

Heron Hill Primary School

Hayfell Avenue, Kendal, Cumbria, LA9 7JH

Inspection dates 15–16 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.

- Achievement and progress have improved since the previous inspection. Progress is good and standards are rising quickly.
- Children benefit from a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They develop very positive attitudes which help their learning as they move through the school.
- Reading is a strength of the school, but pupils also do well in writing and gain a good knowledge of basic mathematics.
- Pupils achieve well in art, aspects of sport, performing arts and their understanding of global issues.
- Behaviour and safety are good. Pupils are polite, well-behaved and courteous. Most love school and attend regularly.
- The quality of learning is good. Pupils are inspired to learn by a wide range of interesting activities.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs achieve well; they benefit from effective support from teachers and a talented team of support staff.
- Improved systems for checking the quality of teaching, by senior leaders, mean that there is a good understanding of how the school performs and where it can improve.
- Governors have a good knowledge of the school. They effectively challenge school leaders to promote ongoing improvement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Achievement is not outstanding because of some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. Pupils do not sufficiently apply their knowledge to solve practical problems in mathematics. Pupils' writing across the curriculum falls below the good standards set in English.
- The most able pupils do not always learn quickly enough and, when this occurs, their progress is hampered.
- Marking is not consistent in giving pupils next steps for improving their work. Some pupils are not sure of the meaning of their targets in literacy and numeracy.
- A lack of precision in the intentions set for school improvement limits the capacity of leaders and governors to be as accurate as they could be when checking on how effectively the school is moving forward.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed 19 lessons and part lessons.
- Many aspects of the school’s work were evaluated, including the support for pupils who need extra help. Inspectors listened to pupils read and conducted discussions with pupils to establish their views of the school. Inspectors examined pupils’ work in their exercise books and that displayed in classrooms and around the school.
- The inspectors looked at a range of documents. These included: records of notable incidents including bullying, the tracking of individual pupils’ progress, the school’s plan for improvement, the use of additional funding for supporting pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, the impact of the primary school sport funding, safeguarding and child protection arrangements, and pupils’ attendance records.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and deputy headteacher to evaluate their impact on the pupils’ achievement.
- Meetings were held with the leaders of English and mathematics, and with middle leaders. A discussion was conducted with the teaching assistant team, the manager of provision for pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs and also with staff of the Early Years Foundation Stage. A meeting was conducted with five governors and a discussion was held with a local authority representative.
- Inspectors evaluated the overall views of parents. An evaluation was also made of the 63 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View).
- The views of staff were gathered by analysing the 43 questionnaires returned by staff and through discussions with them during the inspection.

Inspection team

David Byrne, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Gordon Alston	Additional Inspector
Chris Maloney	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Heron Hill is much larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is below average. The pupil premium is additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils supported at 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 school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school is a member of the Kendal Collaborative Partnership, a group of primary and secondary schools that work together to benefit pupils.
- The school accommodates breakfast and after-school clubs. These are managed independently and subject to a separate inspection.
- The school has received recognition for its work by gaining a number of awards. These include accreditation as a development school for the National College for School Leadership, gaining the Green Tree Gold award for its work in encouraging the protection of the environment, and fulfilling the requirements to be a Fairtrade school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' achievement from good to outstanding through improving the overall quality of teaching to outstanding, by:
 - ensuring the most able pupils are enabled to learn as quickly as they can by getting soon enough onto work that challenges them
 - sharing the best practice in marking so that all pupils receive clear guidance about how to improve their work and understand their targets in literacy and numeracy
 - improving standards further in mathematics by enabling pupils to develop better skills in applying their mathematical knowledge to solve practical problems
 - setting consistently high expectations for pupils' writing in all subjects.
- Improve the capacity of leaders and governors to check on whether the intentions for school improvement are being achieved so that any slippage in progress is efficiently identified and rectified.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Decisive action has raised achievement since the previous inspection. Given pupils' individual starting points, their achievement is good and they are well-prepared for their next stage of education. Progress is good across the school. The variations that existed before in the progress of some pupils, for example, between boys and girls, are now eradicated.
- The school values pupils' achievement in a wide range of subjects. Good achievement occurs in a number of subjects including art, aspects of sport, performing arts and in understanding global and environmental issues.
- When children join the school in the Nursery and Reception classes, a larger proportion than average have skills below those that are typical for their age. They make good gains in their learning and their attainment at the start of Year 1 improves to be typical for their age.
- In Key Stage 1, effective leadership has improved the quality of pupils' learning. Standards by the end of Year 2 are rising after a time when they were not as good as they should be. In reading, writing and mathematics, standards are average but progress in Years 1 and 2 is accelerating quickly. The proportion of Year 1 pupils reaching the standards expected for their age in the national screening test for the sounds that letters make (phonics) is above average.
- In Key Stage 2, progress is accelerating and standards are rising. Robust data held by the school, supported by analyses of the pupils' work, indicate that standards in the current Year 6 are high in reading, better than expected in writing and broadly in line with expectations in mathematics. This is an improvement on the results gained in 2013, when standards at Year 6 dipped to below average and progress slowed.
- There are exemplary pieces of writing across the school. Achievement in writing is depressed slightly because pupils do not consistently maintain their good standards when working in subjects other than English. Achievement in mathematics, although rising, is hindered because pupils are not as skilled as they could be in applying their basic mathematical skills to solving mathematically based problems.
- The most able pupils achieve well. Improvements to the teaching of mathematics and English are increasing the proportions of pupils working at levels that are above expectations, in reading, writing, mathematics and English grammar, spelling and punctuation by the end of Year 6.
- Across the school, much effort is put into developing pupils' love of reading. Each classroom has a dedicated reading area, school libraries are well appointed and stocked and pupils read regularly in school and at home. Carefully selected books for pupils promote pleasure in reading. One pupil stated that she enjoyed reading because, she explained, 'I enjoy getting inside the character's head'.
- The school successfully promotes equality and tackles discrimination. A very significant contribution of teaching assistants secures the good achievement of pupils with disabilities and special educational needs. Their progress towards their academic and personal targets is good and they gain results that compare favourably to those of similar pupils nationally.
- The small minority of pupils who are supported by the pupil premium funding, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, make progress at the same good rate as others. The small numbers make statistical comparisons unreliable but evidence indicates that the attainment gap between these pupils and others is not significant.

