

Yewtree Primary School

Fletcher Way, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire, HP2 5QR

Inspection dates 10–11 September 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Ably supported by senior and middle leaders, the headteacher's determined leadership has ensured that since the previous inspection, the quality of teaching, achievement, pupils' behaviour and attendance have markedly improved.
- Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved and is now good.
- Teaching is good and makes a strong contribution to pupils' learning. This is because teachers and teaching assistants have improved through the good training and support opportunities available and because leaders rigorously hold them to account for the progress that their pupils make.
- Pupils now make good progress. In the recent tests at the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics was average, the best ever in the school's history and a significant improvement on the previous year.
- The curriculum engages pupils well. It inspires them to learn and behave well and teaches them how to keep safe. It also ensures that pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good.
- The governors know the school well. They work closely with school leaders and offer a good balance of both challenge and support.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not yet strong enough to ensure that pupils, including the most able, make outstanding progress.
- Occasionally, pupils are not helped quickly enough when they are unclear about precisely what they need to do.
- The most able pupils are not always given work that is hard enough.
- There are not enough opportunities for pupils to improve their writing skills and solve problems in subjects other than English and mathematics.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage the outdoor learning area is not as stimulating as it is indoors. Staff do not always involve parents enough in their children's learning.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 19 part lessons taught by 11 teachers in order to check pupils’ attitudes towards their learning, to evaluate the quality of the work in pupils’ books, to check how the learning environment contributes to pupils’ learning and engagement and to evaluate how effectively pupils are challenged to make the progress of which they are capable. Nine of these observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher, deputy headteacher or Early Years Foundation Stage leader.
- Meetings were held with the Chair and vice-chair of the Governing Body, staff, groups of pupils and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at documentation including: teachers’ planning; the school’s analysis of its strengths and weaknesses and resulting development plans; information on pupils’ attainment and progress; records of the monitoring of teaching and meetings of the governing body; safeguarding documentation; and samples of pupils’ work.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read, spoke with them about their learning and behaviour, and reviewed the work in their books.
- Inspectors considered the 12 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and 28 responses to the staff questionnaire. They also spoke informally to parents as they brought and collected their children to and from school.

Inspection team

David Radomsky, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Lynn Lowery	Additional Inspector
Peter Lacey-Hastings	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Yewtree is an average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium (additional government funding which in this school supports pupils known to be eligible for free school meals) is well above average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs or the new education, health and care plan is well above average.
- An above-average number of pupils join and leave the school at other than the usual times.
- The proportions of pupils from a range of ethnic minority backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language are much larger than usually found.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage is made up of a small part-time nursery with 10 children currently on roll and two full-sized classes in Reception.
- In 2013, the school did not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. Unvalidated 2014 test results indicate that the floor standards have now been met.
- Since the previous inspection there has been much staff turnover and a reorganisation of the senior leadership team. The new deputy headteacher took up her role at the beginning of this month. The school has continued to expand with two more year groups now having a second class.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching further so that more pupils make rapid progress by ensuring that:
 - any pupils' misconceptions are quickly addressed so that they always understand clearly what they are expected to do
 - the most able pupils always do work that challenges them to reach the highest standards of which they are capable.
- Plan more opportunities for pupils to practise their writing and problem solving skills in subjects other than English and mathematics.
- Improve the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - further developing the outdoor learning environment to match the good quality found indoors
 - involving parents more in their children's learning.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- School leaders, including the governors, have high expectations for themselves, for staff and for pupils. Since the previous inspection they have brought about a positive change of culture where all staff now strive to be the best they can be; to raise standards and give the pupils the finest academic and social education they can. As a result, the school has improved in all aspects of its work. There is no sense of complacency and all aim for continual improvement and excellence.
- The school has sound processes in place for self-evaluation. Priorities for further improvement are therefore clearly defined and resulting action plans have ensured that all aspects of the school's work continually get better. Governors play a key role in these processes and check regularly on how effectively the plans are being implemented.
- Systems of appraisal ensure that that all staff are held to account for the quality of their teaching and for their pupils' progress. Half-termly assessments and test results are analysed by teachers and leaders who provide timely support for pupils who are underachieving. Further, the meetings are used to hold teachers to account for pupils' performance. These processes provide opportunities for leaders to identify whole-school staff training needs as well as any additional support individual staff members might need. They enable teachers to reflect on how they might modify and improve their teaching in light of the assessment information.
- Phase and subject leaders work well together and with their colleagues to plan effective lessons and to check on pupils' progress. They attend subject specific and general leadership training which they then share during weekly staff development meetings. They have made a good start in delivering the new national curriculum. They have identified that they need to increase opportunities for pupils to write in different subjects and for pupils to apply their mathematical skills so that more can make rapid progress.
- The school has benefited well from the support it receives from the local authority in developing leaders' and teachers' skills.
- Since the previous inspection the school has worked in a partnership with a variety of local schools. This has played an important role in bringing about many improvements. The schools have shared leadership and teacher training and have worked together on planning improvements, in checking assessment is accurate and in observing each other's best practice. The school successfully inducted and trained teachers new to the profession last year. This year, in partnership with a teacher training college, staff are supporting two students undergoing school based teacher training.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced, offering pupils a well-rounded formal education. It is enhanced by many enrichment opportunities such as residential trips. It contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, preparing them ably for secondary school and for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life in modern Britain. For instance, it encourages pupils to develop good attitudes to learning, behaviour and safety; to learn about a variety of faiths and cultures; to learn tolerance for all and the differences between right and wrong. Pupils contribute to the community in through activities like raising funds for charity or helping younger children in the school.
- The school is working with the local authority and other local schools this term in trialling a new approach to assessment following the removal of National Curriculum levels.
- Parents who spoke to inspectors were overwhelming positive. They appreciate the many recent improvements in teaching, behaviour and the curriculum. They are made welcome to talk to teachers or leaders about their children's learning and personal development. They benefit from learning opportunities such as on how to read with their children. Parents say they find the school's reporting systems detailed but easy to understand consequently, they know how well their children are learning and behaving and what they need to do to improve.
- Leaders spend the pupil premium funding wisely for instance it is used for additional small group and one-

