

Little Munden Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Church Lane, Dane End, Ware, SG12 0NR

Inspection dates 26–27 February 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 new headteacher, staff and governors work well together. They have established a strong sense of community where all pupils and staff are valued and helped to do their best. As a result, the rate of pupils' progress is increasing and teaching is improving.
- Since the previous inspection, the quality of leadership and governance, the learning environment, teaching and children's achievement in Reception have improved and are now good.
- Governors check the work of the school thoroughly and provide strong challenge and support to school leaders.
- Achievement is good. From low starting points, pupils make good progress to reach average standards at the end of Year 6.
- Teaching is good. Teachers make learning enjoyable so pupils readily come to school. Attendance is, therefore, consistently above average.
- Behaviour is good and pupils' very positive attitudes make a strong contribution to their successful learning. They feel safe in school as they know that staff care greatly for them.
- Parents who responded to the online survey were overwhelmingly positive about all aspects of the school's work.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Progress in mathematics is not as rapid as in reading and writing.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage outdoor area does not promote language and mathematical development well.
- Occasionally teachers set work that is too easy for some pupils, especially the most able.
- Some teachers do not make sure pupils correct spellings or edit their written work so that they can learn from their mistakes and improve the quality of their writing.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed seven parts of lessons taught by three teachers. He also observed the teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) and small group support sessions. Most of these observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body and four other governors, staff, a representative of the local authority and groups of pupils.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at documentation including teachers' planning, the school's analysis of its strengths and weaknesses and resulting development plans, information on pupils' attainment and progress, records of the monitoring of teaching and governing body meetings, safeguarding documentation and samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector listened to pupils read, spoke with them about their learning and behaviour, and reviewed the work in their books.
- The inspector considered the 21 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). He also spoke informally to parents as they collected their children from school.

Inspection team

David Radomsky, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Almost all current pupils come from White British backgrounds.
- Only a very small number of pupils are supported by the pupil premium (additional government funding which in this school supports the very few pupils known to be eligible for free school meals).
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school currently caters for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage in Reception. It plans to offer Nursery provision from September 2014.
- Some pupils leave at the end of Year 4 to attend local middle schools, thus reducing significantly the number remaining in Years 5 and 6.
- Since the time of the previous inspection, a new headteacher was appointed in September 2012 and there has been a substantial change of staffing. Owing to the falling numbers of pupils, the school has reorganised from four mixed-aged classes into three.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement to outstanding by:
 - making sure that pupils, especially the most able, are given work that makes them think hard
 - insisting that pupils correct their work, including spellings of key words, and edit and improve the quality of their writing
 - giving pupils more opportunities across different subjects to practise their mathematical skills in real-life situations and for solving problems
 - improving the outdoor area in Reception to give children more opportunities to develop their writing and mathematical skills.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children enter Reception with skills and knowledge below the levels usually found, especially in their language and social development. Although still below expected levels for their age when they leave Reception, children have made good gains in their learning and personal development by the time they start Year 1.
- As year groups are small and a large proportion of pupils leave to join local middle schools at the end of Year 4, there are some year-on-year variations in the standards reached at the end of Years 2 and 6. Overall standards are broadly average, but only a few pupils attain the higher levels as the most able are not always challenged enough.
- In the past, pupils did not always make good progress across the key stages as a result of some instability and weaker teaching in Reception and in Years 3 and 4. These difficulties have been successfully resolved. During the past 18 months, rates of progress have increased and all pupils are now making good progress across the year groups. Pupils' work in lessons and books and the school's own information reflect a trend of increasingly faster progress.
- In 2013, every Year 1 pupil reached the expected level in the national phonics check. Across the school, standards are rising steadily and pupils are making good progress in their reading. Any pupils experiencing difficulties are given additional adult support. The school's library is used regularly for borrowing books, and recently purchased books have been well chosen to meet the interests of pupils. As a result, pupils are helped to become enthusiastic and confident readers at school and are encouraged to read at home with their parents and carers.
- Pupils' written work is good and improving. Pupils write about a range of topics that interest them and clear writing targets help them to know what is expected of them in order to improve the quality of their writing. Occasionally, however, teachers' expectations of the most able are not high enough to ensure that they attain the higher standards of which they are capable.
- Progress in mathematics is improving, but is not as strong as it is in English. Leaders identified that, owing to some previously poor teaching, pupils had gaps in their basic mathematical skills. They have focused on closing these gaps and this is leading to more rapid progress. However, opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical skills across other subjects are limited. This is a barrier to pupils making accelerated progress and the most able reaching the higher levels.
- The progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is similar to that of their classmates because they receive good, well-chosen support. This demonstrates the school's strong commitment to ensuring that all pupils have an equal opportunity to succeed.
- The pupil premium is used well to help individual pupils make good progress. It pays for additional one-to-one tuition and for personal development opportunities. There were too few eligible pupils in Year 6 in 2013 to comment on their attainment without potentially identifying individuals.

