

Alresford Primary School

Ford Lane, Alresford, Colchester, CO7 8AU

Inspection dates 3–4 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' attainment and rates of progress are above average in all key stages.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are very positive. They feel that they are learning more as they progress through the school.
- Pupils have a very good understanding of the sounds that letters make (phonics).
- Teaching is good. Pupils feel they are supported well by teachers and other adults.
- Behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. Pupils help each other.
- Pupils feel safe in school. Parents agree. Attendance is well above average.
- The headteacher, staff, subject leaders and governors have worked effectively together to raise achievement and improve the quality of teaching.
- The roles of subject leaders are well developed to ensure continued improvement in teaching and achievement.
- Governors have a detailed and accurate understanding of the school. This enables them to offer effective support and challenge.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is promoted well.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Key Stage 2 pupils do not have regular opportunities to develop their writing skills at length.
- Marking does not consistently guide pupils towards the next steps in their learning. Pupils do not always follow up on the detailed guidance they are given to eliminate errors.
- Teachers do not have regular opportunities to benefit from observing each other's best classroom skills.
- Communication with parents about how they can help to take their children's learning forward is still developing.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed eight lessons taught by five staff and attended an assembly. Four of the lesson observations were carried out with the headteacher or assistant headteacher. The inspector also observed a range of activities which the school provides to support individuals and small groups of pupils.
- In addition to looking at pupils' work in lessons, the inspector carried out a scrutiny of pupils' work jointly with members of the senior leadership team.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, staff, governors, a representative of the local authority and a group of pupils. The inspector spoke to parents in the playground and to another group attending a parent and child session in the Reception class.
- The inspector took account of the 32 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). The inspector also took account of the 14 responses to a staff questionnaire.
- The inspector looked at the school's improvement plan, data on pupils' attainment and progress, records of the monitoring and evaluation of teaching, a wide range of policies and procedures, and the school's arrangements for the safeguarding of children.
- The inspector listened to pupils reading.
- During the inspection, Year 6 pupils were on a school trip.

Inspection team

Michael Sutherland-Harper, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The very large majority of the pupils are White British.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below the national average, as is the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium is below the national average. This is additional government 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 set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The headteacher has been in post since September 2012. She is also headteacher of the nearby Millfields Primary School, which works in partnership with this school.
- The school is part of the Colne cluster of schools, which was awarded National Teaching School status in April 2014.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve teaching and learning, and increase progress for pupils, by:
 - giving Key Stage 2 pupils the opportunity to develop their writing skills by more often writing at length
 - giving pupils clear guidance about the next steps they need to take to improve their work, and checking that all suggestions are acted on by pupils
 - providing regular opportunities for teachers to learn from each other's classroom practice
 - extending communication with parents about how they can help to support their children's learning at home.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- With small numbers in each year group, there is some variation from year to year, but children generally start in the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and understanding slightly below those expected for their age. They make good progress in the Reception class because weaknesses are accurately and quickly identified, and support is made readily available. Attainment at the end of the Reception Year is above average, and has been so for the last two years.
- Activities in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good use of both indoor and outdoor spaces and are well planned. Children and their parents get to know the setting before arrival which helps children to settle well. Fine motor skills, such as cutting or holding pencils, and social skills are weaker on arrival so the school works effectively to develop these areas.
- Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 1. Attainment in all subjects is above national averages. Reading is developing especially well because of the work done on early reading skills through the sounds that letters make (phonics). Key Stage 1 writing was well above national averages last year. Current data show that the trend in all subjects is upwards.
- For the last two years, results in the Year 1 phonics screening check have been well above average. Current data indicate that this level has been maintained this year. Pupils taking the Year 2 phonics retest have all been successful each year.
- Achievement in Key Stage 2 is good, and especially so in mathematics and reading. Writing is the weakest skill. The school is focusing on improving pupils' skills at Key Stage 2 to match those at Key Stage 1 by encouraging pupils to write more on a range of interesting themes but this is a work in progress. Pupils have regular opportunities to practise spelling, grammar and punctuation and to apply the mathematics they have learned in a practical context.
- Pupils make good progress in reading. They read regularly and use their good skills with sounds and letters to identify longer words accurately. Pupils are able to talk in detail about what they have read.
- In 2013, more-able pupils' achievement in English and mathematics was above the national average in all subjects at Key Stage 1, and in reading and writing at Key Stage 2. Current data show that more-able pupils in both key stages are on track to make better than expected progress in all subjects this year.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are now making similar, and occasionally better, progress than their classmates. They are supported effectively by staff who know their specific learning needs well. As a result, the number on the special needs roll has fallen. Pupils are integrated into mainstream classes as soon as possible, as part of the school's work to ensure equal opportunities for all pupils, and that there is no discrimination of any kind.
- Pupils eligible for the pupil premium make similar progress compared to their classmates. Improved resources and work in small groups or with individuals have been effective in raising progress rates. There were too few eligible pupils in Year 6 last year to comment on their attainment without risk of identifying individual pupils.
- Pupils' very positive attitudes to learning and their interest in what they are studying ensure that they are making increasingly rapid progress. As one pupil said, 'I have got better and better

from Reception because teachers help me.'

