

The Leys Primary and Nursery School

Ripon Road, Stevenage, SG1 4QZ

Inspection dates 13–14 February 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	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.

- Strong leadership by the headteacher, senior leaders, managers and governors has brought about good improvements in the quality of teaching and a rise in pupils' achievement.
- Teaching throughout the school is good with some that is outstanding. This results in all groups of pupils making good progress, whatever their background or ability.
- As a result of teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage that is good and sometimes outstanding, children make good progress and get off to a good start to their education.
- The school places a strong emphasis on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They behave well and show respect for each other and for adults.
- Pupils enjoy their learning and feel safe in school.
- Governors are well informed and support the school well. They hold leaders to account for the progress pupils make.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not enough outstanding teaching across the school.
- In a few lessons, work does not sufficiently challenge pupils, especially the more able.
- Pupils are not always expected to respond to the advice teachers give in their marking.
- Teaching assistants are not always used effectively to support learning.
- Pupils are rarely encouraged to develop their thinking skills in solving problems for themselves.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 21 lessons or part lessons. Several were observed with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and the Early Years Foundation Stage leader.
- Discussions were held with the Chair of the Governing Body and other governors, senior leaders and subject leaders, staff and pupils.
- Inspectors looked at a range of evidence including the school’s tracking of pupils’ progress, planning and monitoring documentation, documents relating to safeguarding and special educational needs, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and the school’s view of its own performance.
- Inspectors attended two assemblies, listened to pupils read and observed behaviour in class and around the school.
- Inspectors took account of 51 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. They also took account of other surveys the school had undertaken, including two by pupils.

Inspection team

Gillian Bosschaert, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Anthony Woodward

Additional Inspector

Lynne Thorogood

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than most primary schools.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium funding is significantly higher than average. This is the additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, in local authority care or from service families.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is lower than average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is slightly above average.
- The school hosts two specially resourced provisions for pupils with special educational needs that are run by the local authority. The Primary Support Base supports challenging behaviour within mainstream settings and currently caters for seven pupils, including three from the The Leys. The Specific Learning Difficulties Base offers outreach support for 55 schools. Currently, it has thirteen pupils from this school and five from other local schools.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The headteacher joined the school in January 2012 and the deputy headteacher in September 2012. The leadership team has been restructured since then.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching and raise attainment by making sure that:
 - pupils respond to advice given by teachers in marking and correct their mistakes
 - pupils are challenged to think hard about their learning, especially the more-able pupils, so they can solve more problems for themselves.
- Ensure that teaching assistants are used consistently well to support learning in the classroom.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Most children start in the Nursery with skills and knowledge that are well below the levels expected for their age, particularly in communication, language and literacy. They settle well into school and are enthusiastic learners. As a result, they make good progress and by the end of Reception, their attainment is broadly in line with children nationally.
- Attainment in Key Stage 1 has risen in recent years, and it was above average in 2013 in mathematics and broadly average in reading and writing. The recent introduction of a focused systematic approach to phonics (the sounds that letters make) has had a significant impact on pupils' reading and writing, and evidence in lessons and pupils' books already shows that they are making rapid progress and now working above national expectations.
- The rise in attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 has been slower, but it has improved in recent years and is broadly average in mathematics and writing, and just below average in reading. In 2013, a high percentage of pupils exceeded nationally expected progress in writing, and progress was good in reading and mathematics. The school's own tracking and pupils' books show that this upward trend is set to continue because the quality of teaching is good.
- Pupils of minority ethnic heritage and those who speak English as an additional language typically make similar progress to their classmates. Their progress is better when work is carefully adapted for them, and they make better progress than similar pupils nationally.
- The primary sport funding is helping to develop pupils' physical skills, promoting their well-being and encouraging healthy lifestyles. By linking sports to reading, the funding has also had an impact on boys' reading and their interest in books.
- Pupil premium funding is used effectively to support pupils for whom it is intended. Some of the funding has been spent on counselling services and art therapy for pupils with emotional barriers to learning, on training teachers and the pupil well-being worker. This support, group work with a qualified teacher and one-to-one tuition are resulting in these pupils making good progress. In 2013, their attainment in Year 6 was over a term above that of their classmates in writing, in line in reading, a term behind in English grammar, punctuation and spelling and half a term behind in mathematics.
- The progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is consistently good in reading, writing and mathematics. The school has employed two specially trained teachers, one in each key stage, to support them and teach them in smaller groups in Year 2 and Year 6. This is having a positive effect on the progress these pupils make.
- Although pupils' attainment in English grammar, spelling and punctuation was below the national average in 2013, a recent test showed that pupils in Year 6 are working above last year's national average already. This is a result of both direct and more subtle teaching of the relevant skills in English lessons.
- More-able pupils make at least expected progress. More are reaching the higher levels of attainment, but the numbers are still small because work is not always sufficiently challenging.
- Pupils in the two bases within the school make good progress. Adapted work in literacy and mathematics is set for individual pupils, including those with specific learning difficulties.

