

Writtle Junior School

Margaretting Road, Writtle, Chelmsford, CM1 3HG

Inspection dates 10–11 October 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 standards are rising steadily. Previous gaps in learning between different groups of pupils have narrowed significantly because teaching has improved and is now consistently good.
- In mathematics, where attainment had been weaker, the more-able now do particularly well. More than four times the national average achieved the highest Level 6 in this subject in 2012.
- Teachers make learning interesting and provide good advice in their written marking to help pupils of all abilities make good gains in learning and to make good progress.
- The headteacher, supported by well-informed governors, has a clear and determined vision for raising standards. Action taken has enabled sustained improvements in the quality of teaching and learning.
- Behaviour is good; pupils respect each other and adults in the school and care well for each other. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. This contributes to the vibrancy in the school where pupils develop confidence, self-esteem and a thirst for learning.
- Pupils benefit from a wide range of opportunities for physical, social and creative development, such as school sport, becoming first aiders and specialist music lessons.
- Parents are highly appreciative of the school and all it does. Almost all say that their children are happy, safe and well cared for and they would recommend this school to others.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching does not consistently enable pupils to take enough responsibility for their own learning, for instance, to move on to new tasks as soon as they are ready, or respond promptly to the teachers' good written guidance.
- Teachers with leadership responsibilities are not yet fully involved in the school's self evaluation process and as a consequence there are missed opportunities to ensure they focus on areas requiring development.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 14 lessons or parts of lessons. Some of these were observed with the head teacher to check how accurately he evaluated teaching.
- Inspectors took account of the 40 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and 21 staff questionnaire responses. A meeting was held with some pupils.
- Inspectors held discussions with senior staff and subject leaders, a group of governors, a representative of the local authority and the school improvement consultant.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at school documentation, including teachers' planning, the school's self-evaluation, school and subject development plans, assessment information, monitoring files, governing body minutes, safeguarding documentation and samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and talked with them about their reading.

Inspection team

Ruth Brock, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Diana Songer-Hudgell

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than most schools of this type but the number of pupils is growing.
- Most pupils are White British with very few who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs requiring school action is above the national average, as is the proportion requiring external support or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium – additional government funding for looked after children and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals – is below the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- There have been a number of significant changes to staffing since the previous inspection.
- The head teacher, staff and governors work collaboratively with local schools and partnerships.
- There is a privately run before-and after-school club on site, which is inspected and reported upon separately.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop the skills of all teachers with leadership responsibilities so that they contribute more to the rigorous monitoring and school's self evaluation by:
 - planning in time and opportunities for all leaders to work more collaboratively
 - using existing, good data to target priorities consistently across the school
 - making good use of the exemplars from within the school and from the local teaching school.
- Raise attainment further and accelerate pupils' progress by:
 - increasing the amount of outstanding teaching across all year groups
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning and for moving on when tasks have been completed
 - ensuring that there is regular, planned time for pupils to respond to teachers' marking and feedback using the best practice in the school as a model.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Standards are broadly in line with the national average, in reading, writing and mathematics. They have risen each year since the previous inspection. In 2012 they were the best they have been for some years. This represents good progress for each individual from their varied starting points.
- The significant number of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs settle into the school quickly because of the well-planned learning that meets their needs. This helps them to make at least as much progress as their classmates.
- The gap in attainment in 2012 between pupils eligible for pupil premium funding and others was significant. In English, they were a year behind, and nearly two years behind, in mathematics. Funding has been effectively used to ensure that all pupils are supported in class by extra adults and by a school counsellor. As a consequence, their progress has accelerated rapidly and they are now attaining similar standards as other pupils.
- The previous inspection pointed to attainment and progress in mathematics in Key Stage 2 as being an area for improvement. This has been accomplished through careful planning and as result, pupils' needs are met very well and standards have risen, especially for the more-able pupils, who now achieve the highest levels.
- The higher standards and rates of progress are not only due to good teaching, but are also the result of pupils consistently good attitudes to learning. Although they are sometimes reliant on the teacher to tell them to go on with the next task, they are keen and interested in learning, and concentrate well. This was supported by the quality of the work in the pupils' books.
- School data show that the percentage of pupils doing as well as most pupils nationally has increased since 2012. Pupils in all year groups are making consistently good progress in reading, writing and mathematics with the percentage of pupils exceeding the nationally expected levels of progress rising steadily.
- Pupils enjoy reading. They happily pick up a book for pleasure and eloquently explain why they like a particular author or style of book becoming animated when discussing their choices. Pupils make their writing interesting for the reader by using imaginative words, in for example, the 'jubilant journey' that *Wallace and Gromit* made.
- The school is using its allocated sports funding to employ an external, locally-organised programme of physical education and sport to build added depth to the already considerable participation in extra curricular sporting activities and to support less experienced staff. Pupils told us that the school is 'very sporty' and they are beginning to win many trophies.
- Pupils also achieve well in other creative areas. Inspectors observed a wonderful music lesson taken by the music specialist. Pupils proficiently played guitars, keyboards, xylophones and recorders and sang beautifully when recorded for a forthcoming celebration event.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching has improved since the previous inspection and has made a good impact on pupils' achievement. Staffing changes have meant a new team has been developed, and this has

invigorated the quality of teaching.