The quality of teaching is good

- Lessons are well planned to ensure that activities are linked to pupils' interests, develop their understanding quickly and ensure that they want to find out more about the topic being studied. The themes studied are adapted to ensure that both boys and girls respond quickly and creatively to the work. Teachers check regularly on pupils' understanding.
- In a Year 1 and 2 mathematics lesson, the teacher built on pupils' interest in the school's recently hatched chicks. She got pupils to fold a circle in four, cut out a quarter and draw a chicken's beak on the remaining section. Pupils could hardly wait to go around the classroom with the 'right-angle-eating chick' measuring angles against the beak.
- More-able pupils are engaged with learning by the frequent challenge in lessons. In a Year 4 and 5 English lesson, they responded quickly to the extension activity to check on each other's work and then write an alternative ending to the one originally offered. This involved discussion about the pupil's original intentions and made pupils want to do at least as well as the person they were working with.
- Literacy and numeracy skills are reinforced in other subjects. Pupils learning about punctuation were reminded that the speech marks resemble 66 and 99. Children in the Reception class had to explain what they wanted to buy, in addition to working out the cost.
- Teachers ensure that pupils read regularly to develop good reading skills. Thorough coverage of the sounds that letters make (phonics) ensures that pupils quickly become confident readers. Pupils are encouraged to write about what they have read and areas of interest but Key Stage 2 pupils do not have enough opportunities to write at length in order to take writing skills rapidly to the very highest levels.
- Marking is regular and in line with school policies, including a successful focus on improved presentation of pupils' work. Occasionally, marking does not give pupils clear enough guidance about the next steps they need to take towards meeting their targets. Teachers do not always ensure that pupils benefit from their detailed marking by making the corrections suggested.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are well behaved, in and out of lessons. They are polite and courteous to each other and to adults, and keen to tell visitors about their school. Pupils' very positive attitudes to learning are shown by their readiness to explain what they are doing and the way they settle down quickly to work in lessons.
- Pupils say that behaviour is good, and parents agreed in the online response and when spoken to during the inspection.
- The school has clear behaviour policies, which are reinforced in assemblies and by signs around the school. The local vicar, who is also a governor, comes in to promote the standards expected when she speaks to pupils. Pupils know that they are in the school to learn and they are increasingly eager to get on with learning.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Safeguarding procedures cover all

current requirements. Child protection procedures are rigorous. The school regularly reviews its arrangements to keep pupils safe.

- Risk assessments are thorough. There have been no recorded racist incidents in recent years in this harmonious school community.
- Pupils, parents and staff feel that pupils are safe in school. Pupils know how to stay fit and healthy. Fitness is encouraged by the high take-up of after-school activities like the football clubs.
- In a Year 3 lesson about the importance of clean, filtered water across the world, pupils looked at how to make water cleaner and, even when it looked clean, how procedures like boiling would make it even safer to drink.
- Pupils say that there is little, if any, bullying. They know the various forms of bullying, such as name-calling and shoving. Pupils know how to stay safe whenever they use the internet.
- Pupils know that any adult in school will help them but they also know that pupils help each other. Year 5 and 6 pupils are assigned to mentor pupils in Reception for their reading and to ensure their well-being at break times.
- Attendance has improved and is now high. The headteacher follows up closely on any extended absence. Exclusions are very rare because the school believes that pupils should be in school learning and works effectively to resolve any problems early.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has united staff, governors and senior leaders in a team successfully focused on improved teaching and achievement. As one governor said, 'OK is not good enough.' The school's self-evaluation is accurate and the improvements since the last inspection show the school's good capacity for sustained improvement.
- The roles of subject leaders have been expanded through close work with the local cluster of schools and in a loose partnership with the headteacher's other school. The leaders for numeracy and literacy have led the way in carrying out regular lesson observations. All staff have responsibility for at least one, and often two, subjects. They review planning, marking and the quality of pupils' work to ensure that pupils continue to make good progress.
- The subjects on offer are carefully developed to engage pupils with learning and to ensure that pupils have good basic skills in English, mathematics and information and communication technology. The school looks at a different theme, which teachers plan together, each term. The themes, like 'Have I got news for you', are sufficiently broad to allow for a wide variety of pupil responses and extended work, although pupils in Key Stage 2 do not have enough opportunity for writing at length.
- Primary school sports funding is used effectively to link up with the local schools' cluster, football team and other providers. As a result, pupils have good opportunities to practise a range of sports, including netball, basketball and dance, compete with others and stay fit and healthy.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. The school has strong links with the local community and church. Pupils' sense of right and wrong develops through their involvement in discussions about how one should behave and their readiness to support

each other at all times. Cultural understanding is helped by visitors, including parents who have lived or worked abroad. Initial contact has been made for the school to link up with a school in Brazil.

- Procedures for the management of staff performance are rigorous. Staff are held accountable for the quality of their teaching and for pupils' attainment, progress and behaviour. However, teachers do not have regular opportunities to learn from each other's classroom skills.
- The local authority has worked closely with the school to support the improvements in achievement and teaching. Its work has been supplemented by the school's profitable interaction with the local cluster and partner school.
- Links with parents and carers are developing well. Parents spoke positively to the inspector about the improvements in the school. One parent said, 'My child goes to school happily and comes home happy' and this view was reflected in the online survey. Parents have more opportunities to come into school now, such as the Reception class 'Stay and Play' sessions on Fridays. The headteacher is looking at ways to extend communication with parents about how they can help to take pupils' learning forward.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governance is good. Governors know the school well because they are part of the local community and make regular visits. They use their secure understanding of data to carefully monitor the rate of improvement in achievement and teaching as part of the drive to continually improve the school. They offer challenge as well as support; for example, about the recent swimming pool rebuild and the quality of learning in mixed-age classes. They ensure that procedures for the management of staff performance are rigorous and that any pay rises for teachers are linked closely to increased pupil progress. Governors check that good teaching is the norm and enhanced through growing opportunities for professional development. However, teachers do not presently have enough opportunities to learn from each other. Governors monitor the use and impact of pupil premium and sports premium funding so that funds are used effectively and no pupil is disadvantaged.

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	114734
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	442001

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	102
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Roscoe
Headteacher	Janet Meacock
Date of previous school inspection	13 February 2013
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