The quality of teaching is good

- The very large majority of parents say that teaching is good. Their opinions are confirmed by inspection findings. The very warm relationships that staff build with the pupils are key to the good and improving learning. This enables pupils to feel safe and valued and to come to class confident and willing to learn.

- Learning is frequently exciting for pupils because activities are meaningful. The visit of an artist inspired pupils to create high-quality designs based on maps of their locality. Modern fiction enables pupils to understand events and characters in a number of subjects. A novel based on the Derbyshire 'plague village' Eyam developed pupils' understanding of history and geography and promoted good skills in debating and discussion. Older pupils harvested the beans they had grown and worked with a teaching assistant to cook, serve and savour their own vegetarian risottos.
- Across the school, frequent assessments of progress mean that pupils usually get the right level of support and challenge they need. The most able pupils generally do well in response to the high expectations held of them. Occasionally, such pupils do not learn as fast as they could because they do not get onto work that would challenge them quickly enough.
- Displays in classrooms and around the school attract the attention of all learners and reinforce examples of good work. Impressive displays abound, for example, good-quality letters written by Year 6 pupils to themselves when they started school seven years ago.
- Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Whether it is learning outdoors in the rich and exciting environment, mark-making indoors or attempting to use their developing knowledge of phonics to read new words, children thrive and love learning. They are nourished by a good array of activities that entice them to learn as they play.
- Across the school, approaches to developing the pupils' understanding of early reading and phonics make learning fun. Adults provide good opportunities for pupils to develop their love of reading. In Key Stage 2, expectations for pupils to develop spelling and improve grammar have been raised since the previous inspection. This has led to a good proportion of pupils in the current Year 6 gaining above-average standards in English, spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- In Key Stages 1 and 2, skills in reading, writing and mathematics are developed well. Reading is very popular because pupils read often in class and are encouraged to read at home. Powerful displays promote popular children's fiction, for example, the story of 'La Mariposa', a book read by pupils in Year 4. In writing, pupils' achievement is not outstanding because they do not consistently use the good writing skills evident in their English books when writing in different subjects. The basic skills of mathematics are given much attention. While pupils are encouraged to use these skills to solve practical mathematical problems, they do not apply them often enough to reach the standards of which they are capable.
- Teaching assistants are a skilled and dedicated team with some significant expertise. For example, their skills help those pupils with dyslexia to make good progress and pupils with additional needs in reading and writing have effective support to catch up.
- Pupils' work is marked frequently. Often pupils receive helpful pointers about how they can improve. However, marking is not always as good as it could be in guiding pupils' improvements and, at times, targets are not phrased in a way that the pupils understand.
- Homework is set regularly, and most pupils read frequently at home. This makes a meaningful contribution to pupils' progress. Most parents say that homework is appropriate but a small minority feel it could meet their children's needs more effectively. The school is aware of these opinions and is working to resolve any misunderstandings.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Their behaviour and attitudes make a good contribution to learning in lessons, although sometimes pupils need reminders about the behaviour expected. The vast majority of parents share the opinion that pupils are well-behaved. This view is borne out by the inspection findings.
- Pupils get on well together because the school places a strong emphasis on developing pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This fosters very strong relationships. Pupils are kind, considerate and help each other. They have a great understanding and empathy with the few pupils who struggle with their behaviour.
- Pupils care about the world around them. They are proud of the funds they raise for children in

circumstances less fortunate than their own, for example, for a school in Tanzania. Pupils are keen to protect the environment. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children grow and harvest vegetables. Older pupils work alongside the local Conservation Trust to create a wild flower meadow and maintain a tree nursery in the school grounds.

