.
- Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals are making good and improved progress. This is because the school is making effective use of additional government funding.
- Teaching in most subjects, including English and mathematics is good with a small amount of outstanding practice. Lessons are well prepared and learning is enjoyable. Pupils work hard.
- There is a strong focus on literacy. Pupils are given lots of good opportunities to improve their reading and writing skills by practising them in different subjects.
- Pupils behave well and they have excellent attitudes to learning. They say that they feel safe and are cared for well.
- Leaders including governors are improving the school effectively. Pupils' achievement in English is accelerating because the quality of teaching is improving. The range and quality of activities in and outside of school have also improved.
- The curriculum is enriched by a wide range of extra clubs and activities as well as local and residential visits. Music including singing is a strength and enjoyed by large numbers of pupils throughout the school. This all makes a positive contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough teaching is outstanding to support even quicker progress. Pupils do not always have enough opportunities in lessons to take responsibility for their own learning.
- Pupils are not always given opportunities to respond to teachers' marking.
- Teacher's marking does not always inform pupils about what must be improved.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 20 lessons or parts of lessons. Four of the observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Pupils read to inspectors and talked to them about their work.
- Inspectors observed teaching assistants working with small groups of pupils to support those with a disability or who have special educational needs.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other leaders, governors and the School's Improvement Partner. A telephone conversation was held with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of evidence particularly the school's own analysis of how well pupils are doing; records of the monitoring of teaching; governing body minutes and reports to governors; reports prepared by the School Improvement Partner and documentation relating to pupils' behaviour and safety.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils and staff with subject responsibilities. The views of pupils were also gathered through informal discussions during the school day.
- Inspectors spoke to some parents and carers informally at the start of the day. They took account of the 78 responses to the on-line parent questionnaire (Parent View). Inspectors also evaluated 19 questionnaire responses completed by staff.

## Inspection team

Andrew Phillips, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Lynne Thorogood

Additional Inspector

Helen Bailey

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This is an above-average sized junior school.
- Most pupils are White British. There are a few pupils from a range of other heritages. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, including those supported at school action and school action plus or with a statement, is average.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding is below average. This is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children from armed service families and those that are looked after.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that more of it is outstanding by:
  - making sure teachers give pupils more opportunities to learn and to find things out by themselves and ensure teachers only direct learning when it is appropriate to do so
  - ensuring that marking consistently and clearly identifies what pupils must improve and share the very best marking practice with all teachers
  - allowing regular time in lessons for pupils to respond to teachers' marking in order to correct and improve their work.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils make good progress from their original starting points. Year 6 attainment is consistently above average in both English and mathematics. Pupils enjoy learning and are keen to succeed. In some lessons pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning.
- The school's systems for checking pupils' progress are good. School leaders and teachers discuss the progress of all pupils every half-term and decide on what level of support should be put into place to enable all pupils to achieve well. Support is well targeted, particularly for those who have special educational needs or those entitled to free school meals. Provision ensures both groups of pupils learn at a good rate. School data and inspection evidence confirms that current Year 5 and Year 6 pupils are on course to meet challenging targets.
- Pupils make good progress in mathematics because they get lots of opportunities to use and apply their calculation skills to solve real-life problems. More-able pupils receive a high level of challenge which allowed a good proportion of them to achieve the higher National Curriculum level 6 in 2012.
- In 2012, not as many pupils made the expected progress in English as they did in mathematics. The school's leadership took quick and effective action to accelerate pupils' achievement in English. Work in pupils' books, and school data shows that more pupils will make expected and more than expected progress this academic year in English than in 2012. Pupils' writing skills are developing well because they are given lots of opportunities to develop them in different subjects.
- Reading is taught effectively throughout the school. Pupils make good progress in reading because the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) is of good quality. There is a strong emphasis on reading in all classes. Pupils enjoy books and are encouraged to read often, both in school and at home.
- Pupils supported through the pupil premium make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Their attainment in English and mathematics is above that of similar pupils nationally. However, in both subjects it is about two terms behind pupils who are not eligible for free school meals in school. The attainment gap, between those eligible for free school meals and those who are not, has narrowed in the past year. This is because they and their families are supported very effectively through the good use that the school is making of the additional government funding.
- Pupils with a disability and/or special educational needs achieve well because of the good individual support that they receive.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is consistently good with a small amount that is outstanding. The majority of parents think that their children are taught well and make good progress.
- The most effective teaching, and particularly that which is outstanding, informs pupils as to how well they have done, what they must do to improve further, and gives them opportunities to respond to teachers' comments and to correct their mistakes. This good practice is not evident in

every classroom. As a result, some pupils are not always clear as to what is expected of them, nor are they always given time to correct any mistakes in their learning.

- There is a very positive climate for learning in all classrooms. Pupils work hard both on their own and in small groups. Very good relationships exist between teachers and pupils and between the pupils themselves. Pupils listen very respectfully at all times and value the opinions of others. Racial harmony is an important strength and pupils demonstrate a good awareness of their own and other cultures. For example in a Year 4 lesson, the class were discussing apartheid and some of the pupils spoke about how, if it was to occur, it would have an impact on their lives and on that of others.
- Teaching promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. Activities encourage pupils to work in teams and pairs, to behave well and follow school rules, and to reflect on life in the world at large. These have a very positive impact on pupils' emotional well-being.
- The school rightly places a strong emphasis on the teaching of basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils are routinely provided with opportunities to develop and apply their skills to interesting real-life problem-solving activities. For example, in a Year 6 mathematics lesson pupils had to calculate the best monthly and annual mobile phone tariff from a range of information provided by a number of different mobile phone operators.
- A curriculum based around children's literature provides pupils with lots of opportunities to develop and apply their writing skills both in literacy lessons as well as in other subjects. They produce good quality extended writing in a range of topics and genres. The highest quality work results from marking which helps the pupils to improve their work but this is not yet established in all classes.
- In some lessons pupils do not always have enough time, or the opportunity, to take responsibility for their own learning and this slows down the amount of progress that they are able to make.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work well together. Teaching assistants provide effective support to ensure that disabled pupils, including those who have special education needs, those who speak English as an additional language and are eligible for free school meals make achieve well.
- Learning is enriched through an extensive range of activities and clubs before, during and at the end of the school day. Many of the pupils told the inspectors that 'these help me to stay fit and healthy.'

