

Longmeadow Primary School

Oaks Cross, Broadwater, Stevenage, Hertfordshire SG2 8LT

Inspection dates 30 April–1 May 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	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 much lower than in mathematics and reading.
- Teaching is not consistently good throughout the school.
- Not enough pupils make good progress and achieve well, especially in writing.
- Work in some lessons is too easy, especially for the most-able pupils.
- Leaders have not made sure that improvements are rapid enough to raise standards since the previous inspection.
- Inaccuracies in the assessment of how well some pupils are doing have not been picked up and rectified soon enough. This means that leaders have not got a clear understanding of pupils' recent progress.
- A significant minority of parents feel that communication with school is difficult and their views and concerns are not listened to.

The school has the following strengths

- Children make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes.
- Pupils make good progress in reading and Year 5 and 6 pupils currently in school have above-average standards in this subject.
- The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection and more is now good. However, this is not consistent in all classes.
- Governors ask school leaders challenging questions and visit the school regularly to check on how well it is doing.
- Pupils' behaviour is good throughout the school. Pupils and parents agree that pupils are kept safe and secure in school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 24 lessons or parts of lessons, four of which were seen together with the headteacher, deputy headteacher or the Key Stage 2 leader.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other staff, three groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and two parent governors, and a representative of the local authority.
- Informal discussions were held with parents.
- The inspectors took account of the 64 responses to Ofsted’s online questionnaire, Parent View, individual communications from parents and the school’s own parental and pupil questionnaires.
- The inspectors observed the school’s work and reviewed a range of documentation including the school’s checks on its performance, its analysis and tracking of pupils’ progress, records of behaviour and safety, school improvement plans, records relating to classroom observations and the management of staff performance, safeguarding arrangements and records of meetings of the governing body.
- The inspectors also looked at pupils’ work, listened to pupils read and checked information on attendance.

Inspection team

Susan Hughes, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Matthew Brown	Additional Inspector
Vreta Bagilhole	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The school is federated with another school, Shephalbury Park Primary School. The federated schools have one governing body and each has its own headteacher.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium, which is additional funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, in local authority care or with a parent in the armed services, is above average.
- The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language are below average.
- 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 through a statement of special educational needs is also below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good to raise standards, particularly in writing, through ensuring:
 - work is not too easy for pupils, especially the most able
 - pupils have plenty of opportunities to practise and improve their literacy skills in different subjects
 - recently introduced changes to the way writing is taught are fully implemented in all classes.
- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - the assessment of pupils' progress is accurate and regularly checked by the headteacher
 - communication with parents is improved so that they feel their views are listened to and considered.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because not enough pupils make good progress and achieve well, especially in writing where standards are much lower than in mathematics and reading. The most-able pupils generally make expected progress. Occasionally, however, their progress in lessons is not as fast as it could be.
- Children typically start school with skills weaker than those expected for their age. However, the good progress that they make in the Nursery and Reception classes means that they start in Key Stage 1 with skills expected for their age. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development last year was equal to the national average.
- Overall pupils make expected progress through Key Stage 1. However, progress in Year 2 is more rapid than that in Year 1. Standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1 are broadly average.
- The results of the most recent national screening check at the end of Year 1 on how well pupils know phonics (the sounds that letters represent in words) were below average. Recent improvements to the way phonics are taught means that pupils currently in Years 1 and 2 have a better understanding than previously. During the inspection they were seen using these skills to read unfamiliar words and to help with their writing.
- Pupils continue to make expected progress in writing and mathematics through Key Stage 2. While standards in mathematics are stronger than in writing, especially in Years 5 and 6, overall standards in these subjects are broadly average.
- Progress in reading throughout Key Stage 2 is much better. Rapid progress means that, as they move through the key stage, pupils achieve well in reading. For pupils currently in Years 5 and 6, standards in reading are above average.
- Pupils who are supported by the pupil-premium funding make similar progress to other pupils, and some make better progress. The attainment of eligible Year 6 pupils in 2013 fell from the previous year and they were four terms behind their classmates in reading, writing and mathematics. Eligible pupils currently in the school are making better progress. This means that the gap between their attainment and other pupils is closing.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are well supported. In most classes, they make better progress than other pupils in reading and writing. However, their progress in mathematics is not so rapid. They are supported by well-briefed adults within the classroom and in small groups or individually as needed.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because, while it has improved since the previous inspection and there is good and better teaching in the school, this is not consistent across all classes. In some classes work is too easy for pupils, especially the most able, so they do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Pupils have not been given enough opportunities to practise their literacy skills. The school has very recently changed how it teaches writing and now makes sure that pupils write every day. Work in books shows that this is helping pupils develop their skills quicker and providing more

opportunity to practise them.

