

Heathlands CofE Voluntary Controlled Primary School

New Church Road, West Bergholt, Colchester, CO6 3JF

Inspection dates 9–10 October 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		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Good teaching means that pupils make good progress from their starting points and achieve well.
- Pupils make the fastest progress and reach high standards in mathematics and reading because the school has given high priority to these subjects. Nevertheless, the school has now given high priority to writing and pupils' progress is improving.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children make good progress, especially in their reading through the use of phonics (matching letters to the sounds they make).
- Pupils are extremely courteous. They behave well and feel safe and happy at school. They thoroughly enjoy school and all that it has to offer.
- Leadership by the headteacher and deputy headteacher is good. They have a clear understanding of the school and what actions need to be taken to bring about improvement.
- The governing body has a thorough grasp of the school's strengths and what it needs to do to improve it further. Governors regularly challenge leaders because they are keen to make sure that all pupils achieve well.
- Leaders have a strong focus on teachers' professional development. Training and the use of talented teachers working with others has led to continued improvement in the quality of teaching.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not consistently high enough. This is most apparent in writing, where there are inconsistencies in teaching and progress, especially for the most able pupils, lags behind that for reading and mathematics.
- Outdoor learning in the Reception classes is not always planned well enough to support classroom activities and extend children's learning.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in 29 lessons, six of them jointly observed with the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors examined pupils' work in their books. They spoke with members of the school council, a random sample of pupils about their learning and to other pupils at break and lunchtimes. In addition, they listened to pupils from Years 1, 5 and 6 reading.
- The inspectors held meetings with members of the school's leadership team, as well as four members of the governing body. They also held telephone conversations with a representative of the local authority and a consultant employed by the school.
- Inspectors analysed a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, the school development plan, a range of policies including those relating to safeguarding, records of meetings held by the governing body, records relating to the quality of teaching, information about pupils' progress and records of behavioural incidents. They also looked at the school's website.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Inspectors took account of 61 responses from parents and carers to the online Parent View survey and the views expressed by parents and carers who spoke with inspectors in the playground. Inspectors also took account of the views of 37 staff who responded to a questionnaire.

Inspection team

David Berry, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Christopher Crouch	Additional Inspector
Sandra Teacher	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic heritages and those who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The number of pupils supported through the pupil premium (additional funding for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals) is below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of educational needs is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that more is consistently good or outstanding by:
 - ensuring that pupils of all abilities, especially the most able pupils, are set challenging work at the right level to ensure that they make good or better progress
 - raising expectations of what pupils can achieve in their writing, especially for the most able pupils
 - systematically providing professional development activities that focus on moving the quality of teaching from good to outstanding
 - providing pupils with activities that help them to make decisions about their learning for themselves and develop more independence.
- Improve the outdoor learning experiences for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage so that they complement what children are learning in the classroom and ensure that all children are suitably challenged.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- All groups of pupils achieve well. This was confirmed by pupils' attainment in the national tests in 2013. Pupils make good and sometimes outstanding progress in reading and mathematics, but it is not quite as strong in writing. Tests results show that pupils reach and some surpass the standards expected for their age in English and mathematics.
- Effective systems ensure that any pupils who fall behind are given support to help them quickly improve their learning. Disabled pupils and those with special needs are well supported in class. As a result of this effective support, they make good progress.
- The school teaches phonics (linking letters with sounds) extremely well. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 talked to inspectors about a wide range of authors and use their knowledge extremely well in their writing.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage classes enter the school with skills that are broadly typical for their age, with some at a higher starting point. Interesting and challenging indoor activities in the spacious accommodation provide a good start. In two lessons observed, for example, children in the Reception year were sequencing a story and many applied their knowledge of sounds in writing about it. Outdoor learning is less effective, however, because the activities do not fully engage children and do not always challenge them and extend their learning.
- Achievement in writing is inconsistent. The school is fully aware of this and has begun to introduce different approaches to raise expectations of what pupils can achieve. The school's checks on pupils' progress are now focusing on specific groups of pupils and their writing. Some writing seen in pupils' topic books is good, although teachers' expectations and the quality of writing are inconsistent. There is too little extended writing in pupils' English books.
- A very small number of pupils are supported through pupil premium funding. Pupils receiving this support make good progress and achieve as well as other pupils in English and mathematics. As a result, the gap between their attainment and that of their classmates is narrower than that seen nationally.

The quality of teaching is good

- Generally, teachers have high expectations of their pupils and make sure that they make good progress. Where teaching is good or outstanding, teachers set work at just the right level of difficulty for all pupils. Accurate assessment means that teachers move pupils on to the next level with additional challenges.
- Most teachers have good subject knowledge, noticeably in mathematics, and encourage pupils to use technical vocabulary correctly. In one lesson, the teacher noted that pupils in Year 3 were struggling with decimal notation and reshaped the lesson effectively so that they made good progress.
- Teaching in reading and mathematics is good. This was noted in a Year 1 and Year 2 topic session that promoted good speaking, listening and writing skills, underpinned by strong reading skills. In a lesson in Year 5, the class teacher reinforced the use of mathematical vocabulary

through a series of extended questions that sought to deepen pupils' understanding of shapes.

