

Grove Road Primary School

Grove Road, Tring, HP23 5PD

Inspection dates 1–2 May 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	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.

- After a period of many staff changes, the headteacher has established a cohesive team of staff and governors who passionately share her ambition for continuous school improvement. As a result, the school is moving forward rapidly.
- Children settle very quickly into the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are given things to do that interest and excite them. They make a flying start to their life in school.
- Pupils make good progress and standards are above the national average by the end of Year 6, particularly in reading and writing.
- Behaviour is good; pupils are polite and well mannered. They participate enthusiastically in lessons.
- The quality of teaching is mainly good, with many examples of excellent practice, particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Year 6. Teachers provide challenging work for pupils of all abilities, including the most able.
- The headteacher is an inspirational, effective leader, who with her senior leadership team, give high priority to supporting and training staff in order to improve the quality of teaching and raising pupils' achievement. This has been very successful.
- Good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development permeates the whole school, underpinning the pupils' good behaviour and positive attitudes.
- The school's work to keep pupils' safe and secure is outstanding. Almost all their parents agree.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching and achievement are not yet outstanding because pupils in some year groups do not make such strong and sustained progress as in others, especially in mathematics.
- Some subject leaders require more opportunities to monitor lessons to improve teaching.
- The expertise of the best teachers in the school is not used to full effect to improve the practice of others.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 25 lessons and four parts of lessons, including eight which were observed jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at break time and at lunchtime, both inside the school and in the playground. They listened to a sample of pupils read from Year 3.
- Inspectors observed the school at work, visited assemblies and looked at a wide range of documentation, including: the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan; pupils' workbooks; external moderators' reports of assessment; documents relating to the management of teachers' performance; plans for supporting disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs; and minutes of the meetings of the governing body. They also reviewed the standards pupils have achieved over time and the school's information about pupils' current progress.
- Discussions were held with a group of pupils from Key Stage 2, members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority, the headteacher, other school leaders and other members of staff.
- Inspectors took account of 43 staff questionnaires.
- There were 148 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), which the inspectors took into account. They also spoke to a number of parents and considered the correspondence received from parents commenting about the school.

Inspection team

Terrance Mortimer, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Lynn Lowery

Additional Inspector

Joy Barter

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger-than-average primary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is well below the national average. This is extra government funding for particular groups, including pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs who are supported at school action is well below the national average. Few such pupils are supported at school action plus or have a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average. Few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The current headteacher took up post in September 2012. The deputy headteacher took up her post full time in January 2013. There have been several other changes to staffing since the previous inspection.
- The school is in an Education Improvement Partnership, where expertise in teaching and learning is shared with partner schools in the authority to improve standards.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which sets minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment in reading, writing and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise teaching and achievement from good to outstanding by:
 - using the newly trained subject leaders to contribute more fully to improving the quality of teaching and pupils' progress in their areas
 - sharing the good teaching skills that are found and recognised in the school.
- Raise attainment and accelerate progress in mathematics so that achievement in mathematics is as high as it is in English by:
 - providing training and support for teachers to bolster their confidence in teaching problem solving in mathematics.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Despite the staffing changes the school has faced, both in the leadership and teaching, the pupils have made better progress and achieved well since the last inspection. In the Key Stage 2 tests in 2013, pupils attained significantly above average in both reading and writing and slightly above in mathematics. An above average proportion of Pupils in Year 6 often achieve above national averages at Level 5.
- Decisive actions taken by the headteacher, deputy headteacher, supported by staff and governors, have improved teaching, sharpened the accuracy of assessment of pupils' achievement and raised the expectations for pupils. As a result, progress is accelerating rapidly this year.
- Pupils' learning in lessons, work in books and the school's own checks of pupils' progress show many pupils are making rapid progress, especially in reading and writing, though this is not yet as fast in mathematics. Progress across the school is good overall.
- Improvement in rates of progress is not consistent across all year groups or subjects. It is stronger in reading and writing than in mathematics, and it is faster in Years 5 and 6 than in younger age groups. This is because of differences in the quality of teaching.
- In Year 6, there is much evidence of more-able pupils producing work at the higher levels. More able pupils are, this year, working in targeted groups at level 6 in both English and mathematics. The school's system for tracking individual pupils' progress quickly identifies any dips, which are then rectified.
- Most children enter school with skills and understanding that are typical for their age, with some doing better than this. As a result of good teaching and activities closely matched to their needs and interests, all children make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes. They play together happily and are well behaved. They enjoy exploring for themselves, as well as doing adult-led activities, both in the classroom and outdoors. By the end of Reception, their attainment is above that expected and they are ready for Key Stage 1.
- In Key Stage 1, in 2013, pupils attained results in line with the national average. This was a slight fall from 2012, following a more rigorous assessment of Key Stage 1, which was confirmed by local authority moderation. Current data show that there has been an improvement and indicate above-average attainment in reading, writing and mathematics. The focus the school has had on improving the writing of the younger pupils has been extremely effective. This begins in the Early Years Foundation Stage unit, where writing is promoted at every opportunity and children are keen to show off their early writing skills. They regularly choose to write about their drawings, which they enjoy sharing with visiting adults.
- The headteacher has ensured that teachers' assessments of the standards pupils reach in Year 2 are accurate through rigorous checking, so that pupils enter Key Stage 2 with their attainment accurately assessed at the correct levels. This has had a positive impact on accelerating the progress of pupils in Year 3 because teachers have a more accurate understanding of their starting points on entry to Key Stage 2.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs have their needs identified early. They receive well-targeted support quickly and are making faster progress than has been the case in the past, with the result that their progress is now as good as that of other pupils, especially in

reading and writing.

