

Hexton Junior Mixed and Infant School

Hexton, Hitchin, SG5 3JL

Inspection dates 15–16 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		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher, supported by an effective governing body and committed staff team, ensures that teaching is good, so that pupils achieve well from their different starting points.
- All groups of pupils make good progress in mathematics and English, particularly in reading, which is taught very well across the school.
- As a result of the effective support they receive, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs achieve well.
- Teaching is good. Teachers plan tasks that capture pupils' interest and often make learning fun.
- Behaviour is excellent and pupils feel extremely safe at school.
- The excellent relationships between adults and pupils, together with high expectations, mean that pupils work hard and do their best.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are outstanding. These contribute a great deal to their successful learning.
- Pupils seek out opportunities to help each other in lessons and in the playground.
- The school's promotion of pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is exceptional and is underpinned by the school's approach to equal opportunities.
- Parents are very supportive of the school.
- Governors know the school well. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Progress is uneven between year groups, particularly in writing. At times, writing tasks do not engage pupils' interest.
- Teachers do not ensure that pupils improve their work by responding to the comments they make in their marking.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited eight lessons, six of which were observed jointly with the headteacher. All teachers present during the inspection were observed, as well as teaching assistants working with groups of pupils or individuals.
- The inspector made a number of shorter visits to lessons, spoke to pupils during lunchtime and visited play areas at break times.
- The inspector looked closely at pupils' work in all classes, listened to pupils read and looked at the quality of displays in the classrooms and around the school. She also looked at information on the school's website.
- Meetings were held with four governors, the headteacher and two teachers. A telephone conversation was held with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector spoke formally with a group of pupils and informally with other pupils in lessons and around the school.
- A variety of the school's documents were examined. These included: the school's development plan; the school's information about pupils' progress and the support given to disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs; evidence about the quality of teaching; and records relating to behaviour, safeguarding and attendance.
- As well as looking at the 37 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) the inspector took account of the views expressed by parents as they dropped off and collected their children at the beginning and end of the day. She also analysed 8 questionnaires returned by staff.

Inspection team

Christine Mayle, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is significantly smaller than the average primary school. Children are taught in two mixed-age classes.
- The vast majority of pupils attending the school are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- A significant proportion of pupils join the school at times other than Reception.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is well below average. In this school, this additional government funding is for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The headteacher is also the headteacher of a neighbouring primary school.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been a number of changes in the membership of the governing body, including a new chair of governors.
- The school's most recent results cannot be compared to the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum standards for pupils' attainment and progress, because there were not enough pupils in Year 6 to make such comparisons meaningful.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching from good to outstanding and ensure that progress is consistent across all years, particularly in writing, by making sure that:
 - teachers make sure that pupils respond to written comments on how to improve their work
 - teachers give pupils writing tasks that interest and enthuse them.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children join the school from a range of settings with skills and knowledge that vary year-on-year but are, overall, typical for their age.
- Reception children settle into routines quickly and make good progress, as the adults plan a range of interesting, well-resourced activities. These provide indoor and outdoor experiences that engage the children's curiosity and imagination. They are well prepared for their learning in Year 1.
- Pupils in Year 2, reach standards in reading, writing and mathematics that, over time, are at least average, and are often better.
- Attainment by the time the pupils leave school at the end of Year 6 varies year on year, reflecting the characteristics of each year group, the number who start or leave at different times other than Reception and the proportion of pupils with additional needs. In 2013, Year 6 pupils did as well as those nationally in reading, writing and mathematics and made good progress from the time they joined the school. The small size of past cohorts means that no meaningful trends over time can be identified.
- The school's robust assessment information shows that the small number of pupils in the current Year 6 are making good, and sometimes outstanding, progress. In the 2014 unvalidated end-of-Year 6 tests, taken recently, pupils achieved at least the national levels expected for their age or better. This was confirmed by work seen in lessons and in pupils' books. For Years 3, 4 and 5, pupils' progress from their different starting points is also good.
- Pupils' reading skills are well developed. They have frequent opportunities to read in class and at home. Reading 'logs' follow the reading scheme closely. Early readers understand the link between letters and sounds and pupils of all abilities enjoy reading.
- Results for 2013 in the national check on phonics (how the letter in words relate to sounds) taken at the end of Year 1 were above the national average. All pupils in Year 2 met the standard in 2012.
- The school's actions to improve teaching across all year groups, particularly in mathematics, have been effective in maintaining and raising standards. The focus on improving teachers' mathematical knowledge since the previous inspection means they are now more confident in their teaching and pupils are making better progress.
- The school's own information on current pupils indicates that progress in writing is still good, but is not yet as rapid as that in reading and mathematics in all year groups.
- The pupils who enter the school at different times during any key stages of learning make good progress. As a result of the welcoming and supportive environment the school provides, they settle quickly and make new friends.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs achieve well. They are given the focused support they need to continuously build on their literacy and numeracy skills and make good progress in a range of subjects.
- The most able pupils also make good progress. Teachers set work and identify support to further

extend pupils' understanding and knowledge so that they achieve well.

- The few pupils known to be eligible for additional government funding are sensitively supported. The funding has been used effectively to employ additional staff and provide resources so that these pupils achieve well and make good progress. There were no Year 6 pupils in 2013 eligible for this additional funding.
- The additional funding for primary school sport is being used to provide specialist physical education (PE) coaching and extend the range of sports' experience for pupils. Pupils enjoy participating in sport and understand how developing physical skills helps them to lead healthier lives.

