

Chalfont Valley E-Act Primary School

Bell Lane, Little Chalfont, Amersham, HP6 6PF

Inspection dates 29–30 January 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	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

- The achievement of pupils requires improvement. While assessment information shows that pupils have made expected and better progress in the past year, too few pupils have yet made enough progress to reach expected and better levels of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by the time they leave school.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs do not receive specific enough support in writing to enable them to make the progress they are capable of.
- Pupils are not challenged sufficiently to extend their writing skills in daily lessons. They are not given enough opportunities to use these skills in other subjects.
- Not enough teaching is good over time. Pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to use mathematical equipment to help them with their learning or to use their calculation skills to solve problems.
- Not all teachers use marking and feedback well enough to maximise pupils' progress.
- Organisation and routines in the Early Years Foundation Stage have not been changed quickly enough to meet the needs of the increasing numbers. Sometimes, teaching groups are too large to support children's learning well.

The school has the following strengths

- The very determined Executive Principal has set high expectations and put pupils and their achievement first. Working in strong partnership with governors, staff and the head of school, she has implemented rigorous plans for improvement. As a result, the quality of teaching is improving rapidly.
- The quality of feedback and discussion about learning shared by pupils and their teachers is rapidly ensuring pupils make better progress.
- Pupils behave very well, they say they feel happy, safe and well cared for in their school.
- Pupils' progress in reading is improving because key skills are taught well.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector saw teaching in all parts of the school in 10 lessons including some that were observed jointly with the Executive Principal or the head of school.
- The inspector heard pupils read, met with two groups of pupils to discuss their learning and life in school and evaluated the work in their books.
- Meetings were held with members of the governing body, a representative of E-Act, the sponsoring academy trust, staff and pupils.
- The inspector took account of the 19 responses to the online parent questionnaire (Parent View) and spoke to parents as they brought their children to school.
- School assessment data, self-evaluation and monitoring information, procedures for teachers' performance management and the school's improvement plan were scrutinised.
- The inspector looked at policies and records of pupils' behaviour and attendance, and those relating to safeguarding.
- During this inspection, inspectors asked additional questions designed to ascertain the academy's view of the impact and effectiveness of the multi-academy trust's services to support school improvement. This information will contribute to work being carried out by Ofsted to assess how well the support provided by the multi-academy trust is helping to improve the academies for which it is responsible.

Inspection team

Prue Rayner, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Chalfont Valley E-Act Academy converted to become an academy school on 1 September 2012. When its predecessor school, Bell Lane Combined School was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be satisfactory.
- The Executive Principal also leads Amersham School, a local secondary school; she has been in post since 1 September 2012. The head of school was appointed from 1 September 2013.
- This is a much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Buckinghamshire local authority is working with the school to increase the capacity of the nursery class.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported by school action is above average, those pupils with more complex needs identified at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average, although a higher proportion of this group have a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium which provides additional funding for children in local authority care, those from service families and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is almost double the national average and is over half the school's population.
- A similar proportion to the average is from minority ethnic groups. Fewer pupils than average speak English as an additional language.
- The school did not meet the government floor standards in 2013. These are the minimum levels expected for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to good by:
 - establishing better routines for managing behaviour and for the organisation of activities in the Early Years Foundation Stage so that the increasing numbers are managed more effectively
 - improving teachers' marking and feedback to match the standard of the best so that all pupils receive the same good quality advice on how to improve their work
 - providing more opportunities in mathematics for pupils to use their calculation skills to solve problems, and to use practical equipment when they need it

