

# Great Leighs Primary School

Aragon Road, Great Leighs, Chelmsford, CM3 1RP

**Inspection dates** 16–17 January 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
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.

- This is a rapidly improving school as a result of effective leadership by the headteacher, and the good support from the deputy headteacher.
- Additional adults who help to support pupils' learning are highly effective and a strength of the school.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to their learning and are extremely proud of their school.
- Relationships throughout the school are excellent and parents are very pleased with what the school provides for their children.
- Pupils are now making good progress in all year groups and attainment is rising in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teaching is typically good with aspects now excellent, particularly in writing, because of regular and rigorous checking by the headteacher and other leaders. Teaching in Year 6 is outstanding.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good and often excellent. Pupils feel safe in school. There have been no exclusions.
- Governors are effective partners in leading the school and offer a high level of challenge to the school's performance.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- More-able pupils do not reach the higher levels in mathematics as consistently as they do in reading and writing.
- Children's learning in the Reception class is not as well developed as it should be because the outdoor learning area is unappealing and children have not been trained in how best to use this facility to develop their learning to the full.
- Tasks which recognise that pupils are now making more rapid progress and therefore working at a higher level than in the past are not yet consistently provided by all teachers.
- Whilst marking is greatly improved, the marking by some teachers is not focused enough to show pupils how they can improve.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 16 lessons, eight of which were joint observations with the headteacher. Inspectors also observed pupils moving around the school, in the dining room and at break and lunchtimes. They listened to pupils read.
- Meetings were held with pupils, senior leaders, including subjects and phase leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 92 responses to Parent View (Ofsted’s online questionnaire for parents) as well as the views of parents who spoke to inspectors and the school’s most recent parental questionnaire. Inspectors took account of 35 staff questionnaires.
- Inspectors looked closely at a range of documentation, including the school’s data about the progress of pupils, the school’s self-evaluation, improvement plans, safeguarding policies and records relating to the management of teachers’ performance.

## Inspection team

Nichola Perry, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Liz Kissane

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The majority of the pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding (additional money given to schools for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children looked after by the local authority and some others) is much lower than average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is lower than average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is higher average.
- The school met the government's floor standards in 2013, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The headteacher was appointed in September 2012.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in reading and writing, and particularly in mathematics by:
  - ensuring that all aspects of teaching, including lesson introductions, are sufficiently demanding, and take account of pupils' improving rates of progress and higher attainment, so that more pupils across the school make better than expected progress
  - ensuring more-able pupils develop the skills they need to gain the higher levels in mathematics as successfully as they do in other subjects
  - requiring all teachers' marking to be more closely focused on what needs to be improved or developed so that pupils understand exactly how they can do better.
- Improve children's outdoor learning opportunities in the Reception class by:
  - making the outdoor classroom area a more appealing place to learn by keeping it clear of leaves and other detritus so that it looks well cared for
  - making resources more easily accessible for the children to use outdoors
  - training the children in how to use the outdoor area more purposefully.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- In Years 1 to 6, pupils are now making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics so that they are increasingly achieving well from their variable, but broadly average starting points on entry to the school. This is the result of significant improvements over the last two years in teaching, the range and type of activities provided and teachers' much higher expectations.
- In the past, attainment by the end of Year 6 has been average in all three subjects. This has meant that pupils made the progress expected for their age, with too few pupils achieving at the higher levels. Outstanding teaching in Year 6 has led to an improving trend in results at Key Stage 2 and very significant improvement in the 2013 national assessments. Improvement was most notable in writing, where standards were above average. Standards in writing are now strength of the school, and also in reading. Attainment in mathematics has also improved but not at the same rate.
- School data show that this level of improvement is being sustained in all three subjects for the current Year 6 and that the proportion of pupils exceeding expected progress has risen again. Work in pupils' books indicates that writing is consistently above average. Lesson observations and the many opportunities to hear pupils read during the inspection demonstrate that pupils' speaking and reading skills are also above average.
- This good rate of progress and rising attainment are, increasingly, becoming equally secure across Years 3 to 5. This means that each year, there is less reliance on older pupils catching up on learning missed in earlier years due to weaker teaching.
- In the past, attainment by the end of Year 2 has been below average in all three subjects. Increasingly accurate and more regular assessment, plus much improved teaching and approaches to learning, have led to very significant improvement in the 2013 assessments, so that standards in all three subjects were average. Pupils' rates of progress are continuing to rise in both Years 1 and 2 and school data show that attainment is set to rise again for the current Year 2. Work in pupils' books and reading heard during the inspection indicates that standards in writing and reading are now above expectations in the current Years 1 and 2.
- Phonics (the link between letters and the sounds they make) is well taught. The cause of the disappointing dip in the 2013 phonics screening check was quickly identified and addressed, with much improved outcomes for current pupils. Pupils of all abilities heard reading during the inspection, both in lessons and more formally, demonstrate good knowledge of phonics and good understanding of how to use them to pronounce new or unfamiliar words. Across the school, pupils use their phonics knowledge very well in their writing.
- Achievement has improved in the Early Years Foundation Stage. In 2013 half the children achieved a good level of development which is broadly in line with the national average. There is good emphasis on teaching basic literacy and numeracy skills, and children are given interesting activities to do. The teaching of phonics has also improved and opportunities for outdoor learning are now more comprehensive. However, the outdoor area appears tired and underused and during the inspection there was evidence of children failing to benefit from the experiences in this facility.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress. Government funding, together with further money provided by the school, is used to provide a wide range of additional sessions and one-to-one support for pupils with specific or more complex needs. This

