

Fairhouse Community Junior School

Long Riding, Basildon, SS14 1QP

Inspection dates 14–15 January 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Pupils' progress requires improvement because it is inconsistent across the school.
- Attainment in reading is below average. Pupils are not given enough time to read and understand different texts in detail, so their progress is too slow.
- Pupils' reading is not always fluent and their writing lacks structure.
- Teachers' marking does not always show pupils how to improve.
- Teachers do not make clear to pupils what level they are working at or aiming for. This reduces their progress and understanding.
- Teachers do not plan activities that are hard enough for all pupils, particularly the most able, and do not always have high enough expectations of how much pupils can learn in lessons.
- Teachers do not ask pupils sufficiently searching questions to check that they have understood, and adapt their lessons as a result. Some pupils then make weak progress if the work is too easy or too hard.
- Pupils' progress is limited because they do not get enough chance to use and apply their reading and writing skills in other subjects, or undertake investigations in mathematics.

The school has the following strengths

- Behaviour is good and pupils are both polite and courteous to each other and adults. They have a positive attitude to learning and this is helping to raise standards.
- Pupils feel safe and have a good understanding of how to stay safe and healthy, both in and out of school.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the quality of teaching and learning, and are improving both. The arrangements for managing the performance of staff have a sharp focus on improving pupils' progress and this is proving effective, especially in writing.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 15 lessons taught by nine teachers, as well as sessions led by teaching assistants. Four of these observations were done with the headteacher.
- Inspectors reviewed pupils' work and listened to pupils reading.
- Inspectors met with teachers who lead aspects of the school, groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors spoke to parents and carers informally before school and considered the 14 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.
- The 32 responses to the staff questionnaire were also analysed.

Inspection team

Richard Blackmore, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Rachel Garrett

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is slightly smaller than most primary schools.
- Most pupils are White British but the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is higher than average.
- A relatively high proportion of pupils join and leave the school partway through Key Stage 2.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium is much higher than the national average. This is additional funding provided by the government for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs receiving extra support through school action is above average. The proportion who are supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- There have been significant staffing changes over the last two years and a majority of teachers are new since the last inspection, including a new deputy headteacher.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is at least good by making sure that teachers:
 - set activities that are hard enough to challenge all pupils, particularly the most able
 - check pupils' understanding in lessons, and adapt the lessons accordingly so that pupils are not confused or able to coast with work that is too easy
 - mark pupils' work so that all pupils understand what they need to do to improve further.
- Ensure that pupils make faster progress and reach higher standards in writing, mathematics and, especially, reading by:
 - making sure that pupils make more use of their reading and writing skills in subjects other than English and ensuring that pupils develop a broader vocabulary
 - providing opportunities for pupils to read and understand different texts
 - giving pupils more opportunities to tackle mathematical investigations.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils start at this school with below-average standards, particularly in reading and mathematics, although this varies from year to year. Many have complex learning needs, as reflected in the high proportion who are disabled or who have special educational needs. Achievement requires improvement because pupils' progress over time is not consistently good, although most pupils make expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Attainment is broadly average in writing and mathematics but below average in reading because pupils are not given sufficient opportunity to analyse a range of texts and discuss the meaning behind words and phrases.
- More-able pupils are not always challenged by the work set in lessons and spend too much time completing tasks that they find easy. This limits their progress and achievement.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational make progress similar to their peers. They sometimes make good progress because they benefit from work, often in small groups, that is matched closely to their specific needs. A typical example of this was a one-to-one phonics session led by a skilled teaching assistant.
- Attainment in mathematics and writing has been highly variable for several years and is now close to the national expectations. Writing, in particular, has seen a year-on-year improvement over the last three years. This situation has continued over the past months, but has yet to show through in national test results.
- Pupils eligible for the extra pupil premium funding often progress faster than other pupils at the school. This has resulted in closing the overall attainment gap. In 2013, pupils in Year 6 known to be eligible for free school meals were around a term behind their classmates in mathematics, their attainment was similar to their classmates in writing, and they were a term ahead of them in reading.
- Current standards in reading are rising because phonics (the link between letters and sounds) is now taught well and pupils' attitudes to learning are good.
- Staff speedily assess pupils who join the school other than at the start of Year 3. This gives them a clear picture of their capabilities and any individual learning needs. These pupils quickly grow in confidence, and they often make good progress in relation to their various starting points.
- The most recent school assessments show all groups of pupils making faster progress over the last year. Pupils' work evidences pupils being more confident in basic skills. For example, their writing is becoming increasingly accurate in spelling, punctuation and grammar as evidenced in the 2013 test data being very close to the national average. However, pupils' writing lacks a range of adventurous vocabulary.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Tasks given to pupils often do not offer them enough challenge, particularly in reading. Teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of doing are not always high enough, especially for the most-able pupils.

