

Great Bentley Primary School

Plough Road, Great Bentley, Colchester, CO7 8LD

Inspection dates

11–12 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Standards in writing are too low when pupils leave the school. Not enough pupils make good progress from their starting points to reach average or above average levels.
- Not enough of the most-able pupils reach the levels of attainment they are capable of, particularly in writing
- Pupils make uneven progress from one year group to another because the quality of teaching varies too much.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to develop their scientific skills and knowledge. The quality of pupils' work in history and geography varies too much.
- Leaders' efforts to improve teaching are not rigorous enough. Leaders have not yet implemented plans to improve some teaching that requires improvement.
- Most of the middle leaders are new to their role and some have not yet had an impact on improving standards in their area of responsibility.
- The governing body does not hold the school to account well enough.
- The school's action plans do not focus well enough on the most urgent priorities for improvement.

The school has the following strengths

- Senior leaders are determined to improve matters. They have secured the confidence of all members of the staff team.
- The passionate and determined leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher has raised expectations for pupils' progress across the school. Progress in mathematics is improving.
- Pupils enjoy reading a wide range of books. They make good progress in developing their reading skills. Progress in reading is improving.
- Children thrive in the Early Years Foundation Stage because adults provide skilful support in vibrant, well-planned outdoor and indoor spaces.
- Pupils' attendance is above average. They enjoy school. Pupils are polite, friendly and well behaved.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 16 lessons or parts of lessons of which five were conducted jointly with the headteacher. Inspectors heard pupils read and looked in their books for evidence of progress and the quality of teaching over time.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, other school leaders, pupils, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspection team took account of the 78 responses to the online parent questionnaire (Parent View) and talked to parents and carers informally before school.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents including: the school's own data about pupils' current progress; lesson plans; monitoring information; evidence of behaviour and attendance; the register of checks performed on adults working in and regularly visiting the school; and records of additional activities provided by the school.
- Inspectors observed a whole-school assembly, break time, pupils playing outdoors after lunch, and pupils leaving at the end of the school day.

Inspection team

Michelle Winter, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Christine Malone

