

# The Len Wastell Infant School

High Road, Pitsea, Basildon, SS13 3AB

## Inspection dates

4–5 July 2013

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

## 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 not yet consistently good over time. Attainment by the end of Year 2 is broadly average in reading and improving in mathematics, but has been below average in writing for a number of years.
- Pupils do not have adequate opportunities to practise their skills in longer pieces of writing.
- Teaching does not always help pupils to make good or better progress when work does not match their needs. The work set in lessons is too easy or too difficult for some of them.
- The school's expectations of what pupils can achieve have not been high enough, especially for pupils capable of doing harder work.
- Pupils do not always have enough advice on how to improve their work because teachers' marking is not consistently helpful.
- Until recently, senior leaders did not track the pupils' progress closely enough to identify and tackle underachievement.
- Recent improvements to teaching and additional adult support for pupils have not been established for long enough to ensure pupils make good progress.

### The school has the following strengths

- Behaviour is good throughout the school and incidents are managed in an effective way. Pupils feel safe at school.
- More pupils are on track to reach the nationally expected levels of attainment than did so last year. Pupils make good progress in reading because it is taught well.
- The new headteacher and the governors have made a positive impact on pupils' progress by improving the quality of teaching. They now have rigorous and effective systems to check the work of the school.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed 11 lessons, two of which were seen together with the headteacher. All teachers were observed.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, school staff, governors and a local authority representative.
- The inspector took account of 22 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the summary information from questionnaires distributed to parents by the school. Other parents talked to the inspector at the start of the school day. Nineteen staff questionnaires were also considered.
- The inspector looked at a range of documents, including the school's analysis of how well it is doing, the school development plan, information about pupils' progress, checks on the quality of teaching, records of governing body meetings and others relating to attendance, behaviour and safeguarding. The inspector also examined work in pupils' books.

## Inspection team

Susan Thomas-Pounce, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average infant school.
- The large majority of pupils are White British. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below the national average; the proportion who speak English as an additional language is also below average.
- The percentage of pupils supported by the pupil premium, which in this school applies only to pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, is well above average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is above average, as is the proportion supported at school action plus or through a statement of special educational needs.
- The school is a member of the Basildon Education Schools Trust (BEST).
- The current headteacher has been in post since September 2012.

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

- Make teaching consistently good or better, and so raise pupils' achievement, by:
  - matching work precisely to pupils' needs in all lessons and in all classes so it is challenging but achievable, especially to stretch the most able pupils
  - giving pupils good-quality feedback in marking by highlighting strengths and showing the next steps for improvement.
- Increase pupils' progress across the school, particularly in writing, by:
  - providing more opportunities for pupils to practise their skills in longer pieces of writing.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- The majority of children start school with skills and understanding below those expected for their age. Attainment in reading and mathematics is broadly average. However, given their starting points, pupils' attainment is not high enough across the school, particularly in Year 2 in writing.
- Children in the Reception classes are given many opportunities to develop their skills, especially speaking and listening skills. However, progress for these children and older pupils is inconsistent. Weak planning and inconsistent teaching here and across the school mean that pupils do not develop a wide range of writing skills to match those in their reading. Also, more-able pupils are not consistently challenged and do not always make the best possible progress. In Year 2, not enough pupils who are capable of exceeding nationally expected levels in English and mathematics are doing so.
- In the 2012 Year 2 national assessments, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals were further behind their classmates than similar pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. This year the pupil premium has been spent well on providing additional adult support, extra training for both teachers and the other adults who support learning, as well as more careful checks on eligible pupils' progress. Consequently, their progress is improving and the gap between their attainment and that of other pupils is narrowing; this highlights the school's commitment to promoting equality of opportunity.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make expected progress in both reading and mathematics because the work and support that are planned for them in small groups, individually or in class are appropriately tailored to their learning needs. They make weaker progress in writing, in line with other groups of pupils.
- The results of the assessments in reading for Year 1 pupils last year were well below national expectations for boys and girls. The school leaders' response was prompt, and attainment for the current Year 1 is well above expectations. Additionally, the current Year 2 pupils have improved their skills and closed the gaps identified in their previous results. Pupils enjoy reading; they tackle unfamiliar words using their improved understanding of letters and sounds.
- Currently, better planning means that most groups of pupils now make steady progress in reading, writing and mathematics. However, progress is inconsistent because the comments in teachers' marking do not always provide enough guidance for pupils to improve their work.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Teaching has not been consistently good enough over time to ensure that pupils progress rapidly enough to reach their full learning potential, especially in writing. The work pupils have done in their books and discussions about the progress pupils have made confirm that, despite recent improvements, inconsistencies remain and further improvement is required.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve have not been high enough in the past to raise attainment. Although expectations are now higher and the quality of teaching is improving, some weaknesses remain.
- Pupils are not provided with enough opportunities to develop their writing through longer pieces of work and activities fail to challenge pupils of different abilities, especially those of the more-

able pupils. Marking is not used consistently well throughout the school to give pupils advice about what to do next to take their learning forward.