The quality of teaching is good

- Over time, good teaching is ensuring that all pupils are learning successfully in reading, writing and mathematics. However, not enough teaching is outstanding to maximise pupils' achievement across all year groups, particularly in writing.
- Staff provide a stimulating, happy atmosphere with high expectations in all areas of the school. From the moment they arrive, pupils are successfully taught to work and play well together and make good progress.
- The teaching of reading, including phonics, has a high profile and is well managed so that pupils develop a love of reading that supports the good progress they make over time.
- Teachers' planning for learning is consistent across the school so that pupils in the mixed-age classes achieve well. For example, teaching assistants work with pupils on a one-to-one and group basis if they need particular help. This means that all pupils make good progress, including those arriving other than in Reception. These pupils often make rapid progress from the point at which they join the school.
- The tasks teachers provide, generally, capture pupils' interests and often make learning fun. Some writing activities do not have real purpose or context so they do not interest pupils in the same way. Although pupils work conscientiously, they do not produce the same high quality work or write as much.
- In one class, pupils were asked to describe their favourite soft toy, having first read the introduction to a Winnie the Pooh story. Pupils learned a lot as they worked in pairs to talk about the adjectives they would use, then drew and described their toy. Next day, they brought their toys into school and this further extended the quality of their writing. All pupils made good progress as the teacher's expectations were carefully chosen to be different for different abilities and ages.
- Adults who support pupils in need of additional help, including those who are disabled or have special educational needs, play a significant part in pupils' learning. This is because they are well briefed to support these pupils, and information on pupils' achievement is used effectively to target the work the pupils need to do.
- In most cases, pupils understand what they are learning and teachers regularly check their progress so that activities are quickly adapted to suit their changing learning needs. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are well developed so that they are able to learn from each other and from adults very effectively.

- Teachers' written comments clearly explain what pupils have been successful at in their work and sometimes what they need to do to make it better. Some pupils act on the advice they are given and re-visit their work, and clearly make improvements. Teachers do not always ensure that this is done, and then pupils do not make the extra progress they should.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Teachers and other adults create a calm and welcoming atmosphere that promotes high expectations and celebrates the achievement of all pupils.
- Pupils value their excellent relationships with their teachers and other adults, all of whom make a very strong contribution to the pupils' personal development and well-being. They respond to staff instructions immediately and interruptions to lessons are rare.
- Pupils actively seek opportunities to help each other during lessons and in the playground. They are eager to learn, are inquisitive and highly motivated. Pupils of all ages get on extremely well together and respond positively to adults. This contributes a great deal to their successful learning. Pupils are proud of their school.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Most parents who responded to the questionnaire (Parent View), and all parents spoken to during the inspection, were extremely positive in their comments about how well the school cared for their children, and in all other aspects of the school's work. Some parents also felt so strongly they sent in notes. One, typically, stated that, 'We are thrilled with the progress our daughter has made.....the teachers and teaching assistants have all been wonderfully encouraging which has really started to build her confidence.'
- Pupils willingly take on a wide range of responsibilities for running the school, showing their support for it while building their confidence, maturity and social skills. They act as representatives on the school council, contribute to staff appointments and act as mentors to other pupils as reading buddies.
- Bullying, such as name-calling, is extremely rare. Pupils know about the different forms of bullying and who to go to if they have a problem. They are confident in the adults' ability to deal with it, swiftly, were it to happen. They also know how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet or mobile phones.
- Pupils show their support for the school through their regular attendance, punctuality and zero exclusions over recent years.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher provides a clear educational steer for the school. There is a continual drive for high standards in all aspects of the school's work, shared by all staff. This is evidenced in the pupils' good achievement, the improving quality of teaching and the strong sense of community through out the school. Staff morale is high.
- Underpinning the positive picture of pupils' achievement is the strength of systems for checking their progress. These are used well in the management of staff performance and to identify areas for future development within the school. The school's assessment of its own performance

is accurate.

- Senior leaders have responsibility for the co-ordination of all subjects and planning across the curriculum. The headteacher currently has a significant teaching load and this will change next term with the arrival of another teacher. There is a strong partnership with a local primary school and this provides further opportunities for teachers to share expertise and practice. There is good capacity for sustained improvement.
- The school's promotion of pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is exceptional and is underpinned by the school's very positive approach to equal opportunities. There is no difference in achievement between the different groups in the school.
- Pupils are interested in learning about people from a wide range of cultures and are respectful of others when discussing their beliefs. They are understanding of each other's differing needs, and have a keen sense of right and wrong. Assemblies, particularly the singing assembly, are an integral part of the school week and provide valuable time for pupils to reflect.
- Informal discussions with parents show that they have a largely positive view of the school. Parents are actively supportive through the parents' association and organise a number of activities for children, including a drama club. They also recently refurbished the outdoor area for the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- The governing body and school staff make sure that safeguarding procedures are followed rigorously and that all requirements are met.
- The school has a strong partnership with the local authority and is appreciative of the valuable and effective support that it provides.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - There have been significant changes in the composition of the governing body, including a new chair of governors, and the way it carries out its duties since the previous inspection. Governors have undertaken an audit of their own skills in order to identify appropriate training and enhance their understanding of their specific areas of responsibility. This allows them to hold school leaders more closely to account for pupils' achievement. They check on the school's progress against areas within the school development plan. Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and the progress it is making, particularly with respect to the quality of teaching and pupils' progress, making good use of data for this. This means they are able to keep a close eye on the management of staff performance, and ensure its link to pay is appropriate. Governors manage the school's finances well. They check carefully on the use of additional funding from the pupil premium, and that for enhancing physical education, and their impact on raising attainment.

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	117112
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	444221

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	45
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lee Burgess
Headteacher	Jeni Houghton
Date of previous school inspection	29 September 2009
Telephone number	01582 881248
Fax number	01582 882910
Email address	admin@hexton.herts.sch.uk

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