

Hillmead Primary School

Woburn Avenue, Bishop's Stortford, CM23 4PW

Inspection dates 1–2 July 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.

- Pupils achieve well. Attainment in Year 6 has risen markedly in reading, writing and mathematics since the last inspection.
- More pupils are now exceeding the levels expected nationally for their age. This is because most have made rapid progress in the current school year.
- Teachers provide a positive and purposeful learning environment. Lesson activities are effectively planned and engage pupils well.
- Pupils' good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning contribute well to their good achievement. They feel safe and secure in a calm and welcoming environment.
- Pupils who have emotional and social difficulties are supported very effectively to develop confidence and to succeed.
- The senior leaders and governors provide strong and inspiring leadership. The headteacher provides focused and clear direction, which has led to the much improved quality of teaching and achievement.
- Governors are highly effective in holding the senior leaders accountable for pupils' achievement. They are knowledgeable and track the work of the school closely.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils do not do as well in writing as in reading and mathematics. They do not have enough opportunities to practise and develop their writing skills in subjects beyond English.
- Teachers do not consistently use information about what pupils already know and can do to set challenging work for all groups, especially the most able pupils.
- Teachers' marking does not always help pupils to improve their work.
- The new subject leaders do not yet play a full part in checking and improving teaching and pupils' achievement.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching in 15 lessons, four of which were observed jointly with the headteacher. In addition, they made a number of other short visits to lessons and learning areas, and heard pupils in Years 2 and 6 reading.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, members of staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and five other governors, and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors took account of 62 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and 20 responses to a staff questionnaire. They also sought the views of parents through informal discussions at the start of the school day.
- The inspectors looked at pupils' books and at a number of documents, including the school's own data on pupils' current attainment and progress, the school's evaluation of its performance, improvement plans, documentation relating to teachers' performance over time and records relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Tusha Chakraborti, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Janet Watson

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school. Most pupils are of White British heritage. There are small numbers of pupils from minority ethnic groups and a few who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for pupils in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals, is well below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is well below average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- There were significant changes of staff in September 2013. The headteacher joined at that point and a new leadership team was created on her arrival. Several of the current teachers joined the school at the same time. Staffing is now stable.
- The school is a member of the local consortium, which includes several local primary schools and the local secondary school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that:
 - teachers consistently use assessment information to set tasks that stretch all groups of pupils, particularly the most able
 - pupils are given clear guidance in marking on how to improve their work, and teachers routinely check to make sure they respond.
- Raise achievement in writing by:
 - ensuring that pupils have more opportunities to write at length for a range of purposes and audiences in all subjects.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - giving new subject leaders the training and time they need to check teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility, and to take action to make improvements.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children start in the Nursery and Reception with knowledge and skills that are in line with the levels typical for their age. Progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved significantly and is now good. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development by the time they start in Year 1 is well above the national average.
- The new leadership team acted swiftly and decisively to the broadly average 2013 Year 6 test results, which were particularly disappointing in writing, by improving the quality of teaching through rigorous checking of teaching and an effective programme of staff training. The school's data on pupils' progress in the current academic year, supported by the work seen in their books and in lessons, show progress has accelerated significantly in reading, writing and mathematics and standards have risen markedly.
- The most able pupils now reach higher standards overall. However, not all of them are reaching the standards of which they are capable, especially in writing. Progress in writing is still not as strong in other subjects because pupils do not have sufficient opportunity to extend their writing skills in subjects other than English.
- Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 was above average in 2013 and the school's data show further improvement in the current year. A strong focus on phonics (the linking of sounds and letters) has improved the results in the Year 1 phonics screening check significantly this year. A high proportion of pupils achieved above the national average.
- Pupils' reading skills have advanced considerably across the school in the current school year. During the inspection, younger pupils showed they can use their knowledge of phonics to read unfamiliar words. Older pupils are gaining an increasing understanding of different styles of writing by different authors.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress because the school provides well-targeted support for them. Pupils who speak English as an additional language, and those from minority ethnic groups, achieve as well as and sometimes better than their classmates.
- Pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium make good progress because of a range of support designed to speed up their learning. The very small number of pupils in Year 6 in 2013 means that their attainment cannot be reported without the risk of identification. There were no pupils eligible for pupil premium in the current Year 6. However, the school's data on attainment in other years indicates that the gap between the attainment of these pupils and that of their classmates is narrowing.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching has improved since the previous inspection and is now good, with some that is outstanding. Staff have very good relationships with pupils and celebrate their work. As a result, pupils respond readily to tasks with interest and make good progress.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make rapid gains in their learning and confidently pursue activities of their own choice as well as those directed by adults. They are developing

good literacy and numeracy skills. They write about the hidden treasure in the 'Pirates' Ship', often using correct punctuation, and enjoy the sessions on mathematics challenge, extending their understanding of how to add and subtract different numbers.