- The school teaches phonics extremely well. Pupils are prepared well in the Reception classes for the move to Year 1. They read widely and are keen to talk about their favourite authors.
- The management of pupils' behaviour is good. Pupils are keen to learn and enjoy fully the opportunities they have to explore and investigate subjects that are taught through topics.
- In the better lessons, pupils were challenged by high-quality questioning that encouraged independent and resourceful learning. In the occasional weaker lessons, pupils did not make enough progress because the work set did not demand enough from them. Teaching assistants are used effectively to support learning in the classroom and afternoon interventions.
- Teachers' marking is consistent and constructive with good comments seen in pupils' English and mathematics books. There was some inconsistency in the marking seen in their topic books.
- In two outstanding lessons, the rate of progress was excellent because pupils in Year 6, who were ready and encouraged to do so, began their learning with little support or guidance from the teacher. This was in contrast to some other lessons, when the teachers spent too long on introductions to lessons, not recognising that some groups of pupils did not need such a detailed start to the lesson.
- More generally, pupils do not undertake enough extended writing in English and some are not sufficiently independent in their learning, relying too heavily on their teacher to tell them what they should do next.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The school's positive ethos is a strength and underpins the good relationships that exist between pupils. They behave extremely well.
- Pupils also work extremely well with partners and in small groups. On numerous occasions, inspectors saw examples of pupils caring for each other. Pupils enjoy school and make use of the wide variety of clubs that it offers.
- Attendance is above average and pupils arrive on time.
- Pupils form strong and trusting relationships with staff. Pupils confidently asserted that if any bullying were to occur, it would be tackled swiftly by staff. They feel safe and are familiar with the procedures they should follow if they have any concerns. Parents agree that their children are safe and that behaviour at the school is good. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and understand about cyber-bullying.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well promoted. The school uses its curriculum to develop pupils' understanding of living in Britain. The school has also extended pupils' understanding by forging strong links with other schools from Kenya, Slovakia and South Africa as part of their work within the International School Award. Activities to strengthen these links have included correspondence, fund-raising and visits by members of staff.
- Pupils enjoy playing in the well-developed outside areas. Pupils describe the support and encouragement they receive from lunchtime assistants to play cooperative games as very

positive. All pupils participate in a number of activities and say that there is plenty for them to do in playtimes and lunchtimes. They like the wide range of clubs that are offered to them. Pupils also relish taking on additional responsibilities.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher provides good leadership and is supported very well by the recently appointed deputy headteacher. Together, they are helping other leaders to develop their skills so that good and outstanding teaching is shared consistently throughout the school.
- Checks on pupils' progress occur regularly each term and the resulting information is used to challenge staff and identify pupils who may need additional support from other adults. The senior leadership team recognises the need to have even greater impact on achievement. Good peer support and mentoring has ensured that senior leaders fully understand their roles and what they are expected to do.
- The curriculum is stimulating and makes use of the local environment. Some investigational activities clearly expect pupils to take greater responsibility for their own learning. However, the use of the curriculum to develop greater independence in learning is inconsistent.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted extensively through sport and music and through sporting activities in advance of the new sports funding for primary schools. The school has planned effectively for the use of this funding and has allocated it to the deployment of specialist sports coaches.
- Staff improvement is given a high priority by the leadership team and this focus is recognised by other staff and well represented in the school improvement plan. Leaders were keen to show a recent improvement in teachers' questioning and its good quality was clear in a substantial number of the lessons observed by inspectors. The school works effectively with several partner schools and readily shares good practice in teaching and learning.
- Parents and carers who responded to the Parent View online questionnaire and those who talked to inspectors were overwhelmingly supportive and would recommend the school to other parents. They noted particularly how approachable the staff are and the high quality of communication between home and school.
- The local authority provides 'light touch' support for the school, which includes training for governors. The local authority has confidence in the headteacher and is keen for him to support headteachers in schools that require improvement.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is clear about how successful the school is and what needs to be done to improve it. Governors have benefited from good training from the local authority that makes them well placed to make informed decisions. They have a good knowledge of how the school is performing and challenge leaders to bring about improvement. They are fully involved in the school's self-evaluation and forward planning. Governors are clear about the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' progress and about challenging poor performance. The governing body holds all staff and leaders accountable for pupils' achievement and governors are fully involved in the management of performance and awarding pay increases. They work hard at fostering trust and regularly visit the school to establish how well changes have been implemented. Governors work closely with staff to ensure that safeguarding policies and practices meet national requirements. They carry out

their responsibilities in the committees well. They monitor the use of financial resources effectively. They are fully aware of the use and impact of the pupil premium on the small number of pupils who receive support.

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	115083
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	429540

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	398
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Faith Spinlove
Headteacher	Neil Matthews
Date of previous school inspection	22 January 2009
Telephone number	01206 240288
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