

Writtle Infant School

Lodge Road, Writtle, Chelmsford, CM1 3HZ

Inspection dates 28–29 January 2014

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.

- The headteacher's quiet determination to raise pupils' achievement and improve teaching has been successful and she is, consequently, well respected by staff, parents and governors.
- The school's track record of performance shows it has the capacity to build on its successes. Staff and governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and what is required to make it outstanding.
- The Chair of the Governing Body and other governors make a considerable contribution to the school's development. They plan for the long-term, and hold the headteacher to account for the school's performance.
- Teaching is good through the school and ensures that pupils achieve well. It is often inspiring in Reception, and gives the children a very good start to learning and enables them to make good progress.
- The headteacher and all teaching and support staff know the children well. This leads to strong relationships and a happy and caring school.
- Progress is good and pupils leave Year 2 with above-average standards. More-able pupils achieve well.
- Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Pupils are polite, courteous and considerate.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and feel safe.
- Parents are positive about the school and would recommend it.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not enough outstanding teaching to make sure pupils make even better progress.
- Marking and feedback do not always show pupils what they need to do to improve their work.
- The school has worked hard to promote attendance, but rates are no more than average.
- The headteacher's feedback to teachers on their teaching does not always give them specific advice to help them improve their practice.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 17 lessons, three of which were shared with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body and other governors, an external school consultant and groups of pupils.
- The inspectors took account of the 77 responses to the online parents' questionnaire, Parent View, four parent emails, and 23 responses to the questionnaire for school staff.
- The inspectors looked at a wide range of school documentation including: the school's own evaluation of its performance, information about pupils' progress, planning and monitoring documentation including leaders' monitoring of teaching, behaviour and attendance records and documents relating to safeguarding.
- The inspectors also listened to pupils read in Years 1 and 2.

Inspection team

Kelly Stock, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Marion Wallace

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average primary school.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average and falling.
- The proportion of pupils who receive the pupil premium is below average. This is extra government funding given to schools for pupils known to be eligible for free schools meals or in local authority care.
- The school works closely with the junior school and a cluster of local schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to outstanding by making sure that;
 - the headteacher’s feedback to staff on the lessons observed always communicates to them exactly how they can improve their teaching as well as how to develop their strengths
 - training is given to teaching assistants who are less confident in helping pupils to maintain their concentration in learning activities
 - all marking gives pupils a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve their work.
- Improve attendance to be above average for all groups of pupils.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children join Reception with attainment broadly in line with the levels expected for their age, but there are variations between year groups. They make good progress during the Early Years Foundation Stage. By the time they leave Reception, most children achieve a good level of development in the main areas of learning.
- In 2013, the standards achieved in all subjects were above national averages by the end of Year 2. Attainment has long been sustained at an above-average level. The school's data projection for pupils' progress and attainment for the current year shows any gaps between boys' and girls' performance are reducing and all are achieving well. More-able pupils make good progress in all subjects.
- Pupils who receive pupil premium funding are also making good progress and attain above the standards of eligible pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2012, eligible pupils made better progress compared to that of other pupils in the school and nationally. However, in 2013, the few eligible pupils were approximately two terms behind other pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics. During the inspection, eligible pupils were seen to be supported carefully and genuine care by staff and excellent use of outside agencies ensure that these pupils progress well.
- Pupils across the school enjoy reading. The teaching of phonics (sounds and linked letters) is good, although weaker readers show some hesitation in sounding out words that do not follow the usual pattern. In 2013, the proportion of pupils achieving the national average standard in the government's screening check for reading in Year 1 was above the national average.
- Writing across the school is good. The school provides pupils with memorable events, such as live owls being flown in the school hall, authors' visits and Olympic events to inspire pupils' writing. These stimulating experiences lead to pupils developing a very good range of vocabulary and they are able to edit their own work with confidence and choose the way they present it.
- In mathematics, pupils show resilience and perseverance with the problems they are set and are able to apply different methods to check their answers. Pupils in Year 2 are especially enthusiastic about learning their times tables and are keen to impress their teacher.
- Disabled pupils or those who have special educational needs make good progress. New tracking systems identify any weaknesses in pupils' learning and progress and the response of staff is effectively directed to overcome pupils' difficulties.
- Pupils across the school are much better at reflecting on their learning and express their views on it to the staff. All are confident to choose tasks, how to present their work and have a say in how they learn.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching across the school is at least good. In Reception, pupils are often inspired and, at times, transfixed, by the experience teachers provide for them in lessons. The learning environment is rich and inspiring, inside and outdoors.
- In Reception, outstanding teaching makes sure the children's understanding is assessed

regularly in lessons, where teachers quickly notice any mistakes or confusion. Helpful comments directed to individuals help them to know what they have done well and how to improve their work.