to-one support and for funding a 'Strengthening Schools Community Link' which supports eligible pupils and their families having difficulties. Specialist therapist support is provided as appropriate. As a result, achievement gaps between eligible pupils and their classmates are closing rapidly.

- The primary school sports funding is being used well. The school has employed a specialist sports coach to train teachers to improve their sports teaching skills and to offer pupils more sporting activities. Additionally, new equipment has been purchased and a 'sports week' has been funded where a range of external providers taught a variety of sporting skills. The school now enters pupils for competitive sporting activities against other local schools. These opportunities have increased pupils' participation and are improving their physical wellbeing.

■ The governance of the school:

- Since the previous inspection all governors have participated in a comprehensive programme of training which has enhanced their effectiveness greatly. Governors bring a range of skills and experience, including in education and finance, to their role and carry out all their statutory duties thoroughly, including meeting safeguarding requirements. They work closely with school leaders, holding them to account and supporting their work in equal measure. They have helped to ensure that teaching, achievement and behaviour are now good. They closely check on the implementation of the school's improvement plans, including through regular focused visits to the school to gain first-hand information. They know about teacher performance and pupils' progress across all the year groups through reports from the headteacher and external advisers and through scrutinising pupil progress information. Procedures established with other local schools ensure they are confident that assessment information is accurate. Governors know how pupil premium funding is narrowing gaps and how the primary sports funding is broadening opportunities for increased participation in physical activities. They have systems in place to ensure value for money and are willing to make tough decisions regarding pay increments if teachers' performance is not good enough. A variety of strategies ensures communication with parents is good. Through their behaviour policies, knowledge of curriculum content, discussions with pupils and visits to the school, governors know that the values of tolerance and respect for all are well promoted.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. From the time they arrive in the Early Years Foundation Stage they learn to move around the school in a calm and orderly manner and to play and work collaboratively with each other. Pupils behave sensibly in lessons, at break and at lunch times.
- The relationships between pupils and with their teachers and other adults are positive and respectful. Pupils arrive punctually to school and to their lessons and are keen to learn. They happily work with their classmates and help each other with their work. Their positive attitudes help them to make good progress. Occasionally there is a little low-level disruption, but pupils respond quickly when asked to settle down.
- Attendance has risen from well below average to broadly average and persistent absence has reduced considerably in the past year. Pupils enjoy coming to school and proudly wear their uniform, take care of the school's environment and neatly present their work in their books.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils know that if they have any concerns they can approach an adult who will help them sort out any difficulties that they may be experiencing. Through assemblies and the curriculum they learn how to keep themselves safe both in and out of school, such as when using the internet, crossing roads and 'stranger danger'.
- Pupils are aware of the various forms of bullying, including cyber bullying. Since the previous inspection the school has worked hard to eradicate any forms of prejudicial bullying. As one pupil said, 'racism is just not tolerated'. According to pupils, parents and staff bullying is rare and, should it occur, is dealt with quickly and appropriately.
- The rates of exclusions, which were high, have reduced dramatically as a result of the school's work to support children and their families whose circumstances make them vulnerable.
- Pupils value the opportunities to take on responsibilities. They learn the principles of democracy, for

example, by candidates wishing to stand for the school council having to write a manifesto and speeches to persuade their classmates to elect them to represent their class. One of the contributions made by the school council has been the introduction of a 'caught being kind certificate' to encourage all pupils to help others.