- Teaching is typically well organised and interesting. Pupils are asked to regularly assess their understanding either with a 'thumbs up' or by discussion with a fellow pupil. As a result, pupils enjoy their lessons and are eager to learn.
- Marking is a notable strength of the school and teachers understand what they need to do to help pupils to improve. Some use questioning well to challenge pupils to think more independently and deepen their thinking. However, sometimes teachers interrupt pupils' independent learning too readily, holding back their thinking.
- Teachers and learning support assistants work well together to ensure pupils, whatever their ability, make good progress. Pupils, especially those with disabilities and special educational needs, say they grow in confidence as they move through the school knowing who they can ask to help them. There is however, sometimes, a tendency for pupils in small groups to become too reliant on adults to direct and guide them. This hinders their independence.
- Teachers manage behaviour well ensuring pupils develop very positive attitudes to learning across the school. Expectations are high and pupils appreciate the way rewards and sanctions are applied fairly.
- A small amount of teaching requires improvement. This is because the work set was not always well matched to pupils' needs, limiting the rate of progress pupils could make. Staff do not have enough opportunities to see, within the school and elsewhere, what outstanding teaching looks like.
- Pupils are not always encouraged to take as much responsibility as possible for their own learning. As a result, they do not always take initiatives or challenge themselves further and this sometimes limits the progress they can make.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils enjoy coming to school reflected in the improvement to their attendance over the past year to above average and a significant reduction in the proportion of exclusions. Pupils say that the adults' and other pupils' friendliness are particular strengths of the school.
- Pupils behave very well in lessons and around the school and enjoy learning. They enjoy playing together and value the 'very friendly and helpful midday assistants'. Pupils take care over their work, presenting it consistently well throughout the school.
- Pupils are very courteous towards adults and one another. Adults model well respect for each other, pupils and the school's environment. They are proud of their school and remain so even after they have left. One pupil wrote to inspectors to say how his transition to secondary school went well because his time at the school had given him 'a lot of confidence'.
- Pupils take responsibility well for the roles they have been given. For example, older pupils enjoy duties like noting celebrations of pupils' achievements to put in the school's newsletter or being members of the school council which they take very seriously.
- Pupils say they feel very safe in school. They are knowledgeable about different types of bullying from physical contact to 'not being friendly', and know to take care when using the internet. They commented that there was virtually no bullying and they were confident that staff would

deal with any concerns.

- Parents say that they know that their children are safe and happy in school. Virtually all say that they would recommend this school to other parents and two parents wrote to inspectors extolling the virtues of the school, its leaders and the care it offers their children.
- Behaviour is not yet outstanding because, occasionally, when tasks do not motivate them, some pupils lose concentration and go 'off task', or fail to move on quickly enough when they have finished a task.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, well supported by all staff and governors, has a clear ambition for the school to be as good as it possibly can be. This has resulted in a rise in the standards in all aspects of school life since the previous inspection through a steady improvement in the quality of teaching and learning.
- Staff, pupils and governors have a very positive opinion of the headteacher's leadership. There is effective practice and leadership in the majority of areas of the school that bodes well for further improvements.
- Rigorous monitoring of teaching and pupils' progress, combined with appropriate training and support matched to the school's and individual's needs resulting in high levels of morale among staff and pupils.
- Leaders have a good awareness of the school's strengths and areas of development, and their improvement plan is focused on the right priorities to improve achievement further. Teachers are becoming increasingly accountable for their performance.
- Subject leaders monitor teachers' planning and pupils' progress by checking planning, assessment, lessons and work in pupils' books. However, the regularity of this monitoring, and the use of existing good data, is not fully consistent in all subjects and does not always feed into subsequent planning. Opportunities to collaborate are developing.
- Leaders are especially successful in promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. This is promoted through a wide range of subjects and activities, notably through its work to develop understanding of European arts and culture.
- Students and newly qualified teachers are recruited to the school so that senior leaders can effectively 'grow their own'. As a consequence teaching has improved considerably in the last two years with staff being motivated and eager to remain at the school.
- Links with other local schools and the teaching school are very strong and productive. This has a positive impact on school improvement, standards and staff's professional development. However, not all opportunities are exploited for best practice to be shared.
- The local authority has an increasingly appropriate, light touch approach to this good school. Leaders have worked tirelessly particularly in the last two years, to ensure that inadequate teaching is eradicated and they speak highly of the advice and guidance that the local authority has provided.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development based upon their monitoring usually conducted on 'governor days'. Through good-quality training from the local authority and by attracting experienced governors, they have developed good skills to interpret data. As a consequence, they support and challenge the head teacher effectively about the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. Governors receive appropriate information about the management of teachers' performance and see that teachers' pay rises are appropriately linked to pupils' achievements. They are fully aware of how the pupil premium and sports funding is spent, and the impact this has on the achievement of pupils. Governors ensure that the school meets current requirements for safeguarding children. Policies are regularly reviewed to ensure that children are kept safe and free from harm.

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	115047
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	425231

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	214
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ralph Bray
Headteacher	Nicholas Taylor
Date of previous school inspection	27 September 2011
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