- Questioning is often directed at one level to the whole class. Questions are often simple and factual, and teachers do not use this opportunity to extend pupils' thinking or to get pupils to share their views on other pupils' answers. Teachers do not take the opportunity to extend pupils' learning further by using follow-up questions. As a result, pupils do not quickly develop the skills that teachers are seeking to improve.
- When marking pupils' work, teachers give pupils praise but do not offer them detailed guidance as to how to improve. Teachers do not check that pupils respond to the advice they are given or that they have learnt from previous mistakes.
- The teaching of mathematics has been improved and pupils are making better progress as a result of more opportunities for practical work, which engages their interest and helps consolidate their understanding. For example, pupils get an increasing range of real-life problems that are linked to topics.
- Pupils for whom the school receives additional funding, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are taught and supported well in both class and small groups, and this has begun to raise achievement rates for these pupils. As a result, the gap between these pupils and their peers, both in school and nationally, has closed and is doing so quickly.
- Where the teaching of reading is good, the teacher provides clear explanations and guides pupils through a text, asking probing questions so pupils' thinking is challenged by being asked to justify their responses when offering an answer.
- Teaching assistants are directed effectively by teachers and support pupils' learning consistently in lessons because they are well trained. These adults provide good support, especially to less-able pupils and those whose circumstances mean they might be vulnerable.
- Staff know their pupils and manage their classes well. This ensures that lessons are purposeful and flow without interruption enabling pupils to concentrate and work hard.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. In lessons, they are keen to learn and enthusiastically contribute to discussions. Pupils are polite and courteous to each other and adults. They have a range of responsibilities, including being members of the school council, peer mediators and play leaders. The school is effective in promoting positive relationships and tackling discrimination.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say they feel safe in school and that bullying is rare. One pupil, typical of many said, 'There's hardly any bullying.' This view is supported unanimously by the parents who responded to Parent View. Pupils have a good understanding of different types of bullying and told inspectors about what they had learned in school about staying safe when they use the internet.
- Pupils concentrate well and work hard. During discussions with pupils, and in lessons, they clearly showed they enjoyed their learning. They said that lessons are enjoyable as they are practical, fun and interesting. Occasionally, when teaching is not as good as it should be, their concentration lapses and the pace of learning slows.
- Pupils demonstrate their enjoyment of school in their average but rising rates of attendance, which have improved considerably over the last year. This is due to the concerted efforts by the

school and the attendance manager to encourage regular attendance and quickly follow up on absences.

The leadership and management are good

- Leadership and management are good because leaders and governors have been quick to respond to the pupils' wide range of often complex needs when they join, and as they move through, the school. A notable strength of the school are the very effective arrangements, established and overseen by leaders, for managing the new arrival of pupils, both for those who join at the start of Year 3 and for those who join partway through Key Stage 2. These arrangements help pupils to quickly settle at the school and so help them to learn.
- Although the overall quality of teaching is not as good as it was described in the last inspection report, it is clear that leaders have improved teaching, including of the many teachers and support staff who are new to the school. School leaders who teach very effectively have been seen teach in different classes. This enables staff to see how the teaching strategies that have been agreed by leaders are to be delivered. It is also indicative of the high expectations that leaders set for all pupils and staff.
- Senior leaders and teachers who have responsibility for key subjects have received training and support to fulfil their roles. They have accurately identified the areas of weakness in their subjects and are making improvements. They closely monitor the impact of changes by observing learning during lessons and checking the effect on pupils' progress. This is communicated clearly to staff and is particularly important as a high proportion of pupils move in and out of the school throughout the academic year. Leaders make sure that both teachers and teaching assistants understand the information about pupils' progress, and use it with increasing effectiveness so that new pupils' needs are quickly addressed.
- Recent improvements in reading and writing skills, especially for pupils eligible for the pupil premium, demonstrate the effectiveness of school leaders and that the school has the capacity to improve further, although recent improvements have yet to be reflected in national test results.
- The management of teachers' performance is very well structured so that there is a robust focus on pupils' progress, with very specific and challenging targets for teachers to reach. Reviews of teachers' performance have been assessed using national guidelines, and staff have benefited from well-chosen training opportunities and accurate and detailed guidance about how to improve their teaching, especially in developing pupils' early reading and writing skills.
- There are high levels of trust and respect. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well in lessons and whole-school assemblies.
- The school works effectively with parents and they express positive views about the school and the service it provides. Links with other agencies contribute to the support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, and details of this support is communicated clearly to parents.
- The local authority has helped the school with its self-evaluation process and with the training of governors in their new role. They have brokered support from other schools to work with staff to develop the quality of teaching in the school.
- Sports funding has been used effectively to train teachers in the development of pupils' physical

skills. This has resulted in a wider range of activities, including dance, available to pupils. Teachers have a much greater understanding of how to teach a wide range of sports.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors are experienced and are committed to the school, and visit regularly. They consider carefully the evidence from the appraisal of the performance of staff when approving pay progression, and ensure that pupils' progress is always taken into account. They have a good understanding of school's data and they challenge the senior staff about pupils' achievement. Governors understand how the pupil premium and sports funding are used to improve opportunities and outcomes for all the pupils. This includes one-to-one tuition after school and 'catch up' sessions at lunchtime to improve numeracy and literacy skills. They have made sure that arrangements for pupils' safeguarding meet all statutory requirements.

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	114899
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	430472

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	230
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Joyce Sweeney
Headteacher	Jennifer McCutcheon
Date of previous school inspection	8 March 2012
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