

Fernvale Primary School

Somerby Road, Thurnby, Leicester, LE7 9PR

Inspection dates

16–17 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.

- Pupils' achievement throughout the school is good and pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their schooling.
- Children make good progress in the Reception class, where they benefit from a wide mix of exciting work.
- Pupils continue to make good progress as they move up the school. They reach above-average standards when they leave school in Year 5.
- Good teaching helps pupils to build on their skills year by year. Teachers provide pupils with work that is interesting, relevant and challenging.
- Pupils are very happy and feel very safe in school. Their behaviour in class and around the school is good. Pupils are keen to learn and enjoy taking responsibility.
- Leaders' checks on the quality of teaching are frequent and rigorous. Their clear feedback ensures it is good and improving. Plans and staff training to improve the school have been very successful. The school is well placed to improve even further.
- The governing body provides a good level of challenge and support to the headteacher and staff. It makes sure that the school meets all legal requirements.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The pace of learning sometimes slows during lessons when an activity lasts too long.
- Marking is not all of a high standard and does not all help pupils improve their work.
- Older pupils are not really sure of their long-term targets and do not take enough responsibility for their own rate of progress.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed the teaching in all classes. They visited 15 lessons taught by seven teachers as well as sessions for small groups of pupils led by teaching assistants. The headteacher or the deputy headteacher joined them for some of these visits.
- The inspectors held discussions with pupils, the headteacher, other teachers, and the Chair of the Governing Body. The lead inspector had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors heard pupils read and looked at a range of evidence, including records of pupils' progress, safeguarding documentation, behaviour logs and the results of the school's checks on the quality of teaching. They also examined the work in pupils' books.
- The views of 13 parents, analysed through the Parent View website, were considered. The inspectors also took account of the views of seven parents with whom they talked at the school gate and the views of several parents who wrote letters to them.

Inspection team

Gerald Griffin, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Enid Korn

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average sized primary school. Pupils transfer to secondary education at the end of Year 5.
- The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The remainder come from a wide variety of minority ethnic backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those in care) is at the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion of pupils supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also below average.
- The current headteacher has been in post since September 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that pupils make faster progress by making sure that:
 - the pace of learning does not slow during lessons
 - marking consistently provides pupils with clear advice about how to make their work better.
- Make sure older pupils are clear about their long-term goals so that they can take a higher level of personal responsibility for their progress towards them.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Children start school with levels of knowledge, skills and understanding that are typical for their age. Children make good progress in the Reception class to reach above average attainment in all areas of learning. More-able children do particularly well. For example, by the time they start Year 1 they can write interesting short sentences using a wide range of vocabulary and accurate spelling and punctuation.
- Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics has been steadily rising over the past three years because teaching has been getting better. In the Year 2 assessments in 2013, pupils' attainment was above average and this placed the school in the top 20% nationally. The attainment of pupils in Years 3 to 5 is above average, as it was for pupils who left school last year.
- Pupils make much better than expected progress in Years 1 to 5 in reading, writing and mathematics. Their progress is not yet outstanding because sometimes the pace of learning slows during lessons. When this happens pupils lose concentration.
- Pupils enjoy reading and do so regularly. Pupils' phonic skills (linking letters to the sounds they make) are well developed. The Year 1 phonics screening check in 2013 showed pupils' skills to be similar to the school's 2012 results, which were well above the national average.
- More-able pupils make good progress throughout the school. For example, all those who left the Reception class with above-average attainment in 2011 reached the higher levels in the Key Stage 1 tests in 2013.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs work hard in lessons. They make similar progress to their peers because of good teaching by well-qualified adults who know their needs well.
- Pupils eligible for the pupil premium also make good progress and the school uses its extra funding effectively. The gap in attainment between them and their classmates at the end of Year 2 is closing quickly. In English, the gap of nearly three terms in 2012 has been reduced to one term this year. In mathematics, the two term gap last year has closed completely. There is a similar picture at the end of Year 5, where the gap in attainment has been significantly reduced to a small difference in these subjects.
- Older pupils are not really clear about the long-term targets which teachers expect them to achieve. This means they find it hard to judge their own rate of progress, and this limits the opportunity they have to take responsibility for reaching them

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is nearly always good and, in some lesson, outstanding. Teachers have high expectations. They plan work, including homework, that stretches pupils and deepens their knowledge and understanding. Teachers' questions are challenging and demand extended responses.
- Work that teachers plan is relevant and engaging and, as a result, pupils enjoy lessons and work

hard.

