

Knebworth Primary and Nursery School

Swangleys Lane, Knebworth, Hertfordshire, SG3 6AA

Inspection dates 7–8 November 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		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The school is improving through the headteacher's determined leadership and his relentless focus on securing better teaching.
- The strong and effective governing body shares the headteacher's ambitions for the school. It continually challenges him to bring about further improvements.
- Teaching is increasingly of a high quality, particularly in Years 5 and 6. Teachers use inventive methods to catch pupils' attention and stimulate their imaginations.
- Teachers provide many opportunities for pupils to evaluate their own work. Increasingly they use clear criteria to assess their own and others' work cooperatively.
- More-able pupils receive a high level of challenge in lessons and through additional programmes such as extension sessions before school.
- Subjects are linked imaginatively to provide rich, interesting and enjoyable experiences every day.
- The promotion of the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development runs through the fabric of school life. This accounts for the high degree of respect between adults and pupils and amongst pupils themselves.
- Pupils' excellent behaviour in lessons and around the school means the school is a happy and welcoming place. Pupils have a very clear understanding how to keep themselves safe.
- Pupils are strongly committed to learning, as shown by their high attendance and participation in lessons before school. They continually challenge themselves to improve.
- The way pupils collaborate when working on tasks or discussing ideas contributes greatly to their good and at times outstanding learning.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- In a small number of lessons teachers do not push learning forward fast enough.
- Pupils are not always given time to respond to their teachers' comments in their marking.
- At times, teachers do not use the outdoor areas in the Nursery, Reception and Year 1 classes to promote all areas of learning.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 24 lessons, eight of which were seen together with the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, school staff and members of the governing body, including the Chair. A telephone discussion was also held with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 104 responses to the online parent questionnaire (Parent View) and held informal discussions with parents at the start of the school day.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents including the school's own information on the pupils' current progress, planning and monitoring documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to safeguarding. Inspectors also took account of the 44 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors listened to the reading of a sample of pupils in Year 2.

Inspection team

Martin Beale, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Isobel Randall

Additional Inspector

Deborah Whittle

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than most primary schools.
- Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The school receives pupil premium funding for a below-average proportion of the pupils. This is extra government funding given to schools for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those in local authority care.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average, as is the proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- 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?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by:
 - increasing the pace of learning by speeding up delivery
 - making better use of the outside areas in Nursery, Reception and Year 1 classes to promote learning
 - providing more time for pupils to respond to teachers' comments in their marking of work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils' progress is accelerating and their attainment is rising. A strong feature is their development of learning skills such as research and enquiry. Test results for pupils in Year 6 are consistently well above average in each subject. Increasing numbers of pupils are working above levels expected for their age, giving them a very firm platform for starting secondary school.
- Children enter the Nursery and Reception classes with skills that are typical for their age. Their good progress means attainment is above average by the time they enter Year 1. Children become active learners, able to reflect on how well they are doing. These skills are built on across the school so pupils become independent and able to follow their own lines of enquiry.
- The pupils' understanding of phonics (the sounds that letters make) develops quickly. They use these skills to help deal with unfamiliar words. Pupils read widely for pleasure and develop refined skills such as deduction and inference which support their learning across all subjects.
- Action has been taken to raise boys' achievement in writing, for example by making their writing more relevant and with a clear purpose. This has led to standards of writing rising among boys. However, girls have also benefited, so gaps in attainment have not closed completely, the exception being in the 2013, when test results for boys in Year 6 were higher than those for girls.
- Pupils confidently handle numbers, whether working mentally or using written methods. They frequently have the opportunity to apply their skills by solving problems, undertaking investigations and in practical activities. This is leading to significant numbers of pupils reaching Level 6 (the level expected of pupils in Year 9) by the end of Year 6.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs also make good progress. Support is closely matched to individual need and led by trained adults. Its impact is carefully evaluated to ensure it is effective.
- The pupil premium is used to provide small group tuition and pastoral support for the pupils' personal development, with varying success. This is because the number of eligible pupils is small, they often have other learning needs and often join the school late in Key Stage 2. These pupils make good progress but their results in Year 6 fell in 2013. The gap between their attainment and that of others was two terms in mathematics, five terms in reading and two years in writing.

The quality of teaching is good

- Increasingly teaching is of an outstanding quality with very little less than good. Teachers have high expectations and ensure their lessons are challenging for all pupils, and particularly for more-able pupils. Pupils remain focused and engaged because teachers make lessons so interesting that there is hardly a moment in which their concentration can wander. Film, music, interesting texts and challenging investigations are all used to stimulate the pupils' imaginations.
- Skilled questioning is a key feature of the most effective teaching. Teachers make pupils think for themselves and probe their understanding. They seize every opportunity to clarify the pupils' understanding, continually encouraging them to reflect on how they can improve their work and share their 'top tips' for success with each other.

