

Strathmore Infant and Nursery School

Old Hale Way, Hitchin, SG5 1XR

Inspection dates 23–24 January 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	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.

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher have high expectations and are working together effectively to improve teaching and to ensure all pupils achieve well.
- Subject and phase leaders are making a good contribution to school improvement.
- Pupils make good progress in reading and writing. Standards have risen significantly since the last inspection.
- Much of the teaching is good. There is no inadequate teaching.
- Most pupils behave well and have a good understanding of the importance of personal safety.
- The governing body checks on the work of the school and sets challenging but appropriate targets for the headteacher.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Too many pupils do not reach the expected standard in the reading check at the end of Year 1.
- Most pupils' progress in mathematics in Key Stage 1 is not fast enough. The standards reached at the end of Year 2 are lower than those in reading and writing.
- Not all lessons are taught well. More-able pupils are not always challenged sufficiently.
- The details in the school development plan to help governors check on the impact of the actions on pupils' attainment and progress are not precise enough.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 16 lessons, of which three were observed jointly with the headteacher. In addition, the inspectors made a number of shorter visits to lessons and attended an assembly. They heard some pupils in Year 2 read.
- Meetings were held with members of the governing body, staff, groups of pupils and a local authority representative.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at a wide range of documentation, including the data the school has collected on pupils’ attainment and progress, procedures for keeping pupils safe and the school development plan.
- In making their judgements, inspectors took account of the 64 responses to the Parent View online questionnaire and 21 questionnaires returned by members of staff.

Inspection team

David Wynford-Jones, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Jane Richmond	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is similar in size to the average-sized primary school.
- The large majority pupils are of White British origin. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic heritage is slightly higher than in most schools. They come from a number of different minority ethnic backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is broadly average. Few are currently at the early stages of learning English.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is broadly average. The proportion identified for additional support through school action plus is below average. Currently, there are no pupils holding a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium is below average. This is additional government funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, those who are looked after by the local authority, and other eligible groups.
- The school runs a breakfast club during term time.
- The school hosts a pre-school and an after-school club. They were not visited as part of this inspection because they are not run by the governing body.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure pupils make faster progress and reach higher standards in mathematics by:
 - giving all pupils more opportunities to use and understand numbers
 - making certain that pupils understand and use a wider range of mathematical terminology
 - challenging the more-able pupils to undertake more complex calculations
 - ensuring greater consistency in the quality of teaching.
- Make certain that a greater proportion of pupils reach the expected standard in the Year 1 reading check by:
 - consolidating the recent improvements in the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) in Key Stage 1
 - taking every opportunity in other lessons to promote pupils' phonic knowledge and skills.
- Refine the school development plan by including details, linked to pupils' progress and attainment, by which the impact of the actions can be checked.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children enter the Nursery with skills and knowledge broadly in line with those expected for their age. They settle quickly in the secure environment and develop a positive attitude towards learning.
- About half of the children transfer to the Reception classes where they are joined by a significant number of other children, most of whom who have attended other settings. On entry to the Reception classes, the vast majority have the skills expected of a typical four year-old child.
- Since the last inspection, outcomes at the end of the Reception class have risen steadily. In 2013 the proportion reaching a good level of development was above the national average.
- At the end of Year 2 standards in reading, writing and mathematics have also risen. In 2013, standards in reading and writing were above average and average in mathematics. This represents good progress, particularly in reading and writing.
- In Year 2, pupils read confidently and use a range of strategies to tackle unfamiliar works. They recommend books to their friends and know how they move up the reading scheme.
- The outcomes in the end of Year 1 reading check in 2012 and 2013 are not as positive. The proportions reaching the expected standard in 2012 and 2013 were below the national average. This is partly because staff did not have sufficiently secure knowledge in the teaching of phonics and did not ensure that pupils' phonic skills were promoted in other lessons. Pupils' skills in the current Year 1 are broadly in line with those expected at this stage.
- Pupils' skills in writing are developing well. They are developing a good understanding of basic punctuation and sentence construction. Older pupils use connectives and adjectives to make their writing more interesting.
- In mathematics, pupils' progress is not as rapid. This is because many do not have a secure understanding of number and associated mathematical terminology, for example the different words that can be used for addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. Some pupils' skills, especially the more able, are not developed sufficiently as they are not asked to undertake complex calculations or apply their knowledge in practical situations.
- Current school assessment data show that pupils in Year 2 are on track to reach at least the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of the year. Their progress is continuing to accelerate but it is not as rapid in mathematics.
- Pupils supported by the pupil premium make good progress because the school has used this additional funding to provide further support for literacy and numeracy. Although eligible pupils in Year 2 were about two terms behind their peers in reading, writing and mathematics in 2013, more recent data suggest that this gap is closing.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similar progress to their classmates. Their progress is checked regularly and they are given additional support to boost their progress when necessary.