- Teachers use assessments well to plan work that closely matches pupils' needs in reading, writing and mathematics. This means that pupils make much better than expected progress in these subjects.
- In the Reception class, teachers plan an appropriate balance of adult-led and child-chosen activities that cover all the areas of learning, both in the classroom and outdoors. Children mostly have clear challenging targets for their work and work well independently and with other children. Teaching prepares children well for more formal learning in Year 1.
- Staff in the Reception class make good use of regular and accurate assessments of each child's skills to plan challenging next steps in their learning. Their assessments of the standards attained at the end of the year have recently been independently verified.
- Teachers plan many opportunities to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. For example, older pupils recently researched charities and people who support them. In discussions with an inspector they reflected maturely on generosity and the need to help others who are less fortunate than themselves.
- Teaching assistants give valuable support, especially to disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs and those known to be eligible for the pupil premium. For example, they make sure these pupils concentrate in lessons, understand what they are learning and so make good progress.
- Marking is very regular. At its best, teachers' comments give pupils a very clear understanding of how they can make their work even better. This is not the consistent picture across the school.
- Typically there is a brisk pace to learning. Occasionally pupils' lose concentration and progress slows when activities, including some introductions to lessons, last too long.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils feel extremely safe in school. Their knowledge of how to keep themselves safe is highly developed. For example, older pupils know what to do if they encounter a fire and how to keep themselves safe on the internet.
- Bullying is unheard of and pupils are confident that staff would effectively resolve any incidents. Older pupils understand its different forms, such as cyber-bullying, and how to respond to them. Pupils feel very well looked after and supported by adults.
- Attendance has been average over recent years but has risen this term to above-average, which reflects pupils' enjoyment of learning.
- Pupils enjoy assessing their own work and that of a partner. This means they share good ideas, which they use to make their work better. This confident collaborative work contributes well to their gaining independence.
- Pupils have positive attitudes towards learning. They need little or no supervision when they are working independently. They understand fully that the part that they play in lessons is important if they are to reach the standards of which they are capable.

- Pupils are very willing to accept responsibilities. In the Reception class, children take responsibility for collecting the resources they need for their chosen activities. Older pupils are keen to take responsibility, too, as members of the school council and by contributing to class investigations.

The leadership and management are good

- The new headteacher's uncompromising drive for excellence is enthusiastically shared by all members of staff, who each make a valuable contribution to the school's capacity to sustain improvement.
- Leaders of the Reception class have successfully trained teaching assistants in the skills of accurately assessing children's capabilities and planning work in all areas of learning.
- Teaching is improving because leaders make rigorous checks on teaching and the quality of learning. The follow-up actions from these observations successfully tackle any weaknesses and improve teachers' skills. For example, successful training has improved the teaching of phonics.
- The school has made good use of support from the local authority and the local consortium of schools to improve the school. For example teachers' questioning skills have improved and the leaders provide clearer feedback to staff on the quality of their teaching.
- The way subjects are taught strongly promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, the school provides many opportunities for pupils to reflect on right and wrong, their feelings and respect for others.
- Pupils have two lessons of physical education (PE) a week that they thoroughly enjoy. These make an important contribution to their healthy physical development. Leaders have firm plans for spending the new primary school sports funding. For example, it will be used to improve the teaching of PE, pay for coaches to broaden the range of after-school sports clubs and increase pupils' participation in school games.
- Parents expressed positive views about their children's progress, the quality of teaching and leadership of the school. The new headteacher has been quick to respond to parents' wishes by running well-attended courses that help them support their child's learning at home.
- Leaders have a very clear commitment to combating discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity. This is shown in the good progress made by all groups of pupils from all backgrounds. The school fosters excellent relationships with outside agencies and other schools to improve pupils' life chances even more.
- School leaders at all levels are always thinking ahead so that they can make the school even better. They have already introduced plans to improve marking and make sure that older pupils really understand the use of their long-term targets. It is too early to judge their success.
- Child protection training for staff is thorough, and leaders implement child protection policies rigorously. The school completes all statutory checks on the suitability of staff to be employed.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has an accurate picture of how well the school is doing compared with

other schools through their regular visits to see the school at work and their clear understanding of data on pupils' progress. They use this information well to ask the school searching questions about its performance. For example, they are taking a keen interest in way the school is raising the ambition of those supported through the pupil premium. The governing body has a strong focus on staff training and is keen to improve its own skills. Governors check that the management of teachers' performance is rigorous. Only those teachers that have met the challenging targets set by the school, including those for pupils' progress, are considered for pay increases and promotion. Governors make sure that the school is spending the pupil premium funding on those eligible for it and that it brings benefits through higher achievement.

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	119967
Local authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	429561

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–10
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	174
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Helen Tait
Headteacher	Natalie Hackett
Date of previous school inspection	13 January 2009
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