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is a smaller-than-average primary school, with one class in each year group from Reception to Year 6.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in one Reception class.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through extra government funding (pupil premium) is below average.
- The overwhelming majority of pupils are from English-speaking White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average. The proportion supported at school action is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make the quality of teaching and learning consistently good in all year groups and most subjects by ensuring that:
 - leaders accelerate the implementation of plans to improve the quality of teaching in some year groups
 - all teaching supports and challenges the most able pupils to do as well as they can
 - high expectations evident in the teaching of reading are consistent across subjects.
- Improve the attainment and progress of pupils by:
 - drawing up and implementing well-founded plans to improve standards in writing
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to build on their scientific skills
 - ensuring that teachers show consistently high expectations of pupils' work in science, history and geography.
- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - systems to monitor and improve teaching across subjects are robust and effective
 - improvement plans focus on the most urgent and important weaknesses
 - all middle leaders have the support and training they need to be effective in improving achievement in their area of responsibility
 - the governing body checks and challenges the school's progress rigorously, including by asking leaders probing questions about what will make the most difference in improving teaching and achievement.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- The school does not build well enough on the good start that children make in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Most children start the school with the skills expected for their age. Children make good progress in the Reception class. Many pupils enter Year 1 as confident readers and writers and they have well-developed mathematical skills.
- Pupils' progress is not good enough from Year 1 to Year 6 in writing. Pupils, who have a strong start, do not make consistently good progress in all year groups. Consequently, not enough pupils reach the levels they are capable of. By the time pupils reach Year 6, too few of them attain the expected Level 4 in writing.
- Not enough of the most able pupils make good progress. Inconsistent teaching does not meet the needs of these pupils well enough. Too few of them attain the higher levels in writing and by the end of Year 2. Of those pupils who do attain highly at the end of Key Stage 1, not enough carry on doing well by the time they leave the school.
- The school's own evaluation of pupils' progress and attainment indicates that the attainment of pupils in writing at the end of Key Stage 2 will not significantly improve for pupils currently in Year 5 and Year 6. More pupils are on track to make expected or better progress from the end of Key Stage 1 in reading, mathematics and writing.
- Pupils' progress in science, history and geography is not consistently good. Some pupils have too few opportunities to develop their skills in these subjects. In some year groups, teachers' expectations of pupils' writing in these areas of learning are too low.
- Pupils in Key Stage 1 learn the sounds that letters represent (phonics) well; their reading is good, and they enjoy talking about the books they read, understanding the content well. A very large majority of pupils in Year 1 reached expected levels in the phonics check in 2013. This was a large improvement on the previous year. Most pupils needing extra help to catch up do so successfully in Year 2.
- Older pupils make broadly good progress in developing their enjoyment of books and their reading skills. Teaching builds well on the good start pupils make. Pupils talk enthusiastically about their favourite books and authors.
- Achievement in mathematics has improved. Most pupils have the skills they need to complete calculations and solve problems. For instance, most older pupils have a good knowledge of the multiplication tables.
- The school supports many of the disabled pupils and those with special educational needs well. Parents and carers are pleased with the support that pupils with medical needs receive. However, some of the pupils identified as having a special need do not make consistently good progress from their starting points.
- The attainment of pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding matches that of other pupils in reading, writing and mathematics. These pupils make consistently better progress than their classmates and therefore gaps in attainment are closing.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching is not consistently good across all year groups or in all subjects. Teaching in some year groups is not improving quickly enough.
- Until very recently pupils have had too few opportunities to apply their skills by writing at length regularly. However, teachers have recently introduced more regular opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills.
- Teaching fails to build on the skills of the most able pupils well enough by providing challenging questions and tasks which stretch pupils' thinking.
- Pupils have too few opportunities to learn new scientific skills. Teachers' expectations of the quality of work in science, history and geography are sometimes too low. The quality of pupils' work in these subjects varies too much.
- There is much teaching that is good and some that is outstanding. Where it is effective, teachers plan activities to build on existing skills well. They check pupils' understanding throughout lessons by asking appropriate questions and quickly reviewing their work. Teachers then use this information to adapt tasks appropriately and quickly.
- Occasionally pupils eligible for pupil premium funding miss lessons or parts of lessons to attend catch-up sessions. When adults do not keep track of this, classwork in science, history or geography remains unfinished.
- Additional support for pupils with special educational needs is often effective but when teachers do not adapt activities and tasks well enough, progress in lessons for these pupils slows. Adults support pupils with medical needs and disabled pupils well so that they can participate fully in educational activities.
- Adults in the Early Years Foundation Stage support children's learning sensitively and skilfully both indoors and outdoors. Children are encouraged to explore and practise their newly-learnt skills using a very wide range of attractive and well-maintained resources. Boys proudly explain how they are counting and writing down the numbers of coloured balls that land in a bucket. Adults plan both focused activities and play opportunities in detail, in response to what they know will most benefit children's learning.
- Pupils quickly become confident readers in Key Stage 1. Most teachers explain how specific letter combinations make certain sounds, and pupils develop confidence because adults let them practise, and push them on when they are ready. A culture of the enjoyment of reading pervades the school. Progress in reading is improving.
- Teaching in mathematics is improving. Pupils in most year groups explain how they worked out number problems and some teachers encourage pupils to explore their own individual methods for calculation. This effectively embeds learning. Teachers ensure that pupils have the basic knowledge of number facts they need to solve number problems.
- Teachers' marking has improved and the system for providing feedback to pupils is followed by all teachers, although the quality of this work varies. Individual pupil targets have been recently introduced but some of the older pupils do not understand them, and so their impact on helping pupils know what they need to do to improve is limited.

