

Harwood Hill Junior Mixed Infant and Nursery School

Harwood Close, Welwyn Garden City, AL8 7AG

Inspection dates 9–10 July 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		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils in the school make good progress from their starting points because they engage happily with their learning and teachers challenge them to do well.
- Pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics is good enabling them to attain standards above national averages.
- Pupils leave the school accomplished in a range of sports.
- Teaching is good and sometimes outstanding because teachers plan well and have high expectations of pupils.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school, and this has a positive impact on their learning.
- Pupils respond well to a variety of good opportunities to develop their social skills, enabling them to work well with each other.
- The vast majority of parents are very positive about the school. They say their children are safe and behave well.
- The school makes exceptional provision to ensure that pupils are safe.
- Senior leaders have very high expectations for all pupils and know how the school can do even better.
- Governors have an excellent grasp of how well the school is doing and use this to challenge and support school leaders very effectively.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils' progress is not consistently good in Key Stage 1.
- The most able pupils are not always given work which provides them with the challenge they need.
- While pupils leave with good levels of knowledge in all subjects, subject specific skills, such as investigation work in science, are not consistently developed for all pupils.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 16 lessons or parts of lessons and an assembly. An inspector, accompanied by the headteacher, spent a short time in most classes to gain an overview of learning and behaviour of pupils.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, the leadership team, a group of pupils and four representatives from the governing body. A telephone discussion was held with a member of the local authority's school improvement team.
- Inspectors heard pupils read and observed the teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds that they make).
- Inspectors sampled pupils' work in different year groups, examined records of pupils' progress and read the school's improvement plan. A range of documentation relating to safeguarding children was examined.
- Inspectors evaluated the views of 26 staff who responded to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors analysed the 48 responses from parents on Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, to ascertain parents' views about their children's school. Inspectors also spoke to parents in the playground. Two letters submitted by parents were also considered.
- At the time of inspection, Year 6 pupils were taking part in transition activities at their new secondary school and, therefore, were not on site.

Inspection team

Mary Rayner, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Timothy Bristow

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Harwood Hill Junior Mixed Infant and Nursery is an average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium, which is additional government funding provided for looked after children and those known to be eligible for free school meals, is larger than that of the majority of schools.
- A large majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The remaining pupils come from a number of different minority ethnic backgrounds.
- The school has more pupils who speak English as an additional language than the large majority of primary schools.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion identified for additional support through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- There is an on-site, private pre-school that is not managed by the governing body. This provision was not inspected as part of this inspection. Its previous inspection report can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching to outstanding by ensuring that:
 - the most able pupils are challenged in all subjects to reach the highest levels
 - pupils have the opportunity to develop subject specific skills in all subjects, including investigative skills in science
 - pupils' progress throughout Key Stage 1 is good.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Achievement is good. By the time pupils leave school they attain standards about the national average. Given their starting points this represents good progress for the vast majority of pupils. Some pupils, particularly those for whom the school receives pupil premium funding, make even better progress.
- When children enter the Nursery and Reception, their skills, particularly their communication skills, are often below the levels expected for their age. Children settle very quickly into the Early Years Foundation Stage and work on things that interest and excite them.
- In Nursery, children make good use of opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills, enabling them to develop a wide vocabulary.
- In Key Stage 1 most pupils make good progress. However, teaching is not consistently good throughout the key stage and so some pupils' progress is variable. Outcomes at the end of Year 2 are typically average in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards in other subjects are lower than those in reading and writing.
- The school has a good track record of ensuring pupils make accelerated progress in Key Stage 2, especially in Years 5 and 6. Following the dip in 2013, standards have risen rapidly. Current Year 5 pupils are on track to make expected or more than expected progress.
- In 2014 every single Year 6 pupil achieved the national expectation of Level 4 in reading, writing and mathematics. Furthermore, higher attaining pupils make better than expected progress and a very high proportion achieved the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics. However, in lessons they are not always challenged to reach the highest levels.
- Achievement in writing is a real strength throughout the school. Teachers are placing a greater emphasis on preparing the pupils before they start writing so that even those who are reluctant to write independently are enthusiastic about the task.
- The use of stories and topics which capture pupils' imagination supports their desire to be successful in writing. By doing this, teachers encourage pupils to be more creative.
- Progress in mathematics is particularly strong because pupils have opportunities to demonstrate their understanding of calculations frequently and use their mathematical knowledge to solve problems. Pupils were observed solving complex problems without adult support, developing their use of a range of skills independently.
- Teaching assistants' skilled use of questioning when working with pupils with learning difficulties ensures that pupils develop a good understanding of the topic and feel able to work more independently as a result. This means that disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make at least good progress.
- Last year, pupils supported by pupil premium funding were a year behind their peers in reading writing and mathematics. However, substantial progress has been made in 2014 and pupils supported by pupil premium funding achieved similar high standards and made at least as good progress as their peers.

