

Tollesbury School

East Street, Tollesbury, Maldon, CM9 8QE

Inspection dates 21–22 May 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.

- Pupils make good progress and are achieving well in all subjects and year groups.
- Teaching is at least good across the school and some is outstanding.
- Teachers know their pupils well as individuals. They plan interesting lessons which are at just the right level of difficulty for them.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They work hard, enjoy learning and want to do well. Pupils feel safe in school.
- The school provides pupils with an interesting range of subjects, topics and experiences which ensures they enjoy school.
- The new headteacher, well supported by her senior management team, has quickly had a very positive impact on the school and on pupils' achievement.
- Leaders at all levels, including governors, carefully check the quality of teaching and the progress that pupils are making. As a result, both are improving.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not all teachers consistently employ the rewards and sanctions that the school has agreed should be used to promote good behaviour.
- Boys' standards of literacy in Key Stage 1 are not as high as those of girls.
- Boys, especially the less-able, are not always provided with interesting materials to stimulate their reading and writing, or receive the high quality support from teaching assistants that they need in order to catch up.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 16 lessons or parts of lessons, attended an assembly, looked at pupils' work and listened to pupils reading. They spoke to pupils informally about their views of the school, and they observed them at play, and during breaks and lunchtimes.
- Meetings were held with two groups of pupils, staff, school leaders, governors and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke to a small number of parents at the start of each day of the inspection. They looked at the 52 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and at the 15 staff questionnaires.
- Inspectors looked at documents including: the school's own review of its strengths and weaknesses; its plans for improvement; records of the quality of teaching; school information on the progress of pupils; and nationally published results. Inspectors also looked at records of pupils' behaviour and attendance, and at how well the school keeps pupils safe.

Inspection team

Michael Phipps, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Margaret Dutton

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is slightly smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The very large majority of pupils are of White British heritage, and speak English as their home language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is much lower than average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also much lower than average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is lower than average. This is extra funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those in the care of the local authority.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The headteacher was appointed in September 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make sure that all teachers consistently follow the school's agreed systems for promoting good behaviour in pupils and that they employ an appropriate balance of rewards and sanctions.
- Improve standards of boys' literacy in Key Stage 1 by:
 - making sure that the materials used to teach pupils in the early stages of reading are equally appealing to boys and girls
 - giving boys more opportunities to write about topics that they will find interesting
 - making sure that the support for pupils' early literacy skills from teaching assistants is of a consistently high quality.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children join the school with skills that are sometimes well below those typically seen at their age. Subsequently they make good and improving progress as they move through the school.
- Pupils' progress in 2012 and 2013 between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 was good in reading but broadly average overall. However, the proportions of pupils currently making at least the expected amount of progress in reading, writing and mathematics in all year groups are improving rapidly. Pupils in Year 6 are on course to at least match the percentages making good progress nationally and to reach standards that are likely to be well above average in 2014.
- Checks of pupils' work carried out by inspectors confirm that all groups of pupils are currently making good progress in all subjects and key stages.
- Pupils have a good understanding of phonics (the sounds that letters make), and can sound out unfamiliar words. Their results were above average in the Year 1 phonics check in 2013, though girls performed better than boys. Boys' reading standards catch up and match those of girls by Year 6. Pupils enjoy reading, and read widely and regularly. Older pupils talk with enthusiasm about their favourite books and authors.
- Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage because teaching is good and the learning environment is stimulating. This means they progress well and are well prepared for Key Stage 1.
- Pupils are making good and improving progress in Key Stage 1 because the quality of teaching is good. Pupils' standards in 2012 and 2013 were broadly average. Pupils currently in Year 2 are making better progress and are on course to reach above average standards in 2014.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are well-supported and make the same good progress as their classmates.
- There were too few pupils leaving Year 6 in 2013, and who were eligible for the pupil premium, to comment on their attainment in reading writing or mathematics; there is too great a risk of individuals being identified. Funds from the pupil premium have been spent on extra support for literacy and numeracy and on pastoral staff who provide one-to-one counselling. As a result eligible pupils across the school make good progress in all three subjects.
- More-able pupils make good progress in line with other pupils because tasks are set in lessons which provide them with an appropriate level of challenge. A higher than average proportion of pupils in both Year 2 and Year 6 is on course to reach the highest levels of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics in 2014.
- Pupils develop their skills in mathematics well. They confidently use and apply the knowledge and skills they have learned to carry out mathematical investigations and problem-solving exercises. This helps them to enjoy the subject and make good progress.
- Pupils' writing skills develop well because they have many opportunities to write at length in different subjects. A recent school initiative is helping pupils develop the ability to write confidently and accurately in different styles, and this has led to better writing by many pupils, especially in Key Stage 2. Generally, however, boys' writing is not as good as the girls', often because the topics and stimulus materials they are given to write about are not always