- Teachers use their creative learning subjects to enthuse pupils in their writing. For example, Year 3 pupils were engrossed in describing what it would be like on a Viking longship. When writing is done in literacy lessons it is marked rigorously and teachers give pupils clear guidance as to how they can improve. However, when pupils write in other lessons, they are not always encouraged to practise and improve the skills they have recently learnt.
- Teaching in the Nursery and Reception classes is vibrant and exciting. Teachers provide pupils with excellent opportunities to explore, play and develop a range of skills both indoors and outside. For example, while some children were fascinated by the tadpoles and could explain how they would change into frogs, others acted out the story of Jack and the Beanstalk, correctly ordering the events and developing their language skills.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are supported well. Additional adults in the classroom are well-briefed so that they can make sure their advice is consistent with that of the class-teacher. Similarly, pupils supported by the pupil premium receive additional support when they need it. This is helping them make better progress than in the past, especially in reading and writing.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They are courteous and polite to adults and to each other both in lessons and around school. Whilst pupils admitted they were on their best behaviour while visitors were in school, they were in full agreement that most pupils behave well most of the time. Pupils who have joined the school recently told inspectors that they were quickly helped to settle in because everyone is so friendly.
- The playground is a happy, active place where pupils play together well. Responses to Parent View and the school's own questionnaires support pupils' views that they are happy in school and enjoy coming. This is reflected in the improved attendance over recent years.
- Pupils understand what bullying is. They explained how bullying can take different forms, such as physical and cyber bullying. Pupils told inspectors that there is occasionally some bullying in school but it is always quickly sorted out by teachers and other adults.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Leaders ensure that access to the building is secure and staff are rigorously checked prior to appointment. Pupils say they feel safe in school and have learnt how to keep safe on the roads and when using the internet.
- Pupils are enthusiastic about their lessons. They say that the teachers always help them and encourage them to do well. Even if, on occasions, the work is too easy for them and they lose focus, pupils do not disrupt the learning of others but wait patiently for them to catch up.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Pupils' progress is measured by class teachers and reported to the headteacher who tracks achievement across the school. However, some earlier inaccuracies in assessment mean that the progress data for pupils in Years 5 and 6 does not show an accurate picture. While progress can be assessed from pupils' class-work, there has not been a clear strategy for resolving the discrepancy between the data and pupils' actual achievement.
- Whilst the majority of parents are very positive about the school, Parent View responses and

discussions during the inspection show that some parents are less happy. They expressed reservations about communications between home and school and the way the school responds to parental concerns.

- Senior and subject leaders have made improvement since the previous inspection. This has resulted in improving the quality of teaching and more pupils making better progress. However, recent changes to teaching some subjects have not yet had time to raise standards.
- The appraisal system for checking teachers' performance, introduced last year, has contributed to the improving teaching across the school. Individual targets are used by the headteacher and the governing body to measure whether pay rises and promotion are justified by results.
- Good partnership working with local schools and the federation supports staff development, and teachers share good ideas and practice. The local authority has also provided good support for the school. This has included help in improving the teaching of writing and developing subject and senior leaders' skills.
- Subjects are taught in an interesting and creative way. At the start of every new theme, pupils are given the opportunity to say what they would like to find out about the subject. This helps them take part in the planning and they say they enjoy their lessons.
- Some of the new primary sports funding has been spent on joining a sports consortium. This provides a wider range of sporting activities such as cross-country running and gymnastics. Pupils benefit from the use of specialist coaches for physical education and make good progress with learning sporting skills. Coaches, funded by the primary sports funding, run successful lunchtime and after-school clubs as well as teaching lessons. They work alongside class teachers so that the teachers can learn techniques that they can use in their own lessons. Additional coaches also run clubs and take lessons.
- The school promotes equality of opportunity and works to make sure that no groups of pupils achieve less well than others.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is developed through assemblies and in lessons. Incidents that happen in school or current affairs are discussed and pupils have the opportunity to identify strategies for dealing with different situations. Good links with local community groups helps pupils develop their social skills. For example, local elderly residents are invited to Key Stage 1's Harvest celebrations where pupils serve them afternoon tea.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has made significant changes to the way it works since the previous inspection. Governors visit the school regularly to check how well it is doing. They talk to pupils about their learning and see for themselves how the school is improving. All visits are reported to the rest of the governing body and issues discussed at meetings. Governors ask the headteacher and senior leaders challenging questions to hold them accountable for improving the school. They have recently introduced a newsletter 'Parent to Parent' to improve communications with parents.
 - Governors know that the pupil premium is helping eligible pupils to achieve better than in previous years and understand how the new primary school sports funding is used to extend physical education opportunities. Governors appreciate how the new appraisal system has contributed to improvements in teaching. They make sure that teachers' pay rises are linked to the progress their pupils make.
 - Governors have made sure that national requirements for safeguarding and child protection 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	135083
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	442084

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	424
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Gardner
Headteacher	Laraine Hodgson
Date of previous school inspection	20 March 2013
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