- Children in Reception benefit from a blend of adult-led activities and opportunities to learn on their own. The activities provided are interesting and successfully engage children of varying abilities. However, teaching is patchy. At its best it is characterised by high-quality questioning by all adults. This develops the children's thinking skills, makes them use a wider range of vocabulary and develops their imagination.
- The teaching of letters and sounds is well organised and reading is well taught with plenty of opportunities for pupils to read widely. Pupils are encouraged to use the library and reading together with other pupils, including Year 6 pupils from the junior school, supports their progress.
- Teaching assistants are used effectively and make a good contribution to pupils' learning, particularly for those who need additional help with language and literacy.
- Where teaching is stronger, expectations are high, tasks are interesting, resources are of a good quality and all ability groups are challenged. However, this is not consistent and information on pupils' progress is not used effectively or consistently to plan enough challenging and engaging lessons that meet individual needs.
- Some effective steps are being taken to raise achievement in writing. There are some good examples of pupils applying their writing skills in subjects other than English. For example, pupils in Year 1 used historical vocabulary well in describing the artefacts they had seen on a trip they had made that week to the Natural History Museum. However, this good practice is not consistent throughout the school.

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

- Pupils' behaviour and safety are strong aspects of the school. Pupils, parents and staff all think behaviour is good and believe the pupils are safe and well cared for in school. Children in the Reception classes settle quickly into the school because of the warm atmosphere and the strong relationships established by adults.
- Observations of playtimes and lunch breaks show that pupils play well together outside. There is a wide range of activities for them and pupils enjoy playing on the large equipment. There are enough adults to supervise and to support the games the pupils play such as cricket and skipping.
- In discussions, pupils stated that behaviour is good. They usually have positive attitudes to learning and they work well together, sharing, taking turns and listening to each other, particularly when lessons are interesting and challenging.
- Behaviour is usually good in classrooms and around the school. Where teaching is weaker, some pupils occasionally lose concentration and low-level misbehaviour occurs. Even so, school records of incidents show that behaviour is typically good over time.
- Pupils feel safe at school and are well looked after by the staff. Pupils have a good understanding of bullying and the different forms it can take, including persistent name-calling, physical bullying and cyber-bullying. They know what to do should bullying occur, and know that if they talk to an adult any problems will be sorted out. The school's records confirm this.

- A dip in attendance has been addressed, and it has now moved closer to the national average from low levels. The school now intervenes more quickly when pupils miss school or do not attend regularly enough.

## **The leadership and management**

## **requires improvement**

- The improvements introduced by the new leadership team are beginning to raise the quality of pupils' education, but are too recent to have had a sustained impact on teaching and achievement. The headteacher is providing an effective steer for the school's development. She is skilled and accurate in observing teaching, recognising strengths and areas for development and giving highly professional feedback.
- The management of teachers' performance is linked to the current nationally expected standards for teachers. The checking of teachers' performance identifies targets and training needs for each teacher. However, this improved practice in teaching has not yet led to improved rates of progress in all subjects and all year groups.
- This year improvements have been made to the curriculum, the quality of teaching, and behaviour management, and underachievement is being addressed through better tracking of pupils' progress and extra support for pupils falling behind in their learning. The slow progress in writing is being tackled successfully by improving teaching and learning. Consequently, the results of the 2013 Key Stage 1 national assessments show achievement is improving. Responses to the staff questionnaires are very positive about the school's leadership strategies.
- The governing body has worked well with the local authority in the recruiting of a new headteacher. The local authority continues to provide good advice and support in the areas of leadership, governance and teaching. The school has close links with other schools in the Basildon area and uses these effectively to provide training opportunities for staff and learning opportunities for the pupils.
- The school provides an appropriate range of subjects and topics to promote pupils' learning. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well in all subjects. It is an integral part of the school's work, for example in pupils' artwork and their work on other countries, including religions. Pupils fully enjoy the good range of after-school clubs, which are well attended. All pupils have equal access to the range of learning experiences that the school provides. Discrimination, in any form, is not tolerated. However, not all pupils have received consistently good teaching over time.
- Only a few parents responded to the online Parent View, but the school's own survey shows that most parents are satisfied with the education and care provided.
- Pupil premium funding has been properly used to provide for the pupils who are eligible to benefit from it. One-to-one support is helping to raise the achievement of these pupils.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They are enthusiastic and supportive. Most have a clear overview of pupils' attainment and progress and know that the school's performance is not good in comparison to other schools nationally. Governors are kept informed by means of high-quality reports from the headteacher and their visits to school. Governors evaluate the school's performance against the priorities set in the development plan. They understand the school's strengths and

weaknesses, and now check the spending of the pupil premium funding more closely to ensure that eligible pupils benefit. The governing body has worked well with the local authority to help manage the changes to leadership. Governors have worked with the headteacher to create a more rigorous system where teachers' pay is more closely linked to pupils' progress. Governors undertake training to develop their understanding of their responsibilities. They have ensured that the site is secure and all safeguarding requirements are fully met, and use financial resources effectively.

## 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>	114808
<b>Local authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	412544

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	135
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Richard Harris
<b>Headteacher</b>	Sasha Furze
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	16 June 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	01268 553547
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