- The primary school sports funding has been allocated appropriately. Pupils enjoy taking part in sporting activities and have a good understanding of how sport contributes to a healthy lifestyle.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching has improved since the previous inspection. Most is good. There is no inadequate teaching. As a result, children are now making good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and better than expected progress in reading and writing particularly in Key Stage 1. This is reflected in their good achievement.
- Most lessons are well planned. Teachers explain the tasks clearly and offer helpful suggestions to enable pupils to complete the activity. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well and encourage them to share their ideas with each other and with the adults. They use questioning skilfully to check and develop pupils' earlier learning. Information and communication technology is used appropriately to enhance learning. For example, in the Reception classes children use electronic notepads confidently to explore shape and size.
- Pupils know their literacy and numeracy targets and these are referred to regularly by the teachers. The marking of pupils' work is undertaken methodically. There are some good examples of marking in the English books which offer pupils clear guidance on what they have to do next. Marking in the mathematics books is not yet as informative but is starting to become more detailed.
- Teaching assistants are usually deployed effectively. They offer good support to the pupils they work with and help them grow in confidence. They help ensure that all pupils, including those whose circumstances make them vulnerable, pupils who speak English as an additional language, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are fully included in all the activities offered and have equal access to the same learning opportunities as other pupils.
- In the occasional lesson, the quality of teaching slips. The expectations of what some pupils, especially the more able, can achieve in the phonics and mathematics lessons are not always high enough. For example, in a phonics lesson all the pupils in the class were working on the same task. Several already knew the sound and their learning was not extended.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils apply themselves in lessons and have a positive attitude towards learning.
- Pupils are proud of their school. Most pupils behave well at all times. They are polite and well-mannered in the way they speak to adults and to each other. They move around the school sensibly. Displays and equipment are treated with respect. There is no litter. They know about different types of bullying, for example name-calling, fighting, racial bullying, or religious intolerance.
- Occasionally, there are incidents of inappropriate behaviour. These are usually dealt with firmly by the school and, when appropriate, reported to the governing body.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. The school meets the latest requirements for safeguarding. A member of the governing body checks to make certain that

procedures are followed and the site is safe.

- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. They are aware of potential dangers when playing in certain areas.
- Pupils' attendance is rising and is broadly average. Better attendance and improvements in the quality of teaching are helping pupils to make accelerated progress.

The leadership and management are good

- Strong leadership by the headteacher, combined with an increasingly effective governing body and team of subject and phase leaders, has led to improvements in teaching and the acceleration in pupils' progress.
 - Based on an accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses the headteacher has systematically introduced robust assessment procedures, undertaken rigorous observations of teaching and learning and helped subject and phase leaders to understand their roles and responsibilities. High expectations are set, to which the staff have responded positively.
 - Subject and phase leaders are developing their roles well. They have a clear view of what they need to do to secure improvements and help the school improve further. They have a better understanding of performance data than previously and are using this well to challenge their colleagues to raise standards further.
 - Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. Pupils are given many opportunities to enrich their education, for example through educational visits and celebrating festivals from different countries and religious backgrounds. In all classes, there is a focus on developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills.
 - The school has good links with parents. They are very supportive and the Parents' Association raises considerable sums for the school.
 - The primary sports funding is being used to employ sports specialist staff, for training teachers and extending the range of after-school sporting clubs. As a result, staff are more confident in teaching a range of sports and pupils are eager to become involved.
 - The local authority has provided the school with good support. Officers have undertaken regular reviews of the school's performance, helped the governing body to set the headteacher's performance targets and supported the headteacher in checking on the quality of teaching and in analysing data.
- **The governance of the school:**
- Governors have responded well to the challenges of the previous inspection. They have attended a range of courses to enhance their skills in checking the school's performance and in ensuring they fulfil their roles and responsibilities. Governors have a good overview of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are now asking searching questions of the leadership team. They know where teaching is consistently good and where additional support is needed. Governors know how targets are set for teachers to improve, and understand the process for rewarding good teaching. Governors check on the progress of the actions to tackle the priorities identified in the school development plan are undertaken regularly. However, the details by which governors can check on the impact of the actions are not sufficiently precise

and are not linked closely enough to pupils' attainment and progress.

- The governing body checks the school's budget appropriately and makes sure that the primary sports funding and the pupil premium allocation are spent as intended. Governors and the headteacher are keen to promote good relationships within the school and the local community. Discrimination of any sort is not tolerated.

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	117114
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	431619

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	222
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michael Leaver
Headteacher	Bernadette Holmes
Date of previous school inspection	11 September 2012
Telephone number	01462 459 558
Fax number	01462 459 188
Email address	admin@strathmore.herts.sch.uk

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