

Field Junior School

Watford Field Road, , Watford, WD18 0AZ

Inspection dates 19–20 September 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	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.

- Pupils make good progress and attainment by the end of Year 6 is very high in mathematics and above average in English.
- Attainment in mathematics has improved greatly over recent years because of very effective work to ensure that pupils in all classes develop good mental mathematical skills and learn to apply these to solve complex number problems.
- Pupils' good behaviour ensures they make the best of their time in lessons.
- Pupils say how much they enjoy school because they feel safe and free from bullying. There have been no recent exclusions and attendance is consistently above average.
- Consistently good, and sometimes outstanding, teaching means that pupils achieve well in all classes.
- Teachers make learning fun and have high expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- Good leadership by the headteacher and senior staff is a key reason for the school's rapid improvement in the quality of teaching and pupils' standards.
- Effective systems to manage teachers' performance have enabled the leaders and governing body to rectify weaknesses in teaching and raise achievement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Achievement in writing lags behind that in reading and mathematics, mostly because boys do not always make the best possible progress.
- The gap between the attainment of pupils eligible for the pupil premium and others in school in both English and mathematics is not closing quickly enough. This gap is not picked up quickly enough by the leaders during the year to ensure pupils benefit from extra help.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 19 lessons, of which two were joint observations with senior leaders. The inspectors also made a number of brief visits to other lessons.
- Meetings were held with pupils, parents, leaders of subjects, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors took account of the 30 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) at the time of the inspection.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents including records of the progress of every pupil, planning and monitoring files, behaviour records and documents relating to attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Terry Elston, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Fatiha Maitland

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The proportion of the pupils eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in local authority care and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, is a little below average.
- Two thirds of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and nearly a half speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who are supported through school action is above average, while the proportion at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The school holds the ECO Schools and Healthy School awards.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expected for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Narrow the gap between the attainment of pupils eligible for the pupil premium and others in the school by:
 - regularly checking their achievement during the year using the school's data on pupils' progress and evidence from lesson observations
 - taking swift action to help these pupils catch up
 - ensuring the leaders and governing body evaluate the impact of the pupil premium funding on raising the achievement of those eligible to receive it.
- Raise attainment in writing to match that in reading and mathematics by:
 - making tasks as motivating to boys as they are for girls
 - checking that boys get down to writing quickly and don't lose time
 - raising teachers' expectations of how much and how carefully pupils write in subjects other than English.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils' skills on entry to the school are broadly typical of their ages, and they are right to feel they make good progress. Most parents who spoke to inspectors agreed and said how well prepared their children are for secondary school.
- In the national tests, the results in 2012 showed a marked improvement on the previous year and were above average overall, and very high in mathematics. In 2013, the school looks to build on these successes with a higher proportion of pupils attaining and exceeding the expected standard in both English and mathematics. The most able pupils attained very high standards, particularly in mathematics where nearly one half of pupils attained Level 6, the highest level possible.
- Pupils enjoy reading and happily pick up a book for pleasure. By Year 6 they are good at skimming texts in books and using the internet to gain information quickly about their topics. In writing lessons, pupils make their writing interesting for the reader by using imaginative words, particularly when extolling the joys of chocolate or describing their powers as 'superheroes'. Over time, girls' attainment in writing is higher than that of boys. They tend to get down to work and start writing faster than boys, who sometimes are happier discussing the topic than putting pen to paper.
- In mathematics, the youngest pupils sometimes struggle with basic number work but by Year 6, they show excellent skills when calculating quickly in their heads and firing answers back at the teacher. They learn at an early stage the importance of setting out their sums carefully and checking their answers. Pupils enjoy many opportunities to solve problems, and one group of able mathematicians relished working out missing angles in complex shapes.
- Pupils also achieve well in physical and creative subjects. Their art and design work is of high quality and many play musical instruments proficiently. The school makes good use of additional funding for sports, as was seen when qualified coaches helped pupils achieve very well when learning hockey skills.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language achieve well. Those at an early stage of learning English benefit from extensive support, both by teachers and teaching assistants, and this ensures they develop good attitudes towards their learning. In 2012, pupils who speak English as an additional language attained higher standards than others in the school in both English and mathematics.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress in both English and mathematics. A small number, with more complex difficulties, made slower than expected progress in the 2012 national tests but latest assessments show they do well in all year groups. They, too, benefit from good teaching by teachers and skilled teaching assistants, who make good use of their accurate assessment of these pupils' difficulties. Pupils grow in confidence and enjoy increasing opportunities to work on their own.
- The school uses its pupil premium funding to provide individual tuition and small group work for disadvantaged pupils. While the gap between their attainment and others in English and mathematics is closing it remain two terms below that of others in the school in both subjects. This is because those with lower prior attainment sometimes make slow progress.