- In Years 1 and 2, pupils enjoy learning from the good teaching they receive. In Year 1, they enjoy mathematics because they have challenging work and opportunities to apply their skills in different contexts. For example, in lessons pupils are confident to check their answers using a variety of methods. In Year 2, pupils are helped to develop and use a good range of vocabulary in their poetry and are motivated by opportunities to meet authors who visit the school. Pupils are helped to think about their learning and share their understanding. All pupils are enthusiastic about their reading because the staff enable them to learn how to read with confidence and enjoy books.
- Teachers generally have high expectations of what pupils can achieve, including the more able. They know what the different abilities of their pupils are and were seen to skilfully question individuals to help them to improve their learning and gain a better understanding. Classroom resources are carefully selected to help make lessons interesting. For example, information and communication technology is used effectively to support pupils' learning and understanding.
- Support for individuals who find some aspects of learning difficult is often helpful to their progress. Girls sometimes gain considerably in confidence from the support they receive. However, in some situations, teaching assistants do not pick up quickly enough that individuals have lost concentration and – as some pupils say – are 'having a bit of a rest'.
- Marking is not consistently good in all classes. As a result, not all pupils are sure about what they are doing well or how to improve their work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' behaviour is good. Pupils are sensitive and considerate to each other. They know which words are hurtful and understand that, as one said, 'It is the way you say things too.' They often care for each other unprompted by adults.
- Children in Reception classes learn and play well together. 'Wow' display boards are used to celebrate good work and behaviour at home and in school.
- Pupils are often delighted by their learning. They are enthusiastic to take part in classroom activities and demonstrate excellent attitudes to learning and levels of concentration. However, when activities are, occasionally, less interesting to them, some pupils lose interest and concentration. Some teachers and teaching assistants do not pick up this loss of attention quickly enough and consequently learning time can be lost.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Leaders make sure that entry to the school is well controlled and staff are rigorously checked for their suitability to work with children. The consistent application of the behaviour policy ensures that any incidents are followed up quickly. As a result, pupils enjoy coming to school and feel safe. One was confident that, 'The headteacher looks after us.' They have a good understanding of what 'bullying' means and know how to keep themselves safe when online.
- Pupils who have particular special educational needs involving behaviour are managed well by staff. All pupils are helped to behave responsibly and participate sensibly in learning activities.

- The school has worked hard to improve attendance and it is in line with the national average. Pupils are punctual to school and to lessons. The school is working hard to persuade parents whose children are not regular attenders of the importance of the education the school is providing for their children. However, not all pupils and parents have yet been fully persuaded.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher makes sure the school continues to develop and improve pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching. She is respected by all and cares well for staff and pupils.
- There is no complacency throughout the school and everyone aims to do better. The school's record of sustained good achievement and teaching shows it has the capacity to build on its success.
- The headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders and key stage managers work closely with the junior school and a cluster of local schools to share best educational practice. This partnership has helped to improve the assessment of pupils' levels of attainment, share ideas for teaching and make the transition from infants to junior school easier for the pupils. The school development plan is based on an accurate analysis of the school's performance. The headteacher's own use of data on progress and attainment has improved since the previous inspection and has led to thorough monitoring and tracking of all pupils' progress.
- The newly appointed coordinator of special educational needs has used support for individuals effectively. Disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and more-able pupils, receive well-judged support to enable them to achieve well.
- The additional sports funding available to the school is used well. The school is forward thinking in its planning to build capacity for the development of physical education and sport. For example, sport coaches who visit the school also train teachers to improve their skills and knowledge to teach sport.
- Links with parents are helpful to pupils' learning and confidence in the school. All parents responding to Parent View would recommend the school to others.
- The headteacher is adept at identifying strengths in teaching from her observations of classroom practice. She gives helpful feedback to staff following her observations. However, she does not always make the feedback specific enough in helping teachers to understand how they can improve their individual classroom practice so that pupils make even better progress.
- The range of learning opportunities provided is helpful to pupils' personal development and to their achievement. They learn essential skills to enable them to continue successfully to junior school. The learning opportunities and resources available ensure pupils enjoy learning and make good progress.
- Subject leaders are competent and enthusiastic. There have been a number of successful appointments and these staff are having a significant impact on improving pupils' achievement.
- Leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is particularly strong and partnership with other schools is already leading to better teaching, assessment and links with parents and families.
- The local authority provides the school with the level of support necessary to help it to maintain

good standards in all areas of its work.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body has now separated from junior school governance allowing governors to give their full attention to this school.
- The Chair of the Governing Body is particularly knowledgeable about the school and education. He holds the headteacher and other leaders to account for the school's performance. He and the other governors are passionate and ambitious for the school's future success in ensuring teaching and achievement improve to be of the highest quality.
- The governors have a good understanding of the school's performance. They analyse and interpret the data on pupils' progress and attainment to give them a comprehensive understanding of how well the school is doing.
- Governors understand what the quality of teaching is across the school from their interpretation of the data on pupils' achievement, the information supplied by the headteacher and their own visits and observations. They are rigorous in ensuring that teachers are only rewarded financially because of their success in enabling pupils to make progress.
- They use funding and resources effectively to assist pupils' experience of school and to support their progress and achievement. Governors use the pupil premium effectively to ensure the progress and attainment of eligible pupils. They know how the funding is spent and require leaders to account for its use.
- The governing body makes sure that safeguarding meets 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	114917
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	425362

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	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	179
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ralph Bray
Headteacher	Eileen Thomas
Date of previous school inspection	23 September 2008
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