The quality of teaching is good

- The good teaching evident across the school ensures that pupils are making good progress.
- Teachers are highly dedicated to their pupils; they model enthusiasm for learning and share a

strong rapport with them. Because of their teachers' good example, pupils are motivated to work hard and try their best. This also inspires pupils to find out things for themselves. For example, one pupil keenly told the inspector how he had gone home the previous evening and shared with his father the mathematics he had learned that day. The two of them discussed the work and together discovered a mathematical pattern, which the pupil shared with the teacher and his classmates the next morning.

- Typically, teachers prepare activities that interest and motivate pupils across the age and ability range in each class, helping them to learn new things and develop their skills. For instance, in a history lesson seen, pupils enjoyed the challenge of following a list of clues and researching on the internet to find out the relationships between different royal families at the time of the First World War. Occasionally, however, the work set is not difficult enough to stretch the most-able pupils to enable them to attain the higher levels.
- Teaching assistants are well deployed to support pupils' learning and ensure their good progress within lessons, in small group situations and in one-to-one sessions.
- In Reception, teachers and teaching assistants encourage children to develop a wide range of skills and provide well-focused activities to meet the children's learning needs. There has been a marked improvement indoors, where children now have a stimulating environment and a rich variety of resources to promote good learning across all areas. As a result, children are engaged in purposeful activities throughout the day. The school has begun to develop the outdoor area. This is helping children develop their imaginative play. It does not yet reflect the richness of language and mathematical resources found indoors to boost children's progress.
- Books and work folders show that all teachers frequently mark pupils' work and give them written and oral feedback on what they have done well and what needs to be improved. In mathematics, in recent months the teachers have set additional tasks to help consolidate understanding and, for those who have mastered the work, a more challenging activity to try. This helps pupils to improve their work. Writing books, however, show that pupils do not always act upon the advice specified in marking and this limits how well their work, including their spelling, improves.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They are welcoming to all and care a great deal about each other in this small, harmonious and well-knit school community. Equally, they take good care of the school and the environment. For example, at break times they put their food waste in compost bins in the playground, paper is recycled, they eat sensibly in the lunch hall and the school is kept neat and tidy.
- In Reception, children follow established routines, play and share well together and happily tidy up at the end of sessions.
- Pupils have good and often excellent attitudes to learning. They arrive punctually to lessons and are keen to settle down to their work quickly. They readily follow their teachers' instructions and work well with each other. These attitudes make a very positive contribution to their successful learning. Very occasionally, a few pupils disrupt the learning. This is mainly because they get over-excited and enthusiastic about the work. They do, however, respond promptly to their teachers when asked to settle.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school a great deal and this is reflected in their consistently above-average attendance. No pupils have been excluded in recent years. Any pupils experiencing

difficulties with behaviour or attendance are quickly identified and are well supported, together with their parents, to resolve any issues.