- Current checks of pupils' work show that those who benefit from pupil premium support have quickened their progress because of extra adult help. As a result, previous gaps in attainment between these pupils and other pupils at the end of Year 6 in 2013, of 12 months in reading and writing and over five terms in mathematics, have all been closed. Pupils supported by the pupil premium now achieve at least as well as other pupils and are making good progress.
- Pupils' improved performance in the 2013 screening check on phonics (letters and sounds) and their above-average scores in the Year 2 re-check show that teaching of phonics is now more effective. This is also reflected in the accelerated progress now being made in writing by pupils in Key Stage 1, after a dip in standards in 2013.
- Standards in physical education are improving thanks to effective use of the new primary school sport funding. Sports coaches lead lessons and provide training for the staff.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is now almost all good with some outstanding, as a result of the successful work to improve its quality. The school's own lesson observations, undertaken with a local authority representative over the last 12 months, support this judgement. Discussions with pupils and a scrutiny of the work in their books show that teaching has been typically good over time for the last year.
- Children are enthusiastic about learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage Unit, where teaching is good and often outstanding.
- The balance between adult-led activities and those that children can choose for themselves is planned extremely carefully to ensure the rapid development of their skills, knowledge and understanding. Adults know precisely what children already know and can do and how to best offer what they need to learn next.
- The result of good provision in Nursery and Reception is that children persevere with tasks very well and use their imagination and creativity constantly. For example, children were thoroughly engrossed 'mixing potions to make your hair green', or 'make you grow wings' and talked animatedly about the spells and potions they have made. The children, led skilfully by the class teacher, used a very wide range of language, vocabulary and mark making.
- Pupils engage well with their work so learning proceeds at a good pace, which ensures high levels of interest and engagement. Pupils respond very well to the challenges set for them by adults. For example, some of the most able pupils chose to challenge themselves in a highly successful Year 4 mathematics lesson. By starting with the tasks set at the highest level, they quickly began to make extremely good progress.
- Teachers generally have high expectations of pupils' work. Well-planned learning stretches the skills of the most-able pupils. Work in pupils' books clearly shows that these pupils tackle challenging tasks well. In a literacy lesson, the most-able pupils were seen to move on quickly to employ their new skills, making good progress. For example, Year 6 pupils were creating imagery through powerful language and had started by using texts that they knew which created images in their heads, such as 'Artemis Fowl'. This had created a discussion about feelings which pupils continued in groups and pairs. They also shared their ideas and emotions in a secure atmosphere. The writing was full of good descriptive language and pupils extended

their understanding when they checked and commented upon each other's work. One pupil commented, 'Sad is an overused word – I prefer sorrowful'.

- Teaching assistants provide good support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, as well as those who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium. They do this by working closely and effectively with them, whether in class, on individual programmes or in small groups.
- Work in pupils' books is regularly marked by teachers. It is thorough and gives pupils a clear idea of how well they are learning. Comments provide helpful advice so that pupils know what to do to improve their work. Pupils are given the time they need to respond to comments, correct their work and follow the helpful suggestions, so their work gets better.
- Pupils rise to the challenges of quickly recalling their number facts. This was seen, for example, in a Year 4 lesson where pupils, practised random multiplication facts in a fast paced self - checking exercise for 'gold, silver or bronze'. A stronger focus is being placed on making sure pupils are given more chances to use and apply their mathematical skills in order to improve their ability to solve problems, a weakness in the past.
- Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are given a good range of opportunities to apply the mathematics skills they have learnt in everyday problem-solving activities to make their learning more relevant to them. However, pupils do not get such consistent opportunities in other year groups to apply their mathematical skills in practical activities or 'real life' problems.
- The quality of mathematics teaching is not as consistently good as that of reading and writing. Most teachers use information about pupils' ability and progress effectively in their planning. On the few occasions where teaching requires improvement, the information is not used effectively enough to set work at the right level, especially in mathematics. As a result, pupils of all abilities sometimes do not achieve as well as they could.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. There is a very welcoming atmosphere throughout the school. Pupils are polite, courteous and get on well with each other and adults. They enjoy school and are keen to learn. Pupils from different backgrounds relate well to one another.
- Pupils are allowed into their classes early and quickly settle to interesting activities set for them. They use this time well, for example to improve their work from the previous day according to the teacher's advice written in their books. A purposeful start to the day is assured.
- Teachers and teaching assistants establish very good relationships with their classes and manage pupils' behaviour very effectively. As a result, pupils are happy to contribute to lessons and they listen well to each other.
- All members of the school community describe behaviour as good and much improved. These views match inspectors' observations of the pupils at work and play.
- The youngest children watch and learn from their Year 5 'buddies', who show maturity as they help the young ones settle in to school life.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils feel safe and are confident to seek help, should they need it, from any adult in school. Parents and staff strongly

support the view that pupils are safe in school. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe in different situations. The school provides a trip to 'Hazard Alley' for all pupils when they reach Year 5. This trip gives pupils 'first hand' experiences where they learn about keeping themselves safe in all sorts of circumstances.