Several pupils are currently in Year 6 and spend the mornings working in their classroom with their mainstream class teacher. Pupils are taught self-management techniques with the result that all participate in school trips and are going on to mainstream secondary education.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is typically good, including in English and mathematics, and some is outstanding. Staff are enthusiastic and keen to constantly improve. In most classes, expectations are high and the good working relationships established with pupils contribute to their eagerness to learn and make good progress.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good and sometimes outstanding, with the result that children move on quickly in their learning. Lessons are planned and taught well with high levels of challenge. Well-resourced activities, together with a good level support and very good use of praise, keep children motivated so that they make rapid progress.
- Where teaching is most effective, the fast rate of learning reflects teachers' high expectations of pupils. Teachers ask demanding questions, which make the pupils think hard and show how well they have understood.
- To give pupils every opportunity to develop their speaking and listening skills, teachers encourage them to discuss and share ideas. This helps them to clarify their thoughts before writing them down. The school is part of a project to develop speech, language and communication. This systematic approach is helping pupils to develop their ability to talk and reason, make friends and behave well. It is having a positive effect on pupils' learning.
- Pupils' progress is regularly checked and tracked to ensure that every pupil is succeeding and moving on in their learning. Targets are set for pupils and support is set up quickly for any pupil who has not made good progress. As a result, standards are rapidly improving across the school and for all groups of pupils.
- Teaching in the units is good and some is outstanding. Teachers are creative in their approaches to pupils' learning with the result that there is a buzz of high activity and enjoyment to the learning.
- In a few lessons, the work teachers set is not sufficiently challenging, particularly for the more-able pupils. Also, teachers do not always encourage pupils to think more deeply about their work and go a stage further in solving problems for themselves, so they do not progress as much as they could.
- The team of teaching assistants usually support pupils well, but sometimes they are not deployed as well as they could be in supporting pupils' learning and spend too much time just listening to the teacher.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are proud of their school, with the result that they behave well in all circumstances, in the class, in and around the school and in the playground. There is a calm atmosphere and pupils show care and respect for each other, property and adults. They have good attitudes to learning.

- A variety of awards are offered to pupils to enhance their good behaviour and social awareness. For example a 'friendship cup' is awarded for being a good friend and an excellent role model. The names of pupils and groups receiving certificates and prizes are included in the newsletter to parents, and this helps to motivate pupils.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils feel safe and understand how to keep themselves safe. They are very clear that should bullying occur, it would be dealt with speedily. School records show that bullying is infrequent. One pupil said, 'It would not be tolerated.'
- Pupils understand how to keep safe, especially when using the internet. They have spent time discussing cyber-bullying and understand what to do if it occurs. School records and the parent questionnaire responses show that the majority of parents are in agreement that their children are safe in school.
- Older pupils have the opportunity to take part in additional safety lessons run by the local authority. These cover fire safety, cycling safety, electricity safety, gangs, drugs, building site and knife awareness in an accessible format. Younger pupils are taught road safety.
- Attendance has improved rapidly and is now average. Persistent absences have decreased by half in the past two years. This is because the school promotes good attendance well and rewards those with a full attendance record. It employs an attendance officer who monitors attendance and a family worker who offers support to the parents of pupils who are persistently absent.

The leadership and management are good

- Strong leadership by the headteacher and the whole leadership team has secured rapid improvements in pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching. The headteacher has set high expectations, insisting that pupils are given the best the school can offer and have equal opportunities regardless of their age or ability. Discrimination is not tolerated and school records show it rarely happens.
- Raising attainment is securely on the agenda of every teacher and they are very keen to improve their practice to be outstanding. They are accountable for the progress of their pupils, including those eligible for the pupil premium. Regular pupil progress meetings are held between teachers and the headteacher, deputy headteacher and the special educational needs coordinator, who is also responsible for pupils eligible for the pupil premium.
- The school's leaders have an accurate awareness of its strengths and identify the right priorities for improvement. The school improvement plan is closely linked to raising pupils' attainment and identifies suitable training for staff. Pupils' thoughts for improving learning are also taken into account.
- The quality of teaching has been developed through a good approach to managing teachers' performance. Targets are focused on the national *Teachers' Standards* and closely linked to pupils' performance. The headteacher, governors and the local authority adviser ensure they are robust and evaluate them regularly. This has resulted in the improvement of teaching across the school, always with raising attainment in mind.
- The curriculum is good with many links between subjects, and good opportunities for pupils to use their mathematics, reading and writing skills. This was evident in the recent Chinese New

Year celebrations and in work on the beheading of Anne Boleyn. The curriculum is sometimes driven by topical events, for example writing about the extreme weather conditions in parts of the country. Displays are attractive and a carnival display shows the whole school working together.

- The curriculum is enhanced by a variety of after-school clubs and activities, including a club run with a local secondary for the more-able and gifted and talented pupils in mathematics. The school places strong emphasis on promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Primary school sport funding is used appropriately to employ a sports coach who not only teaches the pupils but also helps to develop teachers' skills
- The management of the units is good. Staff work closely with the school's manager for special educational needs to share good practice with all teachers in this school, and with teachers in other schools. As a result teachers manage behaviour well and pupils respond well. This has had an impact on whole-school management of behaviour, which is good.
- The local authority has provided appropriate support for the headteacher as it is her first headship in this authority. She is linked to a professional partner in another part of Hertfordshire. The local authority has also provided opportunities for teachers to observe good practice in other schools and these has been used very effectively.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are well informed about the school's effectiveness, including its existing strengths and what could still be improved. Appointing a governor to be responsible for school improvement has ensured that they are kept informed and closely involved in monitoring the school development plan. They keep a careful check on pupils' attainment and progress and the quality of teaching.
 - Governors have worked closely with the local authority to identify further developments and to challenge the headteacher and senior management team. The performance management of the headteacher is well focused. Governors understand the link between teachers' performance and pay, and know what the school is doing to tackle any underperformance.
 - Finances are managed securely and spent appropriately, including the funding for pupils eligible for pupil premium funding. Governors monitor the impact of this funding to ensure pupils make good progress. The governing body makes sure that all procedures for safeguarding pupils comply with national regulations.

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	117364
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	430764

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	445
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Joy Jackson
Headteacher	Leigh Humphries
Date of previous school inspection	29 May 2012
Telephone number	01438 314148
Fax number	01438 314148
Email address	admin@leys.herts.sch.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2014

