

Grange Junior School

Sparhawke, Letchworth Garden City, SG6 4PY

Inspection dates 4–5 July 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Pupils' achievement is improving but it is not yet consistently good over time across all year groups and subjects.
- Weak teaching, historically, has resulted in pupils making insufficient progress in their learning in lessons because, in the past, teachers were not trained well enough on how to plan lessons to ensure that all pupils made the good progress of which they were capable.
- In some lessons, the work that more-able pupils are set is too easy for them.
- In some lessons, teachers talk for too long and pupils are not given the opportunity to work independently quickly enough. This slows their progress.
- Although teachers' marking usually tells pupils what they need to do to improve their work, pupils are not routinely given sufficient opportunities to consider their teachers' comments and respond appropriately to them.
- There are insufficient opportunities across different subjects for pupils to practise their mathematical skills or to write extensively.

The school has the following strengths

- The determined leadership of the headteacher and other school leaders has resulted in marked improvements in the quality of teaching, pupils' achievement and their behaviour.
- Members of the governing body bring considerable expertise to the school, check its work regularly and offer good support and challenge to school leaders. Their work is helping the school to improve.
- Teaching has improved as a result of good-quality training combined with leaders' checking frequently on the impact teaching has on pupils' progress. This is contributing well to increasingly better achievement.
- Improvements to the quality of teaching of reading have led to pupils making good progress in their reading across the school this year.
- Relationships between adults and pupils are highly positive, contributing to good behaviour in classrooms and around school.
- Pupils feel well cared for and feel safe in school. They have a good understanding of how to stay safe outside of school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 16 lessons taught by 10 teachers. Eleven of these observations were made jointly with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors; staff, including senior and middle leaders; parents; and groups of pupils.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at school documentation, including teachers' planning, the school's self-evaluation and development plans, assessment information, monitoring files, minutes of meetings of the governing body, safeguarding documentation and samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and talked with them about their enjoyment of books.
- Inspectors considered the 38 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the 24 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

David Radomsky, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Lynne Thorogood

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Grange is a smaller than average-sized junior school.
- A higher proportion of pupils than average are supported by the pupil premium. This is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, looked after children and pupils with a parent in the armed services. There are currently no children of service families in the school.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well-above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been changes to the school's leadership at all levels. The current headteacher and Chair of the Governing Body took up their posts in September 2011. The deputy headteacher and phase leaders took up their posts in April 2012.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of teaching that is good or better by ensuring that:
 - teachers always plan work that is hard enough to challenge more-able pupils
 - teachers allow pupils, especially the more able, to work on their own as soon as they have understood their teachers' instructions
 - teachers always tell pupils precisely how to improve their work and, following their marking of pupils' work, routinely give pupils time to edit and correct their work.
- Plan more opportunities across the subjects for pupils to apply and practise their mathematical skills and for extended writing.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because, over time, pupils have not made good progress in their knowledge and skills in reading, writing and mathematics across the year groups. This year progress in writing has been slower in Years 3 and 6. In mathematics, progress has been slower in Year 5 than in other years, where progress in this subject has been good.
- Most pupils join the school in Year 3 with average attainment in English and mathematics. The proportion of pupils reaching expected standards at the end of Year 6 in 2012 was below average.
- Although progress in writing is improving, not all pupils are reaching the standards of which they are capable as they are not always given enough opportunities to write at length to fully develop their writing skills.
- The proportion of pupils making the progress they should in mathematics, although increasing, still remains lower than found nationally. This is because there are few planned activities across other subjects for pupils to apply and practise their mathematical skills in real-life situations.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similar progress over time as their peers and so their achievement requires improvement. As their classmates, the rates of progress these pupils have made this year have increased.
- Progress in reading is now good because the school introduced a new reading scheme and all staff have been trained in the effective teaching of reading skills. Further, leaders have purchased additional texts that pupils find engaging. Pupils have opportunities to read in school every day and those experiencing difficulties are given effective one-to-one adult support.
- In Year 6 in 2012, the attainment of pupils supported through the pupil premium funding was about 10 months behind that of their classmates in English and 16 months behind in mathematics. School leaders have promoted equal opportunities for all pupils through the provision of additional support, both academic and social, for these pupils. As a result, they are making more rapid progress from their lower starting points than their peers and so the attainment gap is narrowing. Current school checks show attainment for this group is improving, with pupils in the current Year 6 on track to narrow the gap to about two months in English and five months in mathematics.
- Current school data and inspection evidence shows that most pupils are now making much better progress than previously in reading, writing and mathematics. This improvement is as a result of the school's work to improve the quality of teaching and leaders frequent checking to identify more quickly those pupils who are falling behind and providing them with well-tailored additional support.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- During the past year teaching has improved considerably. Although much teaching is now good, there are still aspects that require improvement to make it consistently good.
- In some cases, the learning activities that teachers plan are not always hard enough to stretch the most able pupils.
- Teaching sometimes hampers learning through overly long introductions from teachers and pupils not being moved on to writing and other practical activities soon enough so they can work by themselves.
- There are still some inconsistencies in the quality of marking as teachers do not always pick up pupils' misconceptions, tell them precisely how to improve their work and routinely give pupils time to edit and correct their work.
- Most teachers now plan and teach exciting and motivating lessons that enthuse pupils. In an English lesson seen on planning a news report, pupils watched a video clip of a 1974 BBC television news bulletin and compared and contrasted it to how news and information is presented nowadays. They were fascinated by the changes that they observed.
- In the best teaching, pupils rise to their teachers' high expectations and the challenging tasks which are well suited to their varying abilities. They are taught at a good pace, and help each other in pairs or in groups. They respond well to their teachers' challenging questioning, which deepens their thinking.
- Teaching assistants are used effectively for both in-class and small-group support. They make a good contribution to pupils' learning.
- Teachers find opportunities to develop pupils' literacy skills well. In a religious studies lesson about temptation, for instance, the teacher required pupils to name as many synonyms as possible for the word 'tempt'. Pupils shared their own knowledge and industriously consulted dictionaries and thesauri to identify a wide range of alternative words, thus expanding their vocabulary well.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good.
 - Pupils are eager to learn. They try hard and gladly work together in pairs and groups.
 - Pupils enjoy coming to school and treat each other, adults and visitors in a respectful and welcoming manner.
 - Pupils are well aware of various types of bullying, including cyber-bullying. Pupils report that when occasional disagreements do occur, they are resolved quickly by members of staff.
 - Pupils say they feel safe in school and are well aware of unsafe situations. They know, for
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instance, how to keep themselves safe when using the internet, and when cycling on roads.