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- Pupils' behave well and show good manners and respect for others. The school is a calm and welcoming community where there is a strong commitment to learning and care. Many pupils told inspectors how the school motto 'together we learn' is at the 'heart of all we do.'
- Adults and pupils all get along well together. Pupils encourage each other during lessons and have excellent attitudes to learning. They can work on their own as well as collaborating effectively in small groups. Such activities help to develop pupils' social and emotional skills.
- Parents and pupils say that the school is a very safe place in which to learn. Pupils explained to inspectors how they keep themselves safe outside of school as well as how to stay safe when

working online with computers. Pupils and staff have high expectations of behaviour. Poor behaviour is rare and always thoroughly followed up and dealt with effectively.

- Pupils learn about the different forms of bullying and they know who to go to if they need to speak to someone about a concern. There are very few incidents of bullying and both the school's own records and the pupils' responses show that these are tackled very quickly and with care. The school takes prompt action to tackle any form of discriminatory behaviour.
- A number of parents expressed concern about the way that the school deals with bullying, in the online questionnaire. Inspectors spoke to parents at the start of the day who said that they were happy with the way that the school deals with bullying and this was also supported by discussions that the inspectors had with pupils. Any incidents of bullying are effectively dealt with but the steps the school takes are not always communicated fully to parents.
- The school council provides an effective forum for pupils' views of the school to be heard and for topics raised by pupils themselves to be shared with teachers.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school. Attendance is above average and the local authority recommends the school as an example of best practice to other schools. Punctuality is not a concern with pupils arriving at school on time in the mornings and efficiently getting themselves into class so that there is a prompt start to the day.
- Teachers and teaching assistants are very positive about pupils' behaviour and say that their eagerness to learn is a key ingredient in their success. Pupils enjoy the many events including day and residential visits that extend their learning of the wider world.

### **The leadership and management** are good

- Leaders, governors and those responsible for subjects and other areas of the school are suitably ambitious and have a good understanding of what is needed to improve achievement. Joint lesson observations with the headteacher and deputy headteacher showed that their judgements about teaching and learning are fair and accurate.
- The school provides a safe, happy environment where the schools' values are reflected throughout all classes. The school fosters good relations and discrimination is not tolerated.
- The headteacher has high expectations of all staff and promotes strong teamwork. Responsibilities have been delegated effectively. Work to improve pupils' achievement in English, and to enrich and widen the curriculum, have proved effective. For example, pupils' achievement in English is accelerating and the activities provided are more varied and interesting and promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. There is good capacity for further improvement.
- The schools' plans for improvement are appropriately focused on raising standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers and teaching assistants have good opportunities to improve their skills but not enough teaching is yet of sufficiently high quality to raise achievement to outstanding. There are still some inconsistencies in the quality of marking and in the range of opportunities for pupils to take control of what they learn and how.
- The progress of all pupils is checked effectively and updated each half-term so teachers are now much clearer about how well their pupils are performing and what they need to learn next. Leaders have been able to use this information to see where extra support is needed. The

schools' current pupil progress data shows that pupils are making good progress and a number are working at a level above that expected for their age.

- Pupils are provided with a wide range of additional activities including sports clubs, special events, such as the recent very popular science Eureka Day, and residential visits which prepare them well for the next stage in their learning. Currently over 100 pupils are taking part in the lower and upper school choirs. They perform in school concerts and at a local music festival. Links with other schools suitably extend learning opportunities, including for pupils with particular gifts and talents.
- The school promotes equality of opportunity well and all pupils are given every opportunity to succeed. For example, it makes good use of the additional government funding that it receives for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals by ensuring that they are able to participate in additional activities, such as clubs and school trips.
- The school has good procedures for safeguarding pupils, and provides high quality support to pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable.
- The local authority adopts a light touch approach to monitoring the school's work. This said, it provides a range of valuable training opportunities to further improve staff skills.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body has a thorough understanding of the schools' effectiveness and the steps that need to be taken to further improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. Governors have specific responsibilities and they have recently undertaken an audit of their skills in order to further identify any areas for future training and development, for example, in the analysis of pupil performance data. They are actively involved in supporting the school and effectively hold school leaders to account for the attainment and progress of all pupils. They receive regular information on the quality of teaching and the performance of individual staff, and ensure that good systems are in place to improve the quality of teaching. They ensure that performance management is used to reward more effective teachers and to tackle any underperformance. Salary progression is linked to improvements in pupil achievement. Governors report on their visits to the school and undertake a range of activities to keep abreast of teaching quality, including talking to pupils and visiting lessons. Governors keep a close check on the use of pupil premium funding. They make sure that it is spent appropriately to meet the needs of pupils for whom it is intended. Finances are tightly controlled and decisions on spending are linked closely to priorities in the schools' plan for improvement. All statutory duties are met.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	114720
<b>Local authority</b>	Southend-on-Sea
<b>Inspection number</b>	413112

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	360
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Jon Stanton
<b>Headteacher</b>	Lynn Morris
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	2 March 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	01702 333360
<b>Fax number</b>	01702 436062
<b>Email address</b>	office@earlshall-jun.southend.sch.uk

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