- Pupils achieve well in sports including in their after school clubs. Feedback shows that many continue these activities after they leave the school.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching, across the school and over time is good. Typically, this is exemplified by teachers using detailed planning and working together to understand the needs of pupils. This results in all pupils making good progress against their individual targets.
- The recent accelerated progress in writing has been the result of teachers using a consistent approach to inspire and encourage pupils to be 'good writers'. This has made pupils at all levels interested in writing.
- Teachers and teaching assistants have a good knowledge of how to use resources to generate pupils' enthusiasm and enjoyment of reading.
- The effective modelling by teachers of phonics and the correct pronunciation of sounds ensure that pupils make very few mistakes, and mistakes that are made are corrected in a supportive manner. This means that pupils are very willing to read aloud and develop their skills further.
- In some subjects, such as geography, pupils develop skills of an exceptional level. Pupils in this subject were able to use high level mapping skills which will prepare them well for this subject at secondary school. This is as a result of detailed planning by teachers.
- In science pupils are not challenged to use appropriate investigative skills. This prevents pupils from making more rapid progress during the lesson.
- Although many pupils reach above-average standards, teachers do not always give the most able pupils work that provides the challenge they need to reach the highest levels. This limits their ability to make the rapid progress they are capable of.
- Teaching assistants provide good and, at times, outstanding support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Teaching assistants are very effective at using a range of techniques to keep pupils focused. Distracted pupils are enabled to re-join the learning quickly and little time is lost.
- Other professionals such as a play therapist, and speech and language therapists, also support pupils effectively in school and work alongside staff to make sure that resources and teaching methods used best meet the needs of pupils.
- Teachers accurately assess pupils' progress, and marking is of a consistently high standard. Pupils are given good-quality feedback and know how to improve their work. They often respond to teachers' marking with their own ideas and thoughts.
- Pupils are also given opportunities to mark their own work and that of their peers. This allows pupils to develop a very good understanding of what they have to do to get the best levels. As a result, pupils are able to improve their outcomes quickly.
- The value placed on work ensures that all pupils always try their best and that work is well presented. Teachers also make good use of the vibrant, engaging displays to support pupils' learning. These encourage pupils to be independent learners and gather knowledge from the

information around them.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are proud of their school and treat the building and equipment, staff and other pupils with respect. Lessons are rarely interrupted by incidents of inappropriate behaviour. Attendance has improved and is now average.
- Pupils are polite and demonstrate this as they move around the school. Playtime is a pleasant social occasion, enjoyed by all.
- Pupils whose special educational needs may impact on the way they behave are well supported by teaching and support staff, and the expectations of their behaviour are no different to any other pupil in the class.
- Although pupils' conduct is consistently good, their attitudes to learning are not yet exemplary across all classes and subjects. A few pupils do not remain on task throughout the lesson. This is because, sometimes, work in lessons does not challenge the most able enough to keep them consistently engaged.
- Pupils and staff report that bullying is rare. Pupils are aware of the different forms bullying can take.
- Staff support the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all pupils well. As a result, pupils show an interest and respect for others' feelings and values. They are encouraged to use their imagination and creativity when learning, and to be reflective about their experiences. The development of creativity is further supported by the new curriculum throughout the school, where topics allow pupils to explore other cultures and international events.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Teachers have detailed information about individual pupils' needs and work in a focussed, rigorous way to ensure these are addressed. A wide range of support strategies are in place so that pupils get the help they need. These include play therapy, behaviour support programmes and tailored individual support.
- Pupils are given plenty of well-thought out opportunities for reflection and discussion about a range of aspects. These all contribute to children having safe spaces to talk about their feelings and concerns.
- The school makes very good use of its links with external agencies such as 'Thriving Families', who work with families who need additional support. Information is shared appropriately to ensure the best outcomes for pupils.
- Pupils understand potentially harmful situations, including the misuse of the internet and mobile phones. They know how to act if something seems dangerous and know that help is available if they need it.
- Parents are highly positive about that the work of the school and praise the support given to individual pupils.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The senior leadership team, supported by the headteacher's dynamic approach and vision, demonstrates a relentless commitment to ensuring the highest quality education for all pupils. This strong leadership has resulted in a very positive atmosphere around the school.
- The consistency of drive and passion of all staff and the shared ownership of all aspects of school life have a very positive impact on the whole school, which is evident in the positive behaviour of pupils, the standards they achieve, and the high morale of staff.
- Senior leaders know the school well and have established highly effective systems to promote improvement across the school. For example, targets for an individual teacher identified through observations and discussions will result in a bespoke, supportive development plan. Importantly improvements are mapped against these targets.
- The leadership of teaching is highly effective, ensuring a consistent approach that involves all staff in continuous improvement. This results in a culture of high expectations of both staff and pupils and a real can-do attitude.
- Subject and curriculum leaders are very effective in their areas. They have supported the review of the school curriculum. The new curriculum is thematic in its approach to learning. Teachers feel that this means it is more relevant and practical.
- The curriculum promotes a strong interest in learning. It covers a wide range of topics and pupils are challenged to develop research and individual learning skills.
- Leaders make excellent use of the primary school sports funding. Senior leaders are carefully monitoring the very positive impact of the new primary sports funding to ensure that all pupils, regardless of ability, can access a form of sport that they enjoy. There are a range of exciting, well-attended, after-school sports clubs.
- Good use has been made of the pupil premium funding to support small-group work as well as individual work such as play therapy. The impact of this can be seen in the reduction of behavioural issues and the strong outcomes for all pupils.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have an outstanding understanding of the school.
 - Governors are very well-informed about all aspects of the school's work and make very good use of a range of data, including data about pupils' achievement, to ask challenging questions of senior leaders. This helps to ensure the school continuously improves.
 - As well as using external information, governors gain first-hand information about the school through regular visits, and through discussions with staff and pupils.
 - Governors have a good understanding about the quality of teaching in the school and are robust about scrutinising decisions regarding performance management, ensuring effective teachers are rewarded appropriately for the work they do and supported where necessary.
 - Governors have been instrumental in ensuring the highly effective care provided to pupils and ensure that statutory safeguarding procedures 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	117227
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	444035

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	218
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andy Cremer
Headteacher	Philip Gray
Date of previous school inspection	8 June 2011
Telephone number	01707 322855
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