- Pupils and their families experiencing difficulties with learning, behaviour or regular attendance are well supported by the school's family support worker and school leaders. As a result, attendance has moved closer to average from previously low levels and, in the last year, exclusions have markedly reduced.
- Pupils appreciate the many opportunities offered to them to take responsibility, such as being members of the eco-warriors or school council. They are proud to help those less fortunate than themselves. Each year group decides on a charity which they would like to support, and pupils take responsibility for organising their own fundraising activities. Pupils have raised £3000 this year for good causes.
- Occasionally, there is a little disruption to learning because of minor misbehaviour. Teachers manage these situations well and so it does not escalate.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher sets a clear sense of purpose and direction to improve all aspects of the school's work. Working closely with other leaders and the governing body, she has ensured that all staff feel valued and included in the drive to bring about sustained change. As a result, during the past year, the quality of teaching, pupils' achievement and their behaviour have all improved considerably.
 - Leaders frequently check the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. As a result, they have a sound understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This information is used well to inform termly improvement plans, which include training programmes to help teachers improve the quality of their lessons.
 - Half-termly reviews of each pupil's progress are used to hold teachers, as well as other adults delivering small-group support, to account for the quality of their teaching. The information is also used well to identify the help needed for pupils who are falling behind in their learning and has resulted in their improving achievement.
 - School leaders ensure that performance targets for staff link directly to pupils' achievement and the targets set in the school's improvement plans. Checks on the performance of staff through lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work are undertaken regularly. They have correctly identified the next areas for improvement in teaching to secure consistently good learning. Leaders and the governing body pay close attention to pupils' progress information when taking decisions about teachers' pay.
 - The range of subjects taught meets statutory requirements. In order to strengthen the school's focus on ensuring that all pupils make consistently good progress, a teacher in charge of developing the curriculum has been appointed to start in September 2013. Leaders have planned that this additional expertise will be used to bring about further improvement, including opportunities for extended writing and the practical application of mathematical skills across different subjects.
 - The Year 4 and Year 6 residential visits, visitors to the school and the pupils' work towards gaining accreditation as a Unicef Rights Respecting School, for example, enrich pupils' experiences. With these and other opportunities, the school ensures that pupils' spiritual, moral,
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social and cultural development is well promoted.

- The local authority provides good support for school leaders and teachers and this has contributed positively to improvements in the quality of leadership and teaching.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors bring considerable expertise, including in the field of education, to the school. They have a firm understanding of the quality of teaching as well as pupils' achievement, including for groups, and how this compares to similar schools. Through frequent visits to the school, which includes dropping into lessons, and discussions with staff and pupils, governors directly check on all aspects of the school's work. Governors therefore have the tools and ambition to challenge and support the school's leaders with rigour to bring about rapid improvements in teaching and pupils' achievement. The performance of staff is managed well. Good teachers and those who take on additional responsibility are appropriately rewarded. The governing body makes sure that the pupil premium funding is spent effectively to narrow any gaps in achievement. The governing body ensures that all statutory duties are met, including arrangements for pupils' safeguarding.
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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	117122
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	411838

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	187
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Clive Mitchell
Headteacher	Heather Anderson
Date of previous school inspection	14 July 2010
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