interesting to them. Occasionally, less-able boys do not receive sufficiently well-focussed support from the teaching assistants allocated to help them.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is consistently good across the school, with some that is outstanding. Relationships between most teachers and pupils are very good. This was seen, for example, in a lesson in which Year 3 pupils were learning to apply their knowledge of symmetry. The teacher made learning challenging but very enjoyable, so pupils made outstanding progress.
- Teachers know their pupils very well and plan lessons which are at just the right level for them. For example, pupils in a Year 5/6 mathematics lesson made good progress because activities matched pupils' different abilities very closely.
- The marking of pupils' work is detailed and gives pupils clear advice on how to improve their work. Teachers systematically check that pupils understand this advice and use it to avoid errors in future and to produce work of a higher standard. Teachers ensure pupils are skilled in assessing their own work, and that of their classmates, so they understand the next steps they need to take to be successful.
- Teachers skilfully question pupils to make them think and to check their understanding. This was seen, for example, in a lesson in which Year 2 pupils were preparing to write a letter. The teacher's questions helped to stretch the more-able pupils in particular; consequently, they made good progress.
- Some teaching assistants provide outstanding support for students' learning. This was seen, for example, in an extra phonics session for a pupil in Year 1. This is not consistently the case, however, and sometimes teaching assistants' questions do not make pupils think hard enough.
- On occasion, the topics and materials used in lessons are not sufficiently interesting or well-chosen and this can sometimes limit the progress pupils make, especially boys, in the development of their literacy skills.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They have very positive attitudes to learning, which helps them to make good progress. In lessons and around school they respond promptly to instructions. They are polite and courteous to staff and visitors.
- Relationships between adults and pupils are generally warm and respectful. Pupils enjoy answering questions and offering their opinions in lessons. Disruption to learning caused by poor behaviour is rare. Exclusions and racist incidents are very rare.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. All parents who responded via Parent View reported that their child feels safe in school.
- Pupils told inspectors that bullying is very rare, and school records confirm this. Pupils are confident that any bullying would stop if they told an adult. Pupils are aware of different kinds of bullying, such as cyber-bullying. They know how to stay safe in potentially dangerous situations, such as when using the internet.

- Pupils say they enjoy coming to school. This is confirmed by pupils' attendance, which is above average and continues to improve. The very large majority of parents who responded to Parent View said their child feels happy at school, and that pupils are well behaved.
- Pupils develop a sense of responsibility through taking on roles such as membership of the school council, or acting as prefects. Older pupils look after younger ones at lunchtimes.
- Pupils' behaviour and safety are not outstanding because there is some inconsistency in teachers' management of pupils' behaviour. Agreed systems governing the rewards and sanctions to be used in class are not consistently followed by all staff.

The leadership and management are good

- The new headteacher, well supported by a restructured senior management team, has quickly made a strong positive impact on the school. As a result, pupils' achievement is rising rapidly.
- School leaders have quickly and accurately assessed the school's strengths and weaknesses, and put in place plans for improvement which focus on the right areas. Strong leadership at all levels has been responsible for the recent improvements seen across the school, and this shows that the school is well placed to improve further.
- School leaders make frequent checks on the quality of teaching, marking and planning. Procedures for managing teachers' performance are robust. Teachers' targets are based on the progress that is expected to be made by their pupils. Any underperformance in teaching is tackled rigorously.
- Regular checks are made on pupils' achievement and teachers are held to account in regular meetings for the progress of the pupils in their care. If any pupil falls behind, effective help is quickly given. The school is fully committed to equality of opportunity, and to making sure every pupil reaches his or her full potential.
- Subject leaders play an effective part in school improvement, and carry out checks on the quality of teaching and pupils' progress in their areas. Leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage and of provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is strong.
- The school's theme-based curriculum provides pupils with interesting topics and experiences, and encourages them to make connections between different areas of learning. There is a wide range of clubs and activities, including sewing, choir, rugby, netball and cooking. This helps pupils enjoy school. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is good. They develop well as confident, thoughtful and articulate young people.
- Primary sport funding is used to provide specialist sports coaches and to increase the number of sports clubs before and after school and on membership of the local sports partnership. This gives pupils the chances to take part in sports competitions. As a result, more pupils are taking part in a wider range of sports.
- The school has received appropriate levels of support from the local authority.
- The very large majority of parents are fully supportive of the school and its leaders. A small number of parents, however, have expressed concerns at some inconsistency in teachers' use of rewards and sanctions. School leaders are aware of this concern, and are taking action to

address it.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors are active in seeking out first-hand evidence of the school's work. For example governors are linked to a class and they visit 'their' class regularly. They also observe lessons, listen to pupils read and look at pupils' work. Some are directly involved in pupils' learning: for instance one governor leads the 'Forest School' work with pupils in Year 1. This means they have a good understanding of the quality of teaching, and have seen the impact of the pupil premium spending at close quarters. They are aware of how teachers' salary progression is determined by the progress that pupils make, and they know how any underperformance in teaching is tackled. As a result of recent training they have a good understanding of what the data on pupils' performance is suggesting about how well the school is doing compared to schools nationally. They ask searching questions to hold senior leaders to account. Governors oversee the school's budget well, and ensure that all safeguarding arrangements meet 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	114925
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	444107

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	206
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrew Gilbert
Headteacher	Kate Garnett
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2010
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