

Highbury Infant School and Nursery

Standhill Road, Hitchin, SG4 9AG

Inspection dates 20–21 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		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Strong foundations are laid for children's learning in the Nursery and Reception. The children make good progress throughout the school and Year 2 pupils reach higher than average standards in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Those who fall behind in their learning are quickly given extra help to catch up.
- Staff are proud to belong to the school. They engage pupils well in interesting activities.
- Teachers carefully check pupils' progress and pupils know how to improve their work.
- Staff take care of all the children extremely well. Pupils feel safe and know how to keep themselves safe. Their behaviour is excellent.
- Pupils' very good attendance is evidence of their great enjoyment of school. They regularly help teachers to make decisions about improving provision.
- Under the headteacher's strong leadership and wise management, the school continues to improve.
- There is excellent provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The school has an excellent partnership with parents who are extremely supportive.
- The Governing Body is challenging and knowledgeable and keeps a close eye on the progress of pupils and teachers' work.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In occasional lessons, teachers are not sufficiently clear about what they intend pupils to learn and do not give them enough time to do their own work.
- Teachers' appraisal objectives are not always precisely matched to improvements in pupils' learning.
- When teachers in charge of subjects and areas check colleagues' work, they do not identify how pupils' learning has been influenced.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 13 parts of lessons taken by seven teachers. Two of these were joint observations with the headteacher. Additionally, six pupils were heard reading.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, her senior leadership team, members of staff with subject and area responsibility, pupils, and members of the governing body including the Chair. The lead inspector spoke to a representative of the local authority by telephone.
- The inspectors took account of 79 responses to the online parents' questionnaire (Parent View), 18 staff questionnaires and three letters from parents. They also talked to parents at the beginning of the day.
- The inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a number of documents including: records and documents relating to tracking pupils' progress; monitoring and evaluation; behaviour and safety; safeguarding and attendance. The inspectors carried out a work scrutiny with the headteacher.

Inspection team

Kathy Hooper, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Mike Williams

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The size of the school is average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium, the additional government funding for those in the care of the local authority, those with a parent in the armed services and those who are known to be eligible for free school meals, is lower than average.
- Although the large majority of pupils are White British, there is a higher than average proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and a higher than average proportion have English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who are supported at school action is lower than average as is the proportion of pupils supported on school action plus. There are no pupils with statements of special educational needs.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the amount of good and outstanding teaching by making sure that:
 - all teachers plan learning that is measurable in terms of skills and knowledge in all lessons
 - more time is given for pupils to do their own work in every lesson.
- Improve the leadership and management by:
 - making better use of the analysis of pupils' progress to set teachers' targets for their appraisal
 - making sure that teachers in charge of subjects and areas clearly comment on the impact on pupils' learning when they look at the work of their colleagues.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children begin school with levels of development that are broadly those expected of 3 year olds. By the time they leave Reception the vast majority have achieved good levels of development and are confident learners. At the end of Year 2, pupils achieve at a higher level in their reading writing and mathematics than other pupils of a similar age.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who are on school action plus achieve well. The progress of those on school action has improved this year because individuals and groups of pupils who are in danger of falling behind in their reading, writing and mathematics are quickly identified and helped.
- Pupils entitled to pupil premium do not achieve as well as their classmates. Last year, these pupils were five terms behind them in English and four terms behind them in mathematics. Extra support provided this year has reduced the gap to three terms. The funding has allowed extra staff to help pupils with their sounds and letters, reading, writing and their use of mathematics.
- Those pupils from minority ethnic families and those for whom English is their second language make very good progress. A whole school focus on the achievement of girls has helped them to make progress that is similar to that of boys this year.
- Children make good progress from the Nursery to Reception. Reception children speak, read and write well. The most able write in sentences that flow, and read them confidently. They use upper and lower case letters and some use punctuation. They add single digit numbers over 20 and take away single digits from double digits.
- Year 1 pupils make good use of sounds and letters when they are reading. In the 2012 Year 1 phonics screening check the proportion reaching expected levels was below the national average but current Year 1 pupils are working at a much higher level. Year 2 pupils write lively stories of a good length using adjectives, adverbs, connectives and speech marks. They manipulate numbers up to a hundred, add and take away using the full range of coins. They collect information from their research using bar graphs. Pupils become confident users of information and communication technology because they have regular lessons using specialist facilities.