enables them to make up lost ground or provide additional help when pupils find learning difficult. Additional adults provide high quality support. The effectiveness of their work is one of the school's key strengths.

- Pupils supported by the pupil premium fund also receive one-to-one tuition and additional sessions funded by the premium and supplemented by the school, as necessary. 2013 national data shows these pupils are now making consistent improvement and that they are keeping pace with improving trends for the school as a whole. Eligible pupils progressed faster than similar pupils nationally last year and better than their peers in reading, writing and mathematics. They are in the region of two terms behind their classmates in reading and one term behind in writing.

## **The quality of teaching is good**

- The teaching of reading, writing and, to a slightly lesser extent mathematics, is now typically good across the school. There are increasing examples of excellent strands developing within teaching in several classes. Outstanding teaching in Year 6 has contributed strongly to the rapid rate of progress and rising attainment for pupils over the last two years. This effective practice is also helping to improve the quality of teaching for all staff.
- The teaching of writing is excellent and the result of two years hard work and commitment. Pupils say they love writing and lesson observations certainly concur with this when pupils' enthusiasm and ambition to achieve is evident. The tasks they are set relate very well to pupils' learning in other subjects, such as the Egyptian Cinderella, and this interests all pupils. Support for learning is well thought out and expectations, for example, of 'non-negotiables' in behaviour and the presentation of work are clear and increasingly effective.
- A particular strength in all teaching is the level of discussion. All adults engage well with pupils and relationships are excellent. Questioning is used to good effect and pupils are confident in their responses, whether in a small group or to the whole class. Pupils are very prepared to work together and they demonstrate a remarkably caring and supportive attitude towards each other, for example, when a classmate may be struggling with an idea or a word. This is particularly evident in their marking of each others' work, where comments are specific but sensitive.
- Much improved marking is developing good partnerships between pupils and teachers. In the best lessons, this helps pupils to really absorb what is being said and is leading to improvements which are sustained. A good example of this is where a teacher suggested use of adverbial clauses in the next piece of work – the pupil duly highlighted them in the next piece of work. This high quality approach to improving pupils' work is developing but is not yet embedded across all classes.
- Teachers use a range additional sessions regularly and effectively to help pupils improve. These happen throughout the school day and cover all aspects of the curriculum, including reading, handwriting, speed writing and the checking of pupils' work. One-to-one working with pupils with more specific or complex needs operates very effectively and ensures that these pupils have access to good learning alongside their peers wherever possible. Additional adults work equally effectively alongside teaching staff in the classroom and when working with small groups on specific tasks.
- In planning lessons, all teachers ensure that activities for less-able pupils are thoroughly planned and well-resourced. In the best lessons, teachers increasingly plan lessons which are extremely challenging, including the level of lesson introductions. It is this level of planning and expectation which is ensuring that the most able pupils, and some other pupils, achieve at the

highest level in many aspects of their work. This is not secure practice across the school, however, so that expectations for the higher attaining pupils are not always as high as they need to be in all subjects, for example in mathematics.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are outstanding