The quality of teaching is good

- In typical lessons, teachers plan carefully to ensure the work is challenging yet achievable for all pupils. They use teaching assistants well to teach groups and assess pupils' contributions in class discussions. Teachers are particularly skilled in getting the best out of the most able pupils through open-ended tasks and plentiful opportunities to work on their own.
- Teachers show a very good knowledge of the subjects they teach. For example, in mathematics they help pupils build on their prior knowledge and this helps pupils tackle new work confidently. In one lesson, a pupil exclaimed, 'I've got it! It makes sense now.'
- Teachers manage behaviour well. Expectations are high and pupils appreciate the way rewards and sanctions are applied fairly. Teachers' well co-ordinated approach to managing their pupils ensures they develop very positive attitudes to learning across the school.
- In class discussions, teachers ask searching questions that help pupils deepen their understanding. Sometimes, however, they rely on answers from the assertive pupils, often girls, who put their hands up. This sometimes allows less confident pupils to let others do the thinking.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to teach disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Pupils find the work challenging but achievable and grow in confidence as they move through the school. Teaching assistants also work effectively with the most able pupils, giving them just the right amount of help while allowing them to discover things for themselves.
- Teachers' marking is very helpful to pupils because it offers praise for their successes and clear guidance on how to do even better.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils fully deserve their reputation in the area for their good behaviour. Teachers ensure that they learn the rules quickly and disruptions in lessons are very rare.
- In class, pupils concentrate hard and persevere when the work is challenging. They work well on their own and in nearly all lessons there is a buzz of activity as they get on with their task. In the playground, pupils of all ages play well together and are quick to look after someone who looks sad.
- The school places great emphasis on regular attendance and parents respond well to the regular reminders about its importance.
- Pupils feel very safe at school, and say how well staff respond to very rare instances of bullying and racism. Records show decreasing numbers of incidents. Pupils are very knowledgeable about different types of bullying, from physical aggression to excluding someone from a group, and know to take care when using the internet.
- Pupils are very courteous towards adults and one another. With their 'talking partners' they discuss issues sensibly and readily accept opinions different to their own.
- Pupils take responsibility well. For example, older pupils enjoy helping Year 3 pupils settle into

school and the school council does a good job working with the leaders to improve facilities for their school.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is a good leader with high expectations of staff and pupils. Her goals for the school are ambitious yet achievable and have done much to improve achievement over the last two years. Weaknesses in mathematics, for example, were identified and through rigorous training and strong subject leadership it has become the school's main strength.
- The headteacher is supported well by others with leadership roles. As a team, they check regularly on the quality of teaching and give teachers realistic and helpful feedback on their work. Often, however, the leaders give a broad brush evaluation of learning in a lesson and say too little about the progress different groups who may not achieve as well as others, such as boys or disadvantaged pupils. Teachers value the annual reviews of their performance and rightly feel decisions about their pay and promotion are made fairly.
- The school has much data about the progress of pupils that provides a very good basis for setting priorities in the development plan. In the shorter term, however, the leaders do not check well enough on groups of pupils falling behind during the year.
- The leaders make good use of the expertise from the local community and nearby secondary schools to enhance the provision. For example, the school uses its sports funding effectively to employ sports coaches for lunchtime and after-school games sessions and to train teachers at this school on the best way to teach skills. These partnerships also provide very good opportunities for pupils to improve their skills using specialist teachers for art and design and swimming.
- Safeguarding systems are robust and meet all requirements. These are reviewed regularly by the leaders and the governing body. Pupils, as well as their parents, say how much these systems help them feel safe at school.
- The large majority of parents are pleased with the way the school informs them about the work of the school and their children's progress. A few say, however, that they would welcome more opportunities to meet informally with teachers and learn about how their children learn.
- Pupils find the activities provided for them in lessons interesting and appreciate the clubs at lunchtime and after school that enhance their skills in music and sport. They enjoy the broad topics they study and the good opportunities to research using books and the internet. There are good opportunities across the curriculum that are designed to encourage pupils to develop their numeracy skills in other subjects such as science and design and technology. However, expectations of their writing in these subjects are not always high enough to achieve the school's goal of attainment in English matching that in mathematics. A wide range of visits, including residential trips enhance the curriculum and help to develop pupils' academic, personal and social skills.
- Pupils enjoy many opportunities to reflect on issues such as the beauty of nature and the importance of caring for the environment. They learn much about different faiths and cultures and take a real interest in the lives of people in the countries they study.
- The local authority has offered constructive support to the school and helped it improve teaching and sustain its record of good standards and achievement.

■ The governance of the school:

- The governing body has a clear understanding of the school’s effectiveness, pupils’ progress and quality of teaching gained through regular visits, observations of lessons and discussions with the leaders. Governors have a good understanding of the link between teachers’ performance and their pay progression, and the governing body is well-equipped to make properly informed decisions. Governors are keen to improve their skills and benefit from good training matched to their needs. Governors ensure safeguarding requirements are met and have a good awareness of the school’s budget. They know how the funding for pupils eligible for the pupil premium is spent and why it is allocated in this way, but have too little information on how it is closing the gap with others in school.

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	117160
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	425247

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	237
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Zoe Nehra
Headteacher	Julie Henley-Washford
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2012
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