The quality of teaching is good

- Where pupils' learning is good or better in lessons, pupils are excited by the planned activities. Teachers structure the learning so that everyone is fully engaged throughout the whole lesson. They check the progress of pupils of all abilities, using searching questions that are tailored to address their individual needs. They set challenging activities for the most able and sensitively re-direct the learning when pupils misunderstand. In the best lessons, the interactive whiteboard and the outdoor areas are well used to bring the learning alive.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage there is a good balance of child-initiated play and adult-led activities, such as making up words that rhyme with Zog. Good routines encourage children to learn to take responsibility for clearing up after activities. Their understanding of number is well reinforced during lining up. At the end of the learning activities, pupils are encouraged to talk about what they have learned.
- Occasionally lessons require improvement because teachers do not identify exactly what they

intend pupils to learn. In these lessons, the pupils are less confident and the pace of their learning is slower than it might be. In other lessons, the time available for pupils to learn for themselves is limited by too many explanations or interruptions to their work by their teachers.

- Teaching assistants support pupils and children well. They are well informed, ask probing questions, keep records of learning, and take small groups for sessions, such as those to help pupils improve their reading, or for pupils whose first language is not English.
- Teachers reinforce pupils' literacy and numeracy well in all lessons. They correct spellings and punctuation well in topic work, and make graphs in science. Pupils are encouraged to refer to their own individual targets in lessons.
- The quality of marking has improved since the last inspection. Pupils know how to improve their work. Pointers for success help pupils to understand the teachers' expectations. Teachers frequently check pupils' work to ensure that all of them make good progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Behaviour throughout the school is exemplary. Pupils are eager to learn and succeed. They thoroughly enjoy school and like their teachers.
- They try hard in lessons and discuss their work productively with their classmates. They are very cooperative and sociable.
- Pupils are consulted about developments in the school, taking part in surveys and discussing issues through the school council. At their suggestion, a pavilion, Highbury House, was built where children could sit quietly and read books and comics during breaks and lunchtimes.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very well developed through the curriculum, links with the community and through assemblies. The school rules of being kind, looking after things, listening carefully and always trying their best are consistently encouraged.
- There is little evidence of bullying and any thoughtless behaviour is quickly dealt with by staff. Pupils feel safe and know how to keep themselves safe. They are able to repeat the mantra from work they have done regarding e-safety, 'zip it; log it; flag it'.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is highly respected throughout the school and within the community. Her calm and compassionate leadership is well tempered by robust systems for checking the work of the school. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and firmly founded on findings from checking and reflecting on teaching and learning, and an understanding of government analyses of pupils' achievement.
- The senior management team is experienced and productive and contributes well to improving provision. There have been significant improvements in provision for special needs, literacy and the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- The local authority supports the school through bi-annual visits, providing an external perspective on the school's own oversight of the school.

- The teachers with responsibilities for subjects and areas visit the classrooms of their colleagues to check on teachers' practice and produce helpful reports for governors. They do not always relate what they find to the impact of the teachers' work on pupils' learning.
- The curriculum is regularly reviewed and improved and provides a wide experience for pupils. It is well extended by clubs, activities and events in the community and visits further afield.
- Close links with the nearby children's centre and with the junior school help children and pupils to move smoothly from one key stage to the next. The link with the junior school is also well used to train staff.
- There are excellent links with parents who are welcomed into the school to work with their children and to learn how they are progressing. There are good opportunities to help parents to support learning at home.
- The gap in the achievement of different groups of pupils is rapidly closing reflecting a strong approach to ensuring equality of opportunity. There is no discrimination in the school. The school demonstrates the capacity to improve further.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is supportive and very challenging. Governors check the starting points and end points of children's learning and ask searching questions concerning the progress of different groups of pupils. It uses its findings and evidence from school visits to develop increasingly effective ways of working. It has a good grasp of the budget and is aware of the impact of pupil premium and the support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Through its own visits, reports from staff and their involvement in appraisal, members of the governing body are aware of the work of teachers and their progress up the pay scale. A revised policy linking teachers' work to their progress up the pay scale is in the process of being agreed.

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	117113
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	413411

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

Type of school	Infant and Nursery
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	226
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tracey Haase
Headteacher	Helen Avey
Date of previous school inspection	25 November 2009
Telephone number	01462 630500
Fax number	01462 630502
Email address	admin@highbury.herts.sch.uk

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