

Lexden Primary School with Unit for Hearing Impaired Pupils

Trafalgar Road, Colchester, CO3 9AS

Inspection dates 6–7 March 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 good school

- Strong leadership from the headteacher, senior leaders and subject leaders has promoted a steady increase in the quality of teaching and pupils' standards since the last inspection.
- Teaching is typically good and this has resulted in a rise in attainment and progress.
- Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The strong focus on acquiring skills in communication, including signing, and personal and social development means that children are well prepared for the next stage in their learning.
- Pupils in the Hearing Impaired Unit make good progress because learning is skilfully adapted to meet their needs, both in the Unit and when they return to the classroom.
- Pupils behave well and show respect for each other and for all adults at all times.
- Pupils enjoy their learning and say they feel safe in school.
- Governors know the school well. They are aware of its strengths and provide a suitable balance of support and challenge.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not use marking well throughout the school to help pupils improve their work.
- Some parents feel they need support in understanding what is being taught so that they can help their children with their work.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 14 lessons or part lessons, including lessons in the Hearing Impaired Unit. Some were joint observations with the headteacher.
- Inspectors carried out a series of short visits to classes across the school, observed an assembly and listened to pupils read.
- Meetings were held with pupils, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body, senior and subject leaders, and a representative of the local authority.
- There were 77 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and consideration was taken of the views of parents in the playground.

Inspection team

Gillian Bosschaert, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Andrew Lyons

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Lexden is an average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is lower than average. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is much lower than average.
- The school has specially resourced provision for 21 pupils who have special educational needs. These pupils have severe and profound hearing impairments and associated special needs. It provides places in each year group, including the Nursery, so they are included in mainstream lessons where possible.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average due to the number of pupils in the Hearing Impaired Unit.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below average. This is additional funding to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those in local authority care and those with a parent in the armed services.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make teaching consistently good and better by:
 - ensuring that marking is consistently effective so that pupils understand more clearly how to improve their work.
- Enable parents to be more involved in their children's learning by helping them to understand how English and mathematics are being taught.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Most children, especially the boys, start in the Nursery with skills and knowledge that are below the levels expected for their age, particularly in communication, language and literacy, and personal and social development. A strong emphasis is placed on developing these skills and offering a higher number of topics which interest boys that include using the outstanding outside environment. By the time they leave Reception, children's skills and knowledge are broadly in line with what is expected for their age.
- Attainment in Key Stage 1 rose last year to be broadly in line with the national average in writing, reading and mathematics. However, these figures include pupils who have hearing impairment and use British Sign Language as a first language and those who have associated learning and physical difficulties. These pupils make good progress. However, they take time, from very low starting points, to increase their communication skills. This has contributed to the school's data being lower than national figures for mainstream primary schools.
- The proportion of pupils attaining the expected levels in the end of year Key Stage 2 tests in 2013 in reading, writing and mathematics was higher than the national average. The proportion making more than expected progress was much higher than average.
- The new grammar, spelling and punctuation test results were also higher than the national averages. School data and the work in pupils' books shows that this trend is set to continue because the current Year 6 pupils have already made expected progress and some have exceeded this, especially the more-able pupils.
- Pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium do better than their classmates in mathematics but make the same progress in reading and writing in Key Stage 1. In 2013, eligible pupils in Year 6 were around a year behind their classmates in English and mathematics. However, this group and all groups made good progress. The attainment gap is narrowing in each year group in Key Stage 2 and there is no gap in Key Stage 1.
- The progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is good. This is because work is well matched to individual pupils' specific learning needs and abilities, including in the Hearing Impaired Unit, where individual lesson programmes are studied. Their attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 is almost a year ahead of similar pupils nationally but a year behind their classmates.
- The new primary school sports funding is used well. It helps to ensure that all pupils are able to swim, and provides extra swimming lessons for pupils who have not achieved 25 metres. Local competitions in netball and football show pupils achieve well.
- Pupils read with interest and show an enthusiasm for books. Reading is promoted well, with the result that reading standards are getting higher. Year 6 pupils who read to the inspector read accurately, fluently and with enthusiasm. The visit of an author prompted a number of pupils to obtain her book, which they are enjoying. They visit the local library, mostly during holiday times because the books chosen from school are pleasurable and motivating. Pupils read at home to siblings, as well as to parents and carers.