- The 'Learning Logs' work undertaken outside school is another example of the imaginative way pupils take responsibility for their learning. The open-ended, research and practical tasks are linked closely to topics and develop independent learning skills well.
- Teaching partners (the school's term for its learning support staff) work very effectively in classrooms or when taking small withdrawal groups. They are skilled at getting pupils to talk through what they are trying to do rather than making them dependent on adults for answers.
- Marking provides effective guidance for pupils about how well they are doing and provides steps to be taken for them to improve their work. These are increasingly being followed through but the school recognises that not all teachers ensure this regularly happens.
- Children learn through a wide range of interesting activities in the Nursery and Reception classes. Strong relationships help them to feel safe and secure. Children's ideas are respected and encouraged by all adults. Children move freely between inside and out, although activities in the outdoor areas do not always promote all areas of learning.
- When teaching is not at its most effective in a small and a rapidly diminishing number of lessons, learning slows. This is because pupils are not sufficiently engaged as the teaching is not interesting or is not delivered vibrantly and at pace.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils are very considerate and courteous to each other and to adults. They are exceptionally polite and well-mannered. Pupils are very keen to learn and determined to succeed. They love school, as shown by their very positive attitudes to learning and the care they take over projects at home such as the models of Anderson Shelters made pupils in Year 6.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school. Their parents almost unanimously agree. Pupils learn to be vigilant about bullying, but say incidents are rare and dealt with swiftly once an adult is made aware of them. They are taught how to recognise and deal with risks, including when using modern technology.
- Consistency by staff in dealing with pupils is a key to the respect they show to each other and all adults. Meticulous records and strong systems are in place to support the very small number of pupils who need to adapt their behaviour. The lunchtime club provides high quality support for a range of pupils that enables them to develop the skills required to become successful members of the school community.
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- Pupils provide tremendous support for each other in lessons and at other times. Play leaders in Years 5 organise activities at lunchtime and 'friendship benches' make sure no one is left without someone to play with. Pupils in Year 6 are training others in Years 4 and 5 in 'cooperative assessment' techniques by modelling alongside them how to constructively evaluate each other's work.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has led the school through a period of steady improvement. He has ensured everyone understands what makes for high quality teaching and how this can be achieved. By

using a variety of methods to check the performance of each teacher, tailored training has been put into place that has helped them improve. Only good or better teaching is rewarded financially through pay increases. More effective teaching, accurate self-evaluation and planning that is focused sharply on priorities to raise achievement give the school the capacity for further improvement.

- Through training focused on their individual needs, new subject leaders in English and mathematics are already making a contribution to improvement in their areas. They are developing the skills and tools to identify where action is needed and support their colleagues well in improving their teaching.
- Appropriate and effective engagement with the local authority has provided valuable guidance for leaders on how to give feedback following lesson observations, and challenge for the headteacher when setting targets for the school's performance.
- Equality of opportunity is at the heart of the school's work. Leaders continually evaluate the impact of support for pupils, such as through the pupil premium, so that all continue to make at least good progress.
- The parental partnership is strong and productive in supporting children's learning. Parents receive much information through the website about what is happening in school. Workshops are provided to give parents guidance on how mathematics is taught and on how to help their children stay safe on the internet.
- The organisation and teaching through subjects linked together in topics not only ensures all pupils make at least good progress but makes learning interesting. The focus on pupils thinking problems through before taking decisions makes their learning more secure. Pupils develop a deep understanding and respect for other customs and cultures. Both music and drama play an important part in their school lives.
- The school is using the new government sports funding to employ a specialist coach, building on its already strong provision for sport. This has helped to improve teachers' expertise and increase pupils' participation in clubs and other activities.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors' expertise is regularly updated through individual training, attending joint events with staff, visits to see the school at work and sitting in on school meetings. Their questioning is very thorough and detailed, including of the headteacher's interpretation of assessment data, challenging him to reach their aim of this being an outstanding school where every child can shine. Governors recognise this will come about through outstanding teaching and they are quite clear about how the headteacher is trying to get there. The governing body rigorously checks the impact of spending and monitors carefully the progress of priorities in the improvement plan. It is rigorous in keeping the school's safeguarding procedures updated and checking they are implemented. Governors have undertaken much e-safety training.

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	117120
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	425373

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	420
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gill Maddison
Headteacher	Michael John
Date of previous school inspection	23 September 2008
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