- Behaviour is of a consistently high standard in lessons, around the school, in the dining room and outside. Much behaviour is exemplary, for example, when pupils were entering and leaving a whole school celebration assembly that was observed during the inspection. Pupils get on really well together and genuinely care for each other. There is a healthy and playful rivalry between the school 'families', both on an academic level when gaining family points or during sporting activities. Pupils consider the behaviour seen during the inspection is typical. This is supported by their above-average attendance and the complete absence of exclusions.
- The atmosphere in the school is really happy and pupils learn well how to be polite both to each other and to adults. Good manners are the norm. This is because the school focuses very strongly on developing good social and moral values. Pupils are very accepting of difference. For example, they show a mature understanding that some pupils have difficulties which mean that they struggle to behave or communicate in the same way as other pupils. Pupils work very effectively together, either in groups or in pairs. Even younger pupils understand about the need for turn taking and sharing and adopt a democratic approach to such things.
- Pupils are very proud of their school and they are ambitious to achieve well. Almost exclusively, pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent and lessons are rarely interrupted by inattentive behaviour. This is because they enjoy learning so much. Pupils speak glowingly about their enjoyment of a range of different subjects and say that they find the activities they do interesting. All proclaim a love of writing which was very evident from lesson observations and through their books where, from Year 1 upwards, writing is prolific and increasingly of a good quality.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Very regular checks are made by the chair of governors and the caretaker to ensure the outside and inside of the school are as safe as they can be. Pupils feel safe and their parents agree. They like and trust their teachers and other adults and feel listened to. Pupils understand well about personal safety, including e-safety and also about inappropriate use of language towards individuals or specific groups. They know what bullying is and is not and who to inform should it occur. They say that there has, in the past, been some isolated instances of name calling but these were swiftly dealt with and have not re-occurred.
- Liaison with parents, schools and other agencies who offer support for vulnerable pupils and their families is very good and valued highly by the parents concerned. The school has earned a good reputation for giving pupils a new start. New pupils benefit from clear boundaries and also from other pupils' expectations that this is 'how we behave here'. This helps them settle quickly and learn well. Arrangements for pupils transferring to secondary school are well planned and effective so that pupils feel well prepared for the next stage in their education.

### **The leadership and management** are good

- The commitment and drive of the headteacher over the last two years, ably supported by the deputy headteacher, have been excellent and have resulted in much improvement since the previous inspection just a year ago. Everyone in the school, including governors and the pupils themselves, is equally committed and ambitious to improve and achieve well. Parents, including those spoken to during the inspection, are also pleased with what the school provides for their

children and value the work of the headteacher.

- Revised procedures, used to check and manage staff performance, now provide a regular and meaningful platform for dialogue with all members of staff which helps them improve their own performance and that of their pupils. The process has been effective over the last two years in helping underperforming staff to improve, as well as developing and rewarding good practice. Staff speak highly of the good quality professional development they have received and many now feel confident as they, too, deliver sessions to the staff.
- Thorough and effective checking of performance has eliminated inadequate teaching and substantially raised the overall quality so that it is now securely good. Self-evaluation is accurate and plans which guide the school provide clear and appropriate targets for action. The wide variety of support to improve teaching and other aspects of the school, including those identified at the previous inspection just one year ago, have been very astutely managed and have moved the school forward.
- The leadership roles of middle leaders in particular are developing well. Of particular note are the leadership of English and special educational needs, both of which make an excellent contribution to the work of the school. Both leaders have played a key part in ensuring the work planned for pupils, the quality of teaching and the monitoring of pupils' progress are the best they can be. Leaders at all levels have an accurate awareness of the priorities to improve further. All play a key part in the half-termly pupil progress meetings to ensure all pupils are on track to achieve well.
- The school uses the additional funding for sport, enhanced with additional school funds, extremely effectively to benefit pupils and especially to raise their self esteem. In particular, sports funding is being used to: develop competition, including between the school 'families' which the pupils are thrilled about; support those pupils who are gifted and talented in aspects of sport; and to encourage and involve pupils who are less keen on engaging in sporting or physical activity.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is developed very thoroughly through the subjects and activities provided. There is good focus on developing pupils' basic skills and effective links are made between different subjects. Music is strong throughout the school. Pupils really enjoy writing for and to children in the linked school in Ghana, such as the poetry in Year 5 about 'Through Our Window'. There are also many visits, visitors and links within the local and wider communities which enrich learning and broaden pupils' horizons.
- The local authority has provided wide ranging support for this previously requiring improvement school, so that it is now accelerating with improved progress and rising standards. It fully recognises the rapid progress the school has made as a result of the dedication and hard work of the headteacher and her staff.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governance is very effective. Governors have supported and challenged school leaders and others and played a central role in shaping how the school needs to develop and also making important spending decisions. Governors are extremely ambitious for the school and are insightful in their proposals and planning to achieve this. They make increasingly good use of their skills, including seeking out new governors who have specific areas of expertise. Governors are very articulate in explaining how and where the school needs to improve at all levels. They visit the school regularly and have a good understanding of systems which check performance and what is done to manage underperformance by pupils or teachers and reward good performance. Finances are managed extremely well, including use of additional funding

for sport and the pupil premium funding. Governors ensure that these funds are used prudently and creatively to meet the needs of individuals and specific groups so that equality of opportunity is well promoted. Governors ensure that the school meets all current national requirements for safeguarding children and that the school is a safe place to be through regular and thorough checks.



## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	114852
<b>Local authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	432098

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	216
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Tim Hancock
<b>Headteacher</b>	Janis Waters
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	30 January 2013
<b>Telephone number</b>	01245 361254
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