The quality of teaching is good

- Routines are expertly established from the start in the Nursery. This helps children to settle and make good progress. Information about individual children is used well to plan and provide activities that are demanding but achievable.
- In all classes, work is well planned to match pupils' different abilities. Pupils have opportunities to write at length and across different subjects. This is giving them more confidence in writing and ensures good progress, particularly in different styles of writing.
- In the Hearing Impaired Unit, teaching is outstanding. Pupils benefit from individual one-to-one tuition and good progress is made from a very low base. Many children have severe delay in communicating orally and in signing when they start at the school. They are often at the very earliest stages in communicating.
- The pupils in each age group who get extra help because of their special educational needs are taught well by commendably organised teams of well-trained dedicated teachers and teaching assistants. Staff show great patience and initiative in finding just the right level of work for each individual, with the result that these pupils all have an equal opportunity to succeed.
- Teachers and teaching assistants are able to use sign language not only in the Hearing Impaired Unit but also in the mainstream classrooms. It is also taught to all pupils. This ensures that there is no discrimination as all pupils are included in activities. It also aids friendship groups and helps pupils to form relationships.
- Teachers use skilful questioning to clarify pupils' thinking and use sessions in phonics (the sounds letters make) to increase pupils' vocabulary. Opportunities for pupils to challenge each other are enthusiastically undertaken, with the result that they are able to demonstrate their new learning well. Where teachers see that pupils are struggling, they quickly direct adults to intervene to give them the support they need.
- Adults are well deployed in classrooms and show great insight when working with all pupils. They are aware of when to step in with a question and when to stand back and leave pupils to fathom out their own way of tackling a problem. One teaching assistant was heard to say, 'I know you can do this now so I am going to help someone else.' Teaching assistants are well informed and adept at ensuring that pupils make good progress.
- Marking is regular and, in the best examples, a dialogue between pupil and teacher shows the progress pupils have in response to the teacher's comments. Pupils know how to improve their work. However, occasionally, especially in the older classes, pupils are not given enough advice on what they need to do to improve their work.
- Presentation is mostly good. There are good examples, especially in Key Stage 1 and Year 4, of carefully written stories, topics or mathematical equations presented with pride, showing mutual respect between pupil and teacher.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. The school is a calm and orderly place and pupils enjoy being there. They are polite and considerate to each other and to adults. They have a good understanding of right and wrong, and even the youngest children know what is expected of them. In the playground, in and around the school, and in the dining hall, pupils show how well

behaved they are.