- All staff have received the relevant child protection training and the governors have been supporting the school in working with the pupils and their parents in recognising, understanding and protecting the pupils against abuse.
- Pupils know and understand about the different kinds of bullying. They are particularly knowledgeable about e-safety and the possible dangers associated with social networking sites. There is no evidence of bullying and parents, pupils and staff confirm this.
- The after-school club provides a valuable resource for parents. The sessions are calm and purposeful, and pupils enjoy what is on offer and collaborate well with each other.
- Attendance continues to be maintained above the national average, an illustration of the school's strengthening relationship with parents.

The leadership and management are good

- The school's ethos is driven inspiringly by the headteacher and is fully appreciated by parents and carers. One commented, 'The head is always approachable, she cares for the children'.
- The headteacher, senior leaders and governors, having established a stable teaching staff, have a fierce ambition for improvement to raise standards to outstanding. They are setting high expectations for pupil achievement and the quality of teaching. Consequently, the quality of teaching is good, with some that is outstanding, and pupils achieve well.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have identified the right priorities to improve teaching further and accelerate the progress of all groups of pupils. Between them, they have responded positively to the changes that have occurred to the staffing and subject responsibilities.
- The headteacher has introduced a clear and systematic system for helping teachers to track the progress of individual pupils. This is used rigorously, so individual progress in reading, writing and mathematics is regularly checked and reported on to governors. Support can be targeted quickly when it is necessary.
- A new team of subject leaders and key stage leaders, with clear roles and responsibilities, has been established and trained. These members of staff know their areas of responsibility well and model good practice effectively in planning and analysis of work and data, but as yet are not fully involved in checking the work of other teachers through the monitoring of lessons.
- An effective performance management scheme provides support, challenge and appropriate training for staff. Actions to bring about improvement are always followed through to see if they are successful. Teachers are held to account for the progress of pupils in their classes and know that there is a clear link between good performance and salary progression.
- Leaders and managers fulfil their statutory duties effectively. Actions include the thorough vetting of all those who work in the school. Finances are managed efficiently to ensure that funds, such as the pupil premium, are used effectively to include pupils in the full range of

school activities and to boost achievement. School has used funding to provide group sessions and personalised interventions as well as ensuring that the pupils are able to attend the same activities as their classmates.

- Topics studied bring together different subjects in a way that pupils describe as 'fun and interesting'. Pupils appreciate the visits and visitors which enrich the themes considered. The wider curriculum contributes well to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The school is conscientious and effective in promoting equality of opportunity and eliminating any potential discrimination.
- All staff responding to the staff questionnaire said the school is well led and managed. Teachers rightly say that the school is providing training and experiences that are helping them to improve their teaching; this includes working in an Education Improvement Partnership. Recent training in problem solving in mathematics is helping teachers to confidently provide a wider range of learning activities to develop pupils' mathematical skills across the curriculum.
- Staff are proud of the school and its achievements, and work well as a team. Parents' responses to the online Parent View overwhelmingly would recommend the school.
- The local authority provides good and appropriate monitoring and training support to the school. It conducted a review of the school following the previous inspection and supported it while a new leadership structure was established. It has stepped back as its representatives have monitored the effective improvements closely and now offer appropriate, lighter-touch support.
- Leaders make good use of the primary school sports funding. This includes the employment of coaches in a wider range of sports to encourage pupils to adopt a healthier lifestyle. The funding is also used to train the school's teachers and teaching assistants so that they can deliver these sports in the future.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have strengthened their impact significantly and have worked extremely well with the headteacher to bring the school through a transition period. Now, together with the headteacher and other senior leaders, they constitute a formidable team striving to make this good school even better. Led by a very effective chair, governors ensure that they are fully informed about all aspects of school improvement. They do this by frequent visits to school, careful checking of the headteacher's reports on the quality of teaching and rigorous scrutiny of data on pupils' performance. Governors challenge school leaders to ensure that teachers' performance management and salary progression lead to improved pupils' achievement.
 - Governors check diligently the progress of pupils entitled to the pupil premium grant to ensure that the money is used effectively. They also check that the new sport funding develops skills and enhances pupils' health and well-being. Governors regularly take part in training courses to ensure they are fully up to date with all their areas of responsibility. They ensure that their statutory obligations are fully met, including procedures for safeguarding.

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	117341
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	442030

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	425
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Julian Crane
Headteacher	Sharon Sanderson
Date of previous school inspection	21 November 2012
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