

# Homerswood Primary and Nursery School

Kirklands, Welwyn Garden City, AL8 7RF

**Inspection dates** 10–11 July 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	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		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Pupils' achievement in reading and mathematics in Key Stages 1 and 2 is improving but is not yet consistently good.
- Recent improvements in the quality of teaching have not been in place for long enough to make sure that all pupils achieve well.
- At times, teachers do not question their pupils well enough to test their thinking or to find out what they can do. This means that learning is not always set at the right level of difficulty, particularly for more-able pupils.
- In some lessons, pupils do not have enough opportunities to work on their own or with their classmates to develop their own ideas.

### The school has the following strengths

- Improvements in the Early Years Foundation Stage mean that more children are making good progress.
- Better teaching is helping most pupils to make good progress in writing.
- Teachers mark work very regularly. They write detailed comments and check that pupils have time to follow up the advice or extra work they have set.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They feel safe. They are happy to come to school and their attendance has improved.
- The headteacher and other senior leaders have tackled weaker teaching. They have given teachers good guidance and support, which has helped teaching to improve.
- Governors have an accurate picture of the school's strengths and of further improvements needed. They do not hesitate to ask questions of school leaders.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 12 lessons taught by nine teachers. Three of these lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher or the deputy headteacher. In addition, inspectors made a number of shorter visits to lessons and walks around the school to look at pupils' learning. Inspectors listened to pupils read and attended two assemblies.
- Inspectors met with a group of pupils and talked to other pupils in lessons and in the playground.
- Inspectors saw pupils' written work during lessons and looked in greater depth at a selection of books from all the classes.
- Inspectors took account of the 33 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the very small number of letters sent by parents. Inspectors spoke informally to parents as they brought their children to school at the start of the school day.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other school leaders and staff, and three members of the governing body. Inspectors spoke informally with other staff. The responses to the questionnaires completed by 26 members of staff were considered.
- Inspectors looked closely at a number of documents including the school's checks on how well it is doing and its plans for improvement. They went through the school's information about pupils' progress over time. Inspectors looked at records of the quality of teaching, minutes of governing body meetings, and local authority reports on the school. They checked how the school keeps its pupils safe and looked at records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.
- During the first day of the inspection, most of the Year 3 and Year 4 pupils were away from the school on a visit. On the second day of the inspection, Year 6 pupils were visiting their new secondary schools. On the same day, all other pupils moved up to their next class, with most pupils working with their new teacher for the first time.

## Inspection team

Elizabeth Cooper, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Christopher Christofides

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is of just below average size compared to other schools.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- An average proportion of pupils are eligible for the pupil premium, which, at this school, is additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- In 2012, the school did not meet the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- At the end of the Nursery Year, approximately one-quarter of the children continue into the Reception class, with other children joining at the start of Reception. Apart from this, few pupils join the school at times other than the usual starting-point.
- The headteacher was appointed in January 2011. Other members of the senior leadership team have been in post since September 2012. There have been a considerable number of new teaching staff appointments since the headteacher's arrival.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better and raises pupils' achievement further by:
  - making sure that teachers ask pupils questions which find out what they know already and help pupils to think about what they are learning
  - ensuring that the work given to pupils is sufficiently demanding, particularly for the more-able pupils
  - giving enough time for pupils to work on their own or in groups so that they can explore their ideas in depth.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Pupils' learning and achievement during Key Stage 2 went through a period of decline after the previous inspection and their progress dipped. Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2012 fell sharply to well below average, especially in reading and mathematics. Standards have risen this year and are now close to the national average in the current Year 6, but not enough pupils are doing well.
- School leaders have improved teaching, so that most pupils make the progress they should be making. Fewer pupils are doing better than this, however, especially the more-able pupils. Achievement is still too uneven in different classes and therefore requires improvement.
- During Key Stage 1, pupils do not make enough progress in Year 1, although they catch up quickly in Year 2 and achieve well. In 2012, Year 1 pupils did not do well in the screening which checked their skills in linking letters and sounds (phonics). This year, however, the teaching of phonics has improved, and pupils are now more confident in working out new or tricky words.
- At Key Stage 2, some pupils do not achieve as well in reading as in writing. Standards are rising because pupils read more regularly. The school has more activities to help pupils enjoy reading, such as the 'reading baton', where a pupil shares their favourite book during assembly. A Year 3 pupil was excited about writing about a book he had enjoyed on a green paper leaf for the Reading Tree, which displays pupils' book reviews.
- Most disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make as much progress as other pupils, because the teaching and support they receive have improved this year.
- Pupils eligible for the pupil premium did not make enough progress in 2012, because they did not receive extra support before Year 6. As a result, they were almost 18 months behind other pupils in mathematics, with a gap of nearly two years in English. The school has used the pupil premium this year to give extra help to eligible pupils. These pupils have made better progress in writing and mathematics than other pupils and are less than half a term behind in reading.
- Work in pupils' books shows that pupils are becoming more confident in using their mathematical skills to solve real-life problems and to look at number patterns. This is helping them make better progress in mathematics this year. In a Year 6 lesson, groups of pupils had to act as detectives to solve a murder mystery, showing good skills in working out mathematical codes to find out who had killed the inspectors!
- Many children start Nursery with levels of knowledge and skills well below average. They make good progress during the Early Years Foundation Stage, including in reading and numbers, because teachers and other adults plan activities in the classroom and outdoors which interest children and help them to learn well.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- The amount of good teaching has improved significantly this year. Teaching still requires improvement because it has not helped enough pupils to make good progress. Teaching seen during the inspection was not entirely consistently good and none was outstanding.