- Some pupils are monitors in the dining hall and assist younger pupils who find it hard to unscrew tops of yoghurt pots or drinks. They also ensure that tables are clean when pupils have finished eating. In the playground, there is a 'friendship stop' with play ambassadors that the pupils explained was 'very good when you do not have anyone to play with'.
- Pupils are highly motivated and settle to learning quickly. They willingly take part in discussions. They are keen to answer questions and to accept advice from all adults. Teachers create a culture for success that encourages pupils to be enthusiastic and to work collaboratively.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Safeguarding arrangements meet all current requirements.
- The vast majority of parents, carers and pupils agreed the school provides a safe environment. Pupils interviewed stated that bullying very rarely happened but reported that the school tackles this promptly should it occur. School behaviour logs confirm this. A parent partnership team has anti-bullying as its focus, with workshops and a leaflet for pupils.
- Pupils have a good awareness of what constitutes safe and unsafe practices, and different types of bullying, in particular cyber-bullying. They understand about road safety, fire safety and other forms of hazard, showing they know how to keep themselves safe.
- Attendance has steadily improved and is now average. First-day calling to pupils' homes and even a quick visit if there is no response to the telephone call have ensured that pupils attend regularly. Some funding has been used to provide a Well-Being and Home School Liaison Worker. She supports pupils with barriers to learning and their families, especially those of persistent absentees.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, senior leaders and the governors have secured a culture of high expectations for all pupils and a positive climate for learning. This has been communicated through written and oral feedback which followed rigorous monitoring. Together with staff training, it has led to a rise in standards since the previous inspection. This training is linked to priority areas in the school improvement plan and weaknesses in individual staff skills.
- The school's self-evaluation is accurate, showing a realistic view of the school and its priorities for improvement. Teachers are held accountable for the progress their pupils make through regular pupil progress meetings. Any pupils in danger of falling behind are quickly identified and given extra support.
- Leadership of the Hearing Impaired Unit is strong. Adults use both signing and verbal instructions, which are highly effective in helping the pupils to move forward in their learning.
- Subject leaders know their subjects well. New resources purchased have made a difference to pupils' understanding, especially in mathematics.
- Different subjects are taught through topics and enriched through visits out of school. For example, Year 6 last year visited the Imperial War Museum for their topic on the Second World War. This year's Year 6 are looking at the 'Groovy Greeks', and subjects like art and drama

naturally link into the topic.

- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted through assemblies and through the curriculum. Pupils have the opportunity to be composers and artists, as well as develop an understanding of different faiths. For example, pupils visited the Bhakivedante Manor Temple, where they were able to dress in traditional Asian costumes and learn about Hare Krishna.
- Just a few days before the inspection, pupils released blue balloons with their dreams inside. This was a follow-up to a visit by a Para-Olympian who motivated the pupils to see they can 'Be the best they can be'. This is becoming the school mantra.
- The pupil premium funds are used well. Funding is spent on providing an additional mathematics teacher to raise attainment and accelerate progress in this subject, and also extra small-group teaching to raise attainment in English and mathematics. Additional tablet computers have also been purchased to assist in teaching eligible pupils. This has helped to increase the proportion of pupils making expected and better progress.
- The sports funding is used to purchase support from Colchester United Football Club for a variety of sports. Teachers stay in these lessons and are coached alongside the pupils. Pupils have gained confidence in sporting activities. All pupils are able to swim, even if just a short distance, and the netball team came second in the district competition; a remarkable achievement as they were competing against teams with specialist coaches.
- The school strives to involve parents in their children's learning. Class newsletters give termly outlines of the topics that are going to be taught. There are reading workshops, family learning courses and weekly open assemblies. Open evenings are well attended. However, some parents expressed a wish to better understand how their children are taught, especially in mathematics, so that they are better able to help at home with homework.
- The school is in partnership with two other primary schools. This partnership has been effective in checking the accuracy of teachers' assessments of pupils' work and confirming senior leaders' judgements in all three schools. The school also has strong links with the secondary school to which most pupils transfer. This has been particularly effective for the more-able pupils, who benefit from lessons in the secondary school.
- The school works closely with the local authority and other consultants. This has helped to secure some of the improvements and validated the judgements of senior leaders.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governors are well informed and well trained. They actively seek out training from the local authority and others to ensure they are up to date with safeguarding and other essential policies. They have a good awareness of the standards attained by pupils and the quality of teaching. They hold leaders to account for the performance of the school by setting effective objectives.
 - Governors' monitoring is systematic. Individual governors track areas of the school improvement plan and challenge leaders about the impact the developments are having. This leads to further improvements, such as extra help for more-able pupils in mathematics.
 - Governors monitor finances well, including the pupil premium funding. This is a termly item on the headteacher's report, which shows where the money is being spent and the impact it is having on the attainment of eligible pupils.

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	114707
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	430742

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	231
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ros Somerville
Headteacher	Carole Farrer
Date of previous school inspection	22 May 2012
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