- Improve achievement in writing by increasing the challenge for all pupils in relation to how well and how much they write and by specifically addressing the needs of the least able.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because too few pupils make better than expected progress so that they reach and exceed average levels of attainment by the time they leave school.
- The majority of children start school with skills and abilities which are below those typical for their age. A small proportion has particularly weak social and emotional skills and a few do not speak English as their first language. Children make expected progress through the Early Years Foundation Stage. In the past, they have been well supported to improve their behaviour and be more ready to learn when they enter Key Stage 1.
- Since September 2013, pupils' progress has accelerated. Improvements in teaching are making sure that pupils are more effectively supported to make good progress and the gap between national standards and the school's outcomes is closing at both key stages. The proportions of pupils exceeding expected progress is increasing in mathematics and reading. In writing, less progress has been made in Key Stage 2 and standards remain below those expected.
- The most able pupils do not always receive work that is challenging enough for them to make progress that exceeds the expected rate. Current assessment information suggests that this is starting to change because the Executive Principal has raised expectations for all pupils.
- Restructuring to small classes and extra teaching support, made possible by the use of the pupil premium, means that eligible pupils now receive good teaching. In 2013, their attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 was in line with other pupils in mathematics and writing but about a term behind in reading. Assessment information for eligible pupils in school shows they are now making similar and sometimes better progress to other pupils.
- Because the support given to pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs has not been planned and monitored well enough, particularly in writing, they do not always make the progress of which they are capable.
- The teaching of reading has improved. More pupils read books that are at the right level to help them make progress. More pupils are catching up with the expected standards in Key Stage 1 and 2 and more are working at a higher level in Year 6. Pupils who find reading hard, make confident use of strategies they have been taught, particularly the sounds letters make, to help them to read.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- While teaching is improving rapidly it requires improvement because some teachers do not plan lessons well enough to make sure all groups of pupils make progress. In some lessons there is not enough challenge for the most able pupils and in some, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs do not receive the right support to develop their understanding.
- Teachers do not always make expectations for written work sufficiently clear; this means that pupils do not write enough in lessons and pupils do not produce work of a high-enough standard.
- In mathematics, the pace of learning is sometimes slowed because pupils do not have enough opportunities to use the calculation skills they learn well to solve problems. Pupils who would benefit from using practical resources to support their learning, for example counting cubes, do not always have these available.
- The organisation of the Early Years Foundation Stage is not as effective as it has been in the past. This is because staff have not made changes to the way learning is structured to meet the needs of the increased number of children. As a consequence, teaching groups are sometimes too large and activities are not well-enough planned to enable all children to receive the support

and challenge they need to make progress in their learning.

- In the best lessons, where teaching is improving rapidly, teachers use their subject knowledge to plan lessons which build carefully on what pupils know and can do. Pupils at all levels are clear about what they are expected to learn and respond very positively to opportunities that allow them to decide with their teacher which level is right for them to work at. In a Year 3 mathematics lesson, pupils made careful decisions about which numbers to multiply using a number line and all groups made good progress. One explained, 'I am using these easy numbers to test the pattern and when I understand it, I will try the challenge of these harder numbers.'
- Good use is made of other adults in the classroom; they give specific support to small groups and individuals and use questioning well to develop pupils' communication skills. At times, the lack of specific guidance in writing and practical resources in mathematics means this support is less effective in moving learning on.
- The quality of feedback and discussion about learning shared openly by pupils and their teachers is rapidly becoming a strength of the school. Where teaching is best, at the end of lessons, pupils evaluate their own progress and record how well they think they have done. Teachers mark this comment and respond by adding challenge or identifying extra support. Pupils say this is increasing their confidence and is helping them improve their work quickly. This quality is not yet evident in all classes.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' behaviour is good; they are well mannered and through daily guidance from the head of school and staff, know they are cared for and understand what is expected of them. During the inspection, all the pupils watched a demonstration of clowning skills. It was exciting and entertaining and pupils joined in with noisy enthusiasm, however, they listened carefully and respectfully when asked, demonstrating good self-control.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are a strength of the school; they are keen to learn, ask questions and value the opportunities they have to work in partnership with their teachers. In Key Stage 1 and 2 pupils enthusiastically respond to the opportunities they are given to take time to make sure they understand what is expected or to add challenge to their own learning. They strive to do better in their work and are making increasingly good progress.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say they are pleased that expectations of behaviour have improved and say that they feel safe at school. They know what happens and that their parents will be informed if their behaviour is poor. As a result of these strategies, the number and severity of incidents of poor behaviour has reduced considerably.
- Pupils believe that there is little bullying in the school, they think they are treated fairly and equally in lessons and at play. They think that sometimes adults take longer to deal with incidents of poor behaviour than they would like but they are confident they are addressed.
- Attendance has risen significantly and is now average, expectations for further improvement to exceed this are made clear to all. The head of school is ensuring everyone, including parents, understands the need for good attendance and is taking decisive action where it is not.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, behaviour is currently less good because the organisation of learning and activities does not meet the needs of the increased number of children who entered the school in January 2014. When all the children are taught together, low-level disruption and restlessness means that children are at risk of underachieving and disengagement.