- Teachers do not always make the best use of questions to find out exactly what pupils know at the start of the lesson. In these lessons, pupils do not make as much progress because they repeat learning, rather than being able to explore something new. When teachers spend too long talking to the class, pupils do not have enough time to work on their own or in small groups so that they can think things out for themselves.
- Teachers do not always make enough demands on pupils. Even where the teaching is particularly effective, more-able pupils are sometimes not given harder work to help them think more deeply about what they are learning. At times, teachers do not ask pupils to explain in detail what they have learnt.
- In lessons where pupils make good progress, teachers make sure that pupils understand what they are learning and why. The Nursery children used lettuces they had grown in their garden to make sandwiches, before hearing the story *Sam's Sandwiches*. The lesson helped children learn about healthy eating and hygiene, as they worked together to pick and prepare the lettuces.
- In several lessons, teachers and other adults worked as a team to help pupils achieve well. In a good Year 2 lesson, pupils were excited by the description of the dinosaur invented by the teacher and another adult. Both staff helped pupils to spell the sounds and letters of new words and to act out punctuation with their arms, much to the pupils' delight.
- Teachers mark pupils' books daily, often writing detailed comments about pupils' work. They give pupils time to do corrections and complete extra questions set by the teacher. This helps pupils improve their work. Pupils explained to inspectors about the 'non-negotiables' card in all their books which reminds them about writing neatly and setting out their work carefully.
- Pupils' books and their lessons showed that pupils develop English and mathematics skills in their different subjects. The Year 4 teacher checked that pupils used words accurately in their books when writing what they had learnt in science. In Reception, children put language and mathematics into practice when finding out about objects that sink or float.

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

- Pupils are proud of their school and say that behaviour has improved during their time here. A pupil explained: 'Sometimes we can be a bit silly, but we're mostly well behaved.' Parents and staff agree that behaviour is good. A member of staff wrote: 'All children follow the Homerswood vision and code. They are all pleasant and polite and wonderful to be around.'
- Pupils are keen to learn and they behave well in lessons, even where the work is not set at the right level of difficulty. They work equally well on their own or in groups.
- The lunchtime is calm. It is well supervised by adults. Pupils of different years mix together well on the school field, making the most of the games and the school's 'forest' area. They appreciate the many clubs on offer, from cookery, choir and chess to the Crazy Comic Club which helps boys to develop their writing. Pupils enjoyed giving coaching tips to each other in their gym club.
- The site is secure, and pupils feel very safe at school because 'all the adults look after us'. Pupils have learnt how to use the internet safely.
- Pupils are aware of all types of bullying, including cyber-bullying. They are confident that there is very little bullying at the school now, and that any concerns will be dealt with swiftly.

- Pupils enjoy coming to school. They like the 'shooting stars' system which rewards them for good work and behaviour. Pupils' attendance has improved and is now average. All parents who completed the online questionnaire agreed that their children are happy at Homerswood.
- Occasionally, when pupils have to listen to their teacher for overly long periods, they start to lose concentration.

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

- The headteacher, deputy headteacher and the teachers in charge of subjects have an accurate view about teaching because they visit lessons regularly, check pupils' books and discuss pupils' progress with each class teacher. They have dealt with inadequate teaching, making sure that teachers have good support and training to help them improve. The impact is very evident in the improved quality of teaching this year, pupils' improved rates of progress and the rise in standards.
  - Governors and leaders use the clear aims and actions of the school's improvement plan to help the school move forward quickly. As a result, marking has already improved.
  - Teachers are set clear targets and these have made a difference in accelerating pupils' progress. Teachers are held to account in line with the national standards. Leaders and the governing body ensure that they are only given more responsibilities or pay where their teaching is consistently good.
  - The local authority has provided strong support to the school by helping new leaders become skilled in checking teaching and looking at information about how well pupils are doing. The local authority has supported the school fully in setting challenging targets to pupils.
  - The school teaches subjects through interesting topics, which make the pupils' curriculum broad and balanced. The artwork around the school, ranging from the Year 2 aboriginal 'dreamings' to the school's version of Monet's *Water-Lily Pond* jointly painted by pupils and parents, contributes well to their spiritual and cultural development. The 'Grow a £1' project and support for 'adopt an animal' through the World Wildlife Fund have increased pupils' sense of moral responsibility.
  - The school keeps in touch with parents and carers as much as possible. Parents like being able to talk to teachers at the beginning or end of the school day. A parent who wrote to inspectors praised the 'Sharing Assemblies' as 'a good place to see how much effort is put into the children's learning, developing their confidence and raising the school standards at every level'.
- **The governance of the school:**
- The governing body is highly committed to improving the school. They have supported the headteacher in tackling a legacy of weak teaching and leadership. Governors make regular visits to check on key areas of the school plan, such as looking at pupils' books when visiting lessons, as well as meeting with school leaders. This gives them first-hand knowledge about how well the school is doing. The Chair of the Governing Body frequently talks to parents in the playground so that she can find out their views.
  - Governors make the most of the good-quality training provided by the local authority to help them keep up to date. They understand pupil data and ask searching questions about pupils' progress, including that of different groups. Governors know how the pupil premium funding is used to provide support for eligible pupils and keep a close eye on how well these pupils are

doing.

- Governors have managed the school's finances well, so that the school has been able to appoint a number of staff with good teaching skills. They check regularly that all the necessary safeguarding arrangements are in place, and so have ensured that all safeguarding requirements 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>	117252
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	412877

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	193
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Tara Philbert
<b>Headteacher</b>	Debbie Shirley
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	16 March 2009
<b>Telephone number</b>	01707 320610
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