- Pupils have a growing number of opportunities for cultural development. They make regular visits to the local environment and beyond.
- The use of sports funding to employ a sports coach is helping to improve teaching and pupils' progress in physical education.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Most pupils enjoy school and the majority of their parents and carers agree that their children are happy. They are enthusiastic to learn and keen to try their best. Pupils are polite and friendly to each other, to their teachers and to visitors. Pupils' attitudes to learning are consistently good.
- Pupils attend school regularly. Pupils are encouraged to be helpful and to succeed in their work through reward systems. They appreciate how their teachers recognise their efforts, for instance in assemblies. A very small minority of parents question the effectiveness of rewarding pupils when they have not always behaved well.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. It complies with requirements for the induction of new staff and for recording safeguarding checks on all adults working and regularly visiting the school. The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to the online survey agree that the school keeps their children safe.
- Pupils can explain clearly what bullying is and say that bullying never happens in their school. Some pupils can explain how to keep safe online by using the safe searching programme organised by the school. Pupils say that there is no homophobic language used in their school.
- The school keeps a detailed record of incidents that occur at lunchtime, and analyses these so that lunchtime staff can pre-empt misbehaviour. However, there is no clear method to record communications with parents about their child's involvement.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Senior leaders track the achievement of pupils well but not enough has been done to ensure that all pupils leave with the writing skills they need.
- Senior leaders evaluate the quality of teaching overtime accurately but do not always act quickly enough to improve teaching. New plans to develop and improve some teaching have not yet had an impact. Suggestions that senior leaders make to improve teaching are not followed up rigorously enough to ensure that teaching improves quickly.
- The headteacher and her deputy are passionate and determined leaders. They have the full confidence of the staff team.
- The headteacher has a mostly accurate view of the quality of her staff team, and generally knows who is ready for more responsibility. Leaders ensure that teachers' pay accurately reflect their effectiveness and responsibility.
- Most middle leaders are new to their roles. Some of them are beginning to have an impact but not universally on the quality of teaching or levels of progress and attainment. Leaders do not evaluate the quality of teaching and pupils' progress in subjects other than English and

mathematics.

- The new leader responsible for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is beginning to tackle matters. She has recognised that some pupils are inappropriately identified as having special needs. She is determined to evaluate the impact of additional support and to shift the emphasis to consistently good teaching in lessons. She has ensured that teachers are held to account for the progress of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.
- Some of the school's plans for improvement do not make clear what precisely needs to improve and how this will be achieved. For instance, there is not a clear enough strategy to improve achievement and teaching in writing.
- Leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is effective. The small team is led with confidence, knowledge and passion.
- The headteacher and her staff team are determined to offer pupils an exciting and fulfilling school experience. The school environment is busy, bright and interesting both indoors and outside.
- The curriculum is enhanced by visits and visitors, but leaders do not ensure that enough time is spent studying subjects other than English and mathematics. Pupils say they would like more time to develop their artistic skills.
- Leaders allocated sport funding to improve the teaching of physical education. There are increased opportunities for pupils to participate in sporting activities. Leaders do not check the impact of this on pupils' healthy lifestyles.
- The school fosters strong social, moral and cultural development. Teachers promote links with the village community and further afield. Pupils study Colchester, and collect for a range of charities. The weekly cooking club fills the corridor with delicious smells. The school focuses less well on pupils' spiritual development.
- A minority of parents and carers is not fully confident in some decisions made by senior leaders to benefit pupils' learning. The governing body, and headteacher, are aware of this and explain why such a situation has occurred, but have not yet successfully garnered the support of all parents.
- The local authority has had a light-touch approach to monitoring the school. The local authority adviser has conducted joint lesson observations with senior leaders, which have been helpful. Slow progress has not alerted the local authority to the need to increase the challenge and support for the school to focus on improving pupils' achievement.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The headteacher provides the governing body with regular detailed reports, and governors have the confidence to ask in meetings if they do not understand details.
 - Governors check that the use of pupil premium funding is effective in closing the gaps in attainment. The additional support pupils receive in reading, writing and mathematics is effective.
 - The governing body does not routinely ask probing questions of the headteacher about what will make the most difference to improving pupils' progress. The last inspection identified the need to develop the governing body's role in holding the school to account. Although the governing body takes its responsibilities seriously and operates several committees to focus its

work, governors only gain knowledge of achievement from the headteacher and other staff. This reduces their ability to provide the headteacher with helpful critical comments. Governors are aware of the quality of teaching in the school and work with the headteacher to ensure that teachers pay reflects their effectiveness and responsibilities.

- Governors have not checked well enough that the school's improvement plans are addressing the most urgent areas weaknesses.

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	114736
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	432320

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	207
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kevin Plummer
Headteacher	Tracey Caffull
Date of previous school inspection	14 September 2010
Telephone number	01206 250331
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