- Teachers ask probing questions to check pupils' progress, and to challenge them to think more deeply about their learning. They build well on what pupils already know to enhance their understanding. In Year 6, pupils were writing about their time in Hillmead for other years to read. They had to think hard and reflect on what they learnt about different styles of writing to make their work interesting.
- The teaching of reading deepens pupils' understanding of styles of texts and helps them to analyse events and characters. Teaching assistants work closely with teachers in planning and in providing effective support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.
- Pupils who have emotional and social difficulties are supported very well through the 'nurture group' as well as through carefully targeted support in class.
- Pupils enjoy learning because activities are usually well planned to match the abilities of all groups of pupils, but this good practice is not consistent. Teachers do not always use assessment information effectively enough to ensure that all groups of pupils are stretched to reach the standards of which they are capable, especially the most able.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and praise pupils' achievement but do not always provide clear guidance on how to improve their work. Sometimes, even when such advice is given, pupils do not respond well enough to their teachers' comments, and teachers do not systematically check this is done. Therefore, pupils do not always learn from their mistakes or make as much progress as they could.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are polite and thoughtful. They recognise and appreciate how the school has improved their learning over the past year and say that they 'are learning better now'. They have positive attitudes to learning and attend regularly. They listen to adults and work well together without disruption.
- Procedures for adults to manage pupils' behaviour are comprehensive. These are applied effectively and pupils respond well to them. Pupils believe in a set of values that strongly influence their behaviour, relationships and attitudes to each other. While talking about relationships and friendship in an assembly, one pupil explained, 'I now play with children I did not normally play with.'
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils believe that they are kept safe in school and all parents who responded to the questionnaire agree with them. Pupils know how to stay safe, including when using the internet, when on the road, or in case of fire.
- Pupils understand about different kinds of bullying. They state that incidents of bullying are very rare and explain, 'No one is bullied because they know that there are consequences.' On the rare occasions where behaviour is less than good, pupils say that this is dealt with effectively by adults.

- Pupils willingly take on roles of responsibility within the class, and through their school council work and fundraising activities to support national and international charities. Year 6 pupils enjoy their roles as 'peer mediators' and 'buddies', playing with younger ones and engendering a caring environment. Years 5 and 6 have been trained as 'Sports Ambassadors' and proudly promote sporting activities across the school.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher, other senior leaders and governors, has worked effectively to drive forward improvements in the school. Together, they communicate high expectations and have ensured that all staff share a determination to raise pupils' achievement across the school. Most parents appreciate that their children are making rapid progress under the current leadership.
- Senior leaders check the quality of teaching thoroughly and accurately and follow up any areas needing development with effective programmes for all staff. As a result, teaching continues to improve and the school has a strong capacity for further improvement. Teachers are set challenging targets which are linked to pupils' achievement and reviewed regularly.
- Leaders responsible for subjects, and for the Early Years Foundation Stage, contribute well to school improvement. However, those new to their posts had not yet have sufficient time to develop their roles in checking the quality of teaching and learning, and so make further improvements in their subjects.
- The curriculum focuses sharply on developing literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils benefit from specialist teaching in French and music. A wide range of activities such as writing workshops and after-school clubs contribute well to pupils' progress. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well through the teaching in different subjects, including religious studies, and by visits to places of interest.
- Leaders have made good progress in ensuring that groups of pupils from different backgrounds have an equal chance to succeed across the school. However, they have yet to ensure that work is always challenging enough for all ability groups to fulfil their potential.
- The school makes good use of the additional primary school sports funding, including working with a specialist coach to enhance pupils' skills and teachers' expertise. This has encouraged increased participation in inter-school competitive sports and sports clubs. This is having a positive impact on pupils' well-being and their self-confidence. Pupils planned and took part in a community sports event which included staff and parents.
- The local authority has provided very effective support to improve the quality of teaching and the use of assessment information.

■ The governance of the school:

- The governors are highly effective in monitoring the school’s performance. The Chair of the Governing Body sends termly newsletters to parents with detailed information about the school’s performance and any national issues regarding their children’s education. This has ensured increased involvement of parents and their growing confidence in the school’s work. Governors have opportunities to take part in lesson observations and meetings with staff so that they understand more about the quality of teaching. They make effective use of the information gained from these visits and that provided by the headteacher to hold the leaders to account. They know how pupils are performing compared with national standards and ensure that teachers are only rewarded if they are able to raise pupils’ achievement. Governors manage the finances well and ensure that national safeguarding requirements 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	117310
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	442000

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	225
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jim Stoddart
Headteacher	Sarah Keefe
Date of previous school inspection	14 February 2013
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