

Alexander First School

Kenneally, Oakley Green, Windsor, SL4 4XP

Inspection dates 4–5 June 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		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher's clear focus on consistently raising pupils' achievement and aspirations is shared by staff, senior leaders and members of the governing body.
- Good leadership of teaching and learning, together with effective management of teachers' performance, has ensured that teaching is consistently at least good and a small amount is outstanding.
- Regular checks on learning highlight any underachievement. Good support by skilled teaching assistants helps to close learning gaps quickly.
- The enthusiasm and good subject knowledge of all teachers ensure that pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The 'nurture group' plays a major part in ensuring that vulnerable pupils are ready to learn.
- All staff are well trained in how to manage challenging behaviour and this, together with the school's caring atmosphere, creates a secure, calm learning environment.
- Children in the Nursery and Reception class benefit from well-planned, lively activities which ensure that they are happy and settled and make a good start to their education.
- Close and productive partnerships with parents and carers play an important part in children's learning.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Not enough teaching is outstanding to ensure all pupils learn exceptionally well.
- Occasionally the most able pupils are not given harder work to challenge them.
- Teachers give helpful guidance when marking pupils' work, but do not always allow them enough time to respond.
- In mathematics, teachers do not always ensure that pupils' basic skills are secure before moving on to the next step in learning, or show pupils clearly how to carry out their independent work.

Information about this inspection

- During the inspection 16 whole or part-lessons were observed.
- Fourteen joint observations of teaching and learning were conducted with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, governors, a representative from the local authority, staff and groups of pupils.
- The inspector listened to pupils reading.
- The inspector spoke to parents and carers and took account of nine paper copies and 17 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View).
- The inspector observed the school's work, reviewed pupils' workbooks, and looked at school policies, including those relating to safeguarding and equality, records of governing body meetings and planning documents.
- The inspector took account of the 26 questionnaires returned by staff.