- Pupils welcome the many opportunities that they have to take on responsibilities. For example, older pupils organise games in the playground and ensure no pupil is lonely. The school council regularly discuss their ideas with the headteacher and sometimes meet with governors. Additionally, pupils like to organise fundraising events to support charities.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils know that they can turn to an adult with any concern and that they will be listened to and helped. They know how to keep themselves safe, for example when using the internet.
- Pupils know about the various types of bullying, including cyber bullying, and say that it very rarely occurs as they get on well together. They are very clear that any inappropriate behaviour will be dealt with promptly and effectively.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, staff and governors alike are ambitious and have high expectations for the quality of their own performance and what they want pupils to achieve. Since the previous inspection, most aspects of the way children in Reception are catered for have improved and leaders know what needs to be done to improve the outdoor area. Governors are much more effective in checking the work of the school and challenging leaders to improve. The new headteacher has raised expectations and brought in new processes to secure consistently good teaching that have resulted in more rapid progress. This demonstrates the school's good capacity to improve further.
- In this very small school, the headteacher and the three class teachers share the leadership of subjects. They work in close partnership with two other village schools to share ideas and resources, check each other's assessment of pupils' work and arrange joint training for staff. They work closely with universities and local authority cluster groups to share ideas and carry out research. As a result, they are improving their effectiveness as leaders and teachers and this, in turn, is raising pupils' achievement.
- Lesson observations are undertaken regularly and teachers are given areas for further development. Teachers and other staff welcome feedback. They are given training that helps them to improve their skills as it is well chosen to meet their individual needs.
- The school uses well-developed systems for checking the progress that each pupil makes. Leaders use this information to hold staff to account for each pupil's progress and to identify additional support for pupils at risk of underachieving so that they can catch up quickly with their classmates.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Development plans identify a range of suitable actions designed to bring about improvements. They do not include specific actions that will raise achievements for the most able pupils.
- The local authority provides good support for developing the skills of school leaders and the governing body.
- The curriculum gives pupils many exciting experiences that capture their imagination. Pupils welcome the opportunities at the start of new topics to share with the teachers all of the

questions and ideas they wish to explore as their learning proceeds. The topic-based approach gives pupils a good range of opportunities to apply and develop their writing skills. They do not yet have such good opportunities to practise mathematical skills in real-life situations or for solving problems.

- The curriculum and the range of visitors, visits such as to museums and local farms during the lambing season, and many clubs such as singing, music, sport and drama make a strong contribution to pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The new funding to support sport and physical development is being used well to train staff and improve their skills, to acquire new resources and to broaden the sporting activities on offer. This has increased pupils' participation, for example, in the new gymnastics club and the school has signed up for a virtual inter-school sports competition, which will take place later this term.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are highly committed to the school and work hard to support and challenge the headteacher continuously to seek improvements. They have well-organised committees that ensure governors can scrutinise all aspects of the school's work. Governors regularly review pupil performance information and the quality of teaching. Recently they have commenced preparation with leaders for the implementation of the changes to the national curriculum. All governors visit and check the work of the school at least termly and talk to staff and pupils about their work. The governing body provides strong strategic leadership. To address concerns about the falling number of pupils, they have decided to expand the school by offering Nursery places from September 2014. Governors and leaders are also working with a university pilot research programme aimed at assisting parents in supporting their children's learning. Governors manage finances well, for example by checking the use made of the pupil premium funding and its effect on eligible pupils' achievement. They set clear targets for improved teaching and achievement, and are clear that only teachers whose pupils make good progress will be rewarded. Governors make sure that safeguarding procedures meet government 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	117402
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	440552

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	61
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Simon Smith
Headteacher	Stuart Whiteland
Date of previous school inspection	29 November 2010
Telephone number	01920 438271
Fax number	01920 438055
Email address	admin@littlemunden.herts.sch.uk

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