The quality of teaching is good

- Work seen in last year's books as well as checks done by the school's leaders, and evidence gathered throughout the inspection demonstrate that better quality teaching since the time of the previous inspection has ensured higher achievement.
- Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and work and there is mutual respect between pupils and their teachers. As a result, pupils are generally keen to get on with their work and try to learn successfully by following their teachers' instructions.
- Pupils needing additional help, such as those with special educational needs, are given well-targeted support by teaching assistants or other adults so that all can learn well and make good progress.
- The quality of marking and feedback is good. Pupils know what they have done well and receive helpful guidance on how to improve their work. They mostly respond to their teachers' advice and this helps improve their understanding.
- Pupils receive homework in literacy, mathematics and a more general topic each week. In addition, pupils are expected to read daily and log what they have read. Any pupils not completing their homework or not reading have to stay in at break and complete their assignments. Spelling tests are set on a weekly basis. All of these strategies have made a good contribution to raising standards since the previous inspection.
- Teachers mainly prepare activities that engage and interest pupils well. Consistently, as per school policy, teachers prepare work at three different levels of challenge. For the most able pupils however, even the top level of work set is not always challenging enough to stretch them sufficiently to ensure that they make rapid progress.
- Occasionally, a few pupils do not fully understand what their teacher expects them to do and so they produce incorrect work. Sometimes these misconceptions are not picked up and corrected quickly enough by the teacher or teaching assistant. As a result some learning time is wasted and progress slows.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils make good progress during their time at the school. This is because learning is now well planned, support is well targeted and pupils have good attitudes to learning. They try hard and want to succeed.
- There are year-on-year variations in childrens' skills and knowledge, especially in their language and social development, as they join the Early Years Foundation Stage. This is because the number of children in the Nursery fluctuates and because the proportions of children who join the much larger Reception with pre-school experience, or at the early stages of speaking English, vary each year. In 2014, children started in Year 1 working below the levels expected for their age. They had however, made good progress from low starting points on entry.
- Rates of progress across Key Stage 1 improved last year and were good. The proportions of pupils reaching the expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics in the summer assessments improved markedly from the previous year and are now close to average.
- The school has successfully addressed the 2013 sharp decline in standards at the end of Year 6. As a result, in 2014, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics improved significantly from well below average to broadly average. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher Level 5 also increased with writing being above average.

- Pupils make good progress in their reading. The school has successfully ensured that pupils read frequently at home and at school. Staff have received specific training to help those who have difficulties in reading. Pupils who are unable to read to an adult at home are given additional support and opportunities to read to adults in school. School leaders are prioritising improving pupils' comprehension skills to further raise standards.
- School leaders made it a major priority last year to improve the quality of writing. They initiated a new writing scheme that teaches, motivates and inspires pupils to write to a good standard. This has had a very positive impact on raising writing standards across year groups. There are not yet, however, enough opportunities for pupils to write at length in other subjects to help them make more rapid progress.
- As a result of good teacher training, rates of progress in mathematics have improved and are now good. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to practise their problem solving skills in subjects other than mathematics.
- As a result of well targeted support, all groups of pupils, including those who are disabled and those who have special educational needs, those who speak English as an additional language, late joiners and those of ethnic minority heritages, make similar good progress to their peers. This demonstrates the school's commitment to equality of opportunity.
- The most able pupils do not consistently make the rapid progress needed to reach the high standards of which they are capable. This is because teachers do not always give these pupils work which challenges them sufficiently and too often they are expected to repeat work which they have already fully mastered. Sometimes, when they have successfully completed their work, instead of being given more difficult tasks to grapple with they are asked to assist other pupils. These factors hold them back and slow their progress.
- In 2013, the attainment of disadvantaged Year 6 pupils who were eligible for the pupil premium funding was over two years behind their classmates and other pupils nationally in reading. In writing and mathematics they were almost two years behind their classmates and other pupils nationally. Inspection evidence shows that in the last year, these gaps have been closing rapidly across the school because eligible pupils are now making more rapid progress in all subjects. Unvalidated data show that the entire 2014 Year 6 class reached much higher levels of attainment than previously and that the gaps between eligible pupils and their peers narrowed markedly.

The early years provision is good

- Childrens' learning journals show that they are taught well and engage in a wide variety of interesting activities covering all areas of learning. Teachers assess children's skills frequently and adapt their planning to meet their needs and interests. Adults are competently trained in teaching early reading skills.
- Indoor classrooms provide children with a vibrant learning environment. Resources are easily accessible to the children and are well chosen to stimulate interest. They contribute well to childrens' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, such as in encouraging imagination in the role play areas. In the outdoor areas children can develop their physical skills well through, for example, the riding of bicycles. Activities outdoors, however, do not promote other areas of learning as well as those indoors, especially in terms of language and mathematical development.
- Children make good progress in their learning and development. Disabled children and those with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language are well supported to make similar good progress. Not enough of the more-able children however, are helped to exceed age-related expectations by the time they enter Year 1.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage leader has trained the new teachers and other adults well. There are now more accurate systems for assessing children's progress and the information is used well to plan the next steps of learning. Dialogue between staff and children has improved so that children are challenged and helped to learn at a better pace. The leader has identified correctly that they need to increase the involvement of parents in their children's learning.

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	135222
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	449097

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	263
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jenny Underwood
Headteacher	Faye Ewen
Date of previous school inspection	6 March 2013
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