Inspection team

Barbara Atcheson, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Alexander First School is smaller than the average first school.
- Most pupils are from a White British background.
- The vast majority of pupils are from families serving in the armed forces, and an above average proportion of pupils joins or leaves the school at times other than the usual time of entry.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium (additional government funding to help certain groups) is above average. In this school it applies mostly to pupils from service families, plus a small number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportions of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action, and through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, are below average.
- The school runs a breakfast club for its pupils, managed by the governing body.
- There are five classes. There is one class for the nursery and reception children in an Early Years Foundation Stage unit. Years 1, 2, 3 and 4 are taught in single-aged classes.
- The headteacher was appointed in June 2012 after a period of two years as acting headteacher. Since the last inspection four new teachers have been appointed.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make more teaching outstanding by ensuring that all teachers:
 - stretch more-able pupils by giving them harder work to do
 - give pupils time to apply the helpful guidance given in marking by correcting their work and learning from their mistakes.
- Raise attainment and accelerate progress in mathematics by making sure that all teachers:
 - help pupils to secure each skill in mathematics before moving on to the next step
 - show pupils ways in which they can work independently.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- In this small school, children's attainment on entry to the Reception class varies from year to year. Although all groups of pupils make good progress, standards at the end of Year 2 fluctuate to reflect this. They also reflect the fact that the vast majority of pupils are from service families and very few stay in the school from Reception through to Year 4.
- Pupils' standards at the end of Year 2 were significantly above average in 2010, but significantly below in 2012. Half of the 2012 pupils were new to the school; many started school in that year. Two of the 16 pupils in the class spoke no English and had not been to school before. A quarter of the pupils had special educational needs.
- There is a continuous flow of children from service families in and out of school. Pupils and their families find it unsettling when troops are deployed or return from a mission. The school has used government funding to finance a highly effective nurture group with well-trained staff who help pupils deal with their emotional and social difficulties, so that they are ready to learn.
- All pupils known to be eligible for extra funding make good progress thanks to a wide range of extra support. Those who join the school later than normal often have gaps in their learning. These are quickly identified. Small support groups, taught by highly trained teaching assistants, emotional literacy support assistants and teachers, focus on pupils' individual needs to quickly close these gaps.
- Pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals achieve well. In 2012, eligible pupils in Year 2 reached standards that were on average two terms ahead of their classmates in English and mathematics. Pupils from service families also do well, but do not attain as highly as other pupils in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Parent and child groups give families vital support and help service families to cope with everyday life. A teddy called Paddy McBear' went out during the last deployment with the Irish Guards. Pictures of what he did there help young children come to terms with events and settle down to learn. During the latest deployment the school has involved deployed parents and children in a scheme to share the same book in order to introduce a common everyday element into conversation.
- Accurate identification and an appropriate range of extra support enable disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs to make the same rate of progress as their classmates. A similar level of support ensures that pupils learning English as an additional language make the same progress as others.
- Four days a week the school divides into small reading groups that are at the right level for each pupil. This accelerates pupils' progress and addresses individual difficulties. A group of reception children and Year 1 pupils delighted in playing a game of musical chairs, landing on different letter sounds. Not only were they able to say the sound, but they rose to the challenge of using the sound in a sentence such as 'Look at the book!'
- The topics that pupils study every afternoon are planned to give writing a purpose and this, together with an emphasis on increasing vocabulary, has meant that the current Year 2 pupils are already reaching levels in writing which above those expected nationally for their age.
- School records and inspection evidence show that the few pupils who do stay at the school from Reception through to Year 4 make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Progress in mathematics is slower than in reading and writing, which have been the focus of the school's work. Sometimes pupils move on to new learning in mathematics before they are really secure in the preceding steps.
- In 2012 most children started Reception with skills that were below the levels expected for their age. Of the 13 pupils in the current Year 4, only four started in Reception. Even so, the majority are working at the expected levels for their age in reading and mathematics and a large majority are exceeding the expected levels in writing.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is typically good and some is outstanding. Teachers and support staff know their pupils well and are very enthusiastic. They are all well trained and their good subject knowledge is evident in the way that they question pupils to deepen their understanding and clarify any misunderstandings. They have a good relationship with their pupils. This means that pupils want to do their best, make good progress and achieve well over time.
- Year 2 pupils were enthusiastic when writing a letter using adjectives because it was about holidays. Pictures to illustrate the steps for success ensured all pupils were clear about what to do. They all made good progress because work was set at the right level for each pupil. Occasionally this is not the case, and more-able pupils are given work that is too easy for them.
- Year 1 pupils who were practising their recognition of coins and matching them to the right value delighted in playing games and taking turns. They rose to the challenge of working without adult support because they understood what they had to do and had been shown how to carry out the task on their own. However, on some occasions pupils find working on their own difficult, particularly in mathematics, because they are not shown what to use or the different ways in which they can solve their particular problem.
- The marking of pupils' work is consistently good across the school and teachers give pupils helpful comments on how to improve their work. However, teachers do not always give pupils the time to make those corrections and learn from their mistakes, and so errors are often repeated and the same comment appears at the bottom of each piece of work.
- The skilful contribution made by teaching and emotional literacy assistants in class and in smaller support groups plays an important part in ensuring that pupils make good progress. This particularly helps disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and those known to be eligible for the pupil premium.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour is good and although the school is a hive of industry, there is a calm atmosphere throughout. This is a great tribute to the leadership of the headteacher, who has set great store in ensuring that all staff are well trained in how to deal with the challenging behaviour that sometimes occurs when pupils face difficult and often traumatic episodes in their lives.
- The nurture group gives pupils time, space and ways in which they can improve their personal skills and come to terms with events. Even pupils who are not from service families can become unsettled as friends leave and new pupils arrive. Well-planned systems and procedures and a quiet, calm way of working provide all pupils with the stability they need to take full benefit of all that the school has to offer.
- Good opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development enable pupils to have a clear set of personal values, and to work and play harmoniously.
- Pupils say that bullying is rare. They say that they feel very safe in school and know that there will always be someone who will listen to them if they have any concerns.
- Parents and carers appreciate the benefits of the school's breakfast club and pupils enjoy the companionship and games.
- Parents and carers talk in glowing terms about the school. They recognise what it strives to achieve and say they are extremely happy with their children's education.
- A very large majority of those who responded to Parent View said that they would recommend the school to another parent or carer. They also said that the school dealt effectively with bullying, and that their children were happy, felt safe and behaved well.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has quickly got to grips with what needs to be done to take teaching and achievement even further forward. She has an accurate picture of the school and a quiet determination to keep staff motivated and continually focused on driving improvement forward. Morale is high and staff, senior leaders, and members of the governing body share her aspiration to make the school outstanding.
- Strong partnerships with parents and carers give them the support they need, particularly when troops are deployed. Sewing groups and cookery groups provide parents and carers with useful skills and something enjoyable to share with each other, and parent and child groups give parents and carers the opportunity to share time with their children. This in turn helps parents and carers to become partners in their children's learning.
- Teaching and learning are improving strongly as a result of effective monitoring of lessons that is followed up with a comprehensive programme of coaching and good quality training for staff. As a result teaching is consistently at least good and a growing proportion is outstanding.
- Teachers' performance is managed effectively. Following an audit against the 'Teachers Standards', school and personal targets are set and the level of support needed to reach those targets is discussed. Reviews of performance tackle weaknesses and recognise and reward improvements in teaching.
- The local authority regards the school as only in need of 'light touch' support, based on its performance and the good quality leadership of the headteacher. Even so, the school has engaged very well with the local authority and has taken advantage of all that is on offer in terms of training and partnerships with local schools.
- The school ensures that all pupils have an equal opportunity to succeed. All teachers are held to account and pupils' progress is checked at regular meetings. If any pupil is seen to underperform, extra help is arranged.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The members of the governing body are now playing an increasingly active part in the strategic direction of the school. They have an accurate view of the school's performance, including the quality of teaching and how pupils' test results compare against national data and those of other similar schools. Helpful local authority training and governors' own observations are helping them to understand where weaknesses in teaching lie and to realise that more work has to be done to increase the proportion of outstanding teaching. They fulfil their responsibility in rewarding teachers' performance only when justified by pupils' achievement. Governors ensure that statutory duties such as safeguarding are met and that financial resources are managed well. For example, they know how many pupils are eligible for extra funding through the pupil premium, how well they are achieving and the impact of the extra help provided by the money allocated.

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	109884
Local authority	Windsor and Maidenhead
Inspection number	412655

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

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	116
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Molly Baker
Headteacher	Gill Young
Date of previous school inspection	1–2 March 2010
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