The leadership and management are good

- The Executive Principal leads the school with resolute and clear determination to ensure that every pupil has an equal opportunity to achieve all that they are capable of. Expectations and ambition are high; as a result of this increased challenge, teaching is improving strongly. The partnership with Amersham School has increased resources available and provided teaching and administrative expertise. These have been well used to increase capacity and speed improvement.
- A significant feature of the Executive Principal's work has been the development of pupils' attitudes to learning. She quickly identified the need to improve behaviour through pupils feeling valued and supported in overcoming barriers to learning. Her partnership with the head of school is effective in ensuring that the school's vision of 'live, learn and succeed together' is evident in every corridor and classroom.
- Self-evaluation is accurate. School improvement plans are clear and precise and there is no doubt about what is expected or who is responsible for key actions. Monitoring of progress is accurate and performance management is used effectively to support teachers to improve. As a result, the proportion of good teaching is rising and many pupils are making better progress.
- New appointments have strengthened leadership, training given to middle leaders has enabled them to evaluate where improvement is required and they have taken action to address any issues rapidly. Changes made to the teaching of reading and mathematics are improving progress in lessons.
- Parents agree that communication has improved and that their knowledge of what is happening in school is better. They recognise the improved ambition for their children to succeed. Parents whose children have recently joined the school say that their needs have been met well and they have settled quickly and happily. A few expressed concerns about the school's management procedures, however, inspectors found the incidents they referred to had been appropriately dealt with.
- The curriculum for reading, writing and mathematics has been the focus for improvement; it is well planned and effective. Other subjects are combined through topics to make learning more active and interesting and pupils have good opportunities to learn about their own and other cultures. Pupils do not have enough regular opportunities to practise their writing and mathematics skills in different subjects such as science.
- Pupils enjoy the range of physical education (PE) opportunities they are offered and say they would like more. The primary school sport funding is used collaboratively with other schools to enable a qualified PE teacher to support the improvement of sports teaching and increase competition. Pupils' well-being is enhanced through the use of this funding to increase their active involvement in playtime games and activities.
- Advisers from E-Act multi academy trust provided the drive to commission the Executive Principal and the additional support that has been forthcoming from Amersham School. Until this academic year, the perspective of the school adviser has been generous. New systems and personnel are bringing effective challenge; the Executive Principal acknowledges this can be uncomfortable but she and governors recognise that the systems now in place support a more rigorous analysis of the school's work. To increase the sustainability of improvement the E-Act interim head of primary education is providing training for middle leaders to develop their role in improving teaching. E-Act has representatives on the governing body however; governors are not always clear about the actions the trust is taking to bring about further improvement. E-Act is addressing the training needs for governors by providing access to courses provided by Buckinghamshire local authority. At the time of the inspection an Improvement Board had been established with the aim of raising the school's standards but it has not yet met.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The Chair of the Governing Body is also the Chair at Amersham School. This means that the benefits of the partnership are well understood and its impact is monitored at both schools.

- The governing body shares leaders' ambitions and high expectations for good quality teaching to raise achievement, they visit the school regularly to better understand how well it is improving. Governors benefit from the support given to their analysis of how well the school is doing by both E-Act and the Executive Principal. As a consequence they are asking more challenging questions about how well pupils are progressing. The governing body understands how the Executive Principal is managing staff performance to move all teaching to good. Governors effectively evaluate how well the pupil premium is used. They have supported the move to smaller classes to ensure all pupils receive high-quality teaching. Governors ensure that statutory requirements for safeguarding are met.

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	138583
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	434135

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	Primary
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	111
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nigel Davies
Executive Principal	Sharon Jarrett
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01494 764521
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