- Pupils make important contributions to the life and work of the school. Some proudly wear their playground helper caps when helping others at play; older pupils regularly read with younger ones, while the school council represents the views of pupils and influences decisions that affect their school life.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Parents are unanimous that their children feel safe. Pupils are adamant that incidents of bullying are rare. They have a good understanding of the forms that bullying can take, including racism, making fun of a person because of their faith or culture, and ostracising people for their chosen lifestyles.
- Guidance about safe practices when using computers, cycling safely and avoiding risks with strangers, gives pupils a good awareness of how to keep themselves safe from harm. In preparation for later life, older pupils receive good-quality guidance about the risks of smoking, alcohol and abuse of drugs.
- Attendance rates are high. This reflects the pupils' enjoyment of school and the value placed by many parents on education.

The leadership and management are good

- Since the previous inspection, the headteacher, supported by a strong governing body, has worked with determination to implement improvements to pupils' academic achievement. All staff share the same desire to raise achievement and are working diligently to do this. Their total commitment, coupled with the good leadership of the headteacher and governing body, means the school is well placed to sustain its improvement in future.
- By improving the frequency and quality of the checks on pupils' progress, leaders and governors have an accurate view of the school's performance. This informs the most important actions for securing improvement but leaders have not made sure that the targets are precise enough to easily identify whether or not they are achieved. This restricts the capacity of leaders to check the impact of actions so that any slippage in progress is efficiently identified and action taken to rectify this.
- The impact of middle leaders on the pupils' education is positive. Subjects are regularly evaluated to identify where standards could be higher. Leaders have introduced improvements to the way literacy and numeracy are taught. These are raising standards and accelerating progress in pupils' basic skills in reading, writing and phonics, as well as in mathematics.
- Staff are keen to improve their practice. Well-selected and regular professional development improves the quality of learning and has contributed to pupils' improved achievement since the previous inspection. Regular appraisal meetings are managed carefully and staff say they find the process helpful because it enables them to highlight training they feel would be of value to their professional development. Where necessary, action is taken by senior leaders to improve weak teaching. These actions have improved significantly the quality of teaching since the previous inspection.
- There are systems established to link together promotion, the movement of staff along the salary scale and the progress of pupils. The school's ambitious targets for staff, however, are not precise enough to gauge efficiently whether or not they are met.
- Imaginatively designed subjects and topics successfully promote both pupils' academic achievement and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Wide-ranging enrichment activities include a good diversity of educational visits, extra-curricular clubs and opportunities for pupils to develop their sporting, visual, artistic and performing arts skills.
- A good variety of educational outings, including a residential visit each year in Years 4, 5 and 6, complement class-work projects and support learning very well. Educational visitors and links to local places of interest enable pupils to apply some of their academic skills to real situations. For

example, pupils have written and designed guides to Abbots Hall Art Gallery in Kendal, which were of such good quality that they are now published for the public at large.

- Outstanding partnerships with local schools play a key part in helping the school to secure improvements. Regular training and shared expertise between staff of the schools benefit pupils because of the better teaching they receive.
- The vast majority of parents are very positive about all aspects of the school and the quality of education their children receive. The school works hard to inform families about how to support their children at home by giving detailed reports about each pupil's achievement and welcoming parents who wish to meet with staff.
- Good use of the primary school sport funding promotes sports and physical education. The fund is used to employ a consultant who has widened the choice of sports available to pupils, increased their participation in inter-school events and developed the skills of staff.
- The local authority has provided effective guidance to assist the school in making good progress in rectifying the weaknesses identified in the previous inspection report.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Outstanding leadership by the Chair of the Governing Body has enabled a swift response to the outcomes of the previous inspection. Extra training has given governors a much better understanding of how the school performs compared to others.
 - The Chair of the Governing Body is a frequent visitor to the school; other governors also visit very regularly, which enables them to gain good first-hand knowledge of the impact of teachers' work on pupils' achievement.
 - This knowledge of the school assists governors in setting realistic but aspirational targets for the performance of the headteacher and staff. These targets are linked to securing good or better progress for the pupils.
 - Staff movement up the pay scale is dependent on whether or not their targets are reached. However, the governing body's ability to check on the success of staff in this process is not as efficient as it could be because of a lack of precision in the targets set.
 - The governing body manages the budget very effectively. It has a good understanding of how the different forms of funding, such as the pupil premium, are allocated, and their impact on the achievement of qualifying pupils.
 - Governors ensure that safeguarding meets 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	112190
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	442372

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	453
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Morag Knight
Headteacher	Peter Hicks
Date of previous school inspection	19 February 2013
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