

Wheatfields Infants' and Nursery School

Downes Road, St Albans, AL4 9NT

Inspection dates 11–12 September 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Early years provision		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- The headteacher has established a culture where nothing less than the best will be accepted and where excellent behaviour and teaching can flourish.
- Teamwork at all levels is a major factor in the school's success. Staff continually share ideas so they can learn from each other. Subject leadership teams are very successful in driving forward improvement in their areas.
- The governing body is highly effective and much improved. It balances support for the school with challenging it to do better.
- The headteacher, staff and governors rigorously check the school's performance and take action swiftly if any area is not meeting its targets.
- School leaders keep teaching continually under the spotlight so that action can be taken if it falls short of the high standards expected. As a result, teaching has improved considerably. All groups of pupils make outstanding progress and reach high levels of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teaching in the Nursery and Reception classes prepares children very well for their future learning at Key Stage 1. Activities provided are interesting and engaging, although the school recognises better use could be made of the outside area.
- The pupils' very positive attitudes to learning make a significant contribution to their excellent learning and rapid progress. Pupils of all ages are very keen to do well. They work hard at all times, listen carefully to their teachers and do their utmost to meet their expectations.
- The school is happy and harmonious because pupils conduct themselves very sensibly in lessons and at other times. They are very kind and considerate towards each other.
- Promoting the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is at the heart of the work of the school. Pupils eagerly learn about values such as tolerance, respect for others and how to recognise right from wrong.
- Pupils are confident and say how safe they feel in school. Their parents strongly agree that the school does everything it can to safeguard their children.
- Each pupil is known as an individual. This enables teachers to make sure that all achieve the best they can whether they are the most able, disadvantaged or have special educational needs.
- The pupils have clear targets to aim for, but marking does not always fulfil new school policy by making sure that pupils act on their teacher's guidance.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 15 lessons, five of which were seen together with the headteacher or other senior leaders.
- Inspectors looked at work in pupils' books retained by the school from the last academic year including records of the learning of children in the Nursery and Reception.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, school staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and other governors, and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 184 responses to Ofsted's online parent questionnaire, Parent View, and held informal discussions with parents and carers at the start of the school day.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school's own information on the pupils' current progress, planning and monitoring documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors also took account of the 29 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Martin Beale, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Mandy Wilding	Additional Inspector
Vreta Bagilhole	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than most primary schools.
- Most pupils are White British.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils known to be eligible for funding through the pupil premium is below average. This is additional government funding which, in this school, supports pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs on the school roll is less than a quarter. This is fewer than found in most schools.
- The headteacher is a Local Leader of Education. In this capacity she has been providing support for two local schools.
- The school hosts before and after school clubs. These are privately run and so inspected separately.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Implement plans to improve the use of the outside areas in Nursery and Reception.
- Making sure that pupils can regularly make amendments and improvements to their work following feedback from teachers and other adults.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher is highly ambitious for the school and determined that her expectations will be met. Governors, staff and parents are fully behind her in the pursuit of excellence. This is reflected in the continual drive to improve and the challenging targets she sets pupils and teachers. This, and its record of improvement, give the school the capacity to become even more effective.
- New subject team members learn from the more experienced and so quickly develop the skills they need to become leaders in the future. The teams support the headteacher in checking carefully on the progress of each pupil so that their parents can be informed each term about their progress, whether they are falling behind and their individual targets.
- The headteacher has maintained a relentless focus on improving teaching and learning. She makes sure that the performance of all staff is continually checked, and training provided for them to improve is appropriate depending on their level of need. This includes working alongside each other to share expertise. She maintains a very tight link between good classroom performance and salary increases by setting challenging targets for the progress of pupils in each teacher's class.
- Engagement with the local authority has been relatively light touch as the school has flourished. However, support has been provided in helping the school to adapt to both the new National Curriculum and assessment arrangements. The school is prepared well for implementing the changes needed in both.
- The curriculum focuses on English and mathematics and ensures that other subjects are taught in sufficient depth through careful planning taking into account the pupils' interests. The pupils' learning is enriched by many memorable events such as the recent trip to the city centre. Assemblies make a major contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, such as when visiting speakers from different religious backgrounds talk to the pupils about their faiths. Given their young age, they are prepared well for life in modern Britain.
- Sports funding has been used well to improve teaching by increasing teacher expertise and confidence and to extend the range of activities by introducing a popular gymnastics club.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are fully aware of the school's performance through their regular visits and the information the headteacher provides. Their expertise has developed considerably since the last inspection, particularly in their ability to understand and interrogate assessment data. They share in monitoring and evaluating the progress towards meeting priorities in the school improvement plan, having initially been fully involved in identifying annual priorities. They also make sure that additional funding including the pupil premium is having the impact they want. Governors are quite aware of the school's strengths and where improvement is needed, particularly in teaching. They are fully conversant with the way systems to monitor and reward performance are managed by the headteacher. They have kept a close eye on how the school is implementing changes to the National Curriculum and how it promotes tolerance, respect for others and prepares pupils for life in modern Britain.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils are very polite and well mannered. They are very considerate towards each other and show great respect to adults and visitors to the school. Pupils take great care to ensure that their classrooms and the school are kept clean and tidy. They thoroughly enjoy school as reflected in their consistently above-average attendance that rose last year.
- Lessons and learning flow uninterrupted as teachers quickly establish their expectations and routines. Pupils respond almost instantly to their teachers, and work constructively together on tasks or in discussion from the time they join the Nursery. They share resources amicably and readily compromise

when they have differing views. They quickly learn to reflect on the consequences of their actions and to recognise if they have done something wrong.

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. School leaders and staff do their utmost to make sure that they rigorously implement safeguarding procedures.
- Pupils are taught how to look after themselves such as through e-safety training shared with parents. They take great care to ensure that everyone can play happily at playtimes, and play and work safely such as when lessons take place in the 'Forest School'.
- Pupils support very well the school's aim that they should care for themselves, each other and the environment through their roles on the school council or as 'Sustainable Ambassadors'.
- Pupils say bullying does not take place. Their parents strongly agree. School records also confirm this. Assemblies continually promote the school's values including how pupils should treat each other with consideration. 'Squabble squashers' help pupils to become friends again if they have fallen out.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Teaching has improved since the school's last inspection and is leading to outstanding learning and progress over time. Teachers have very high expectations and through these develop a culture where all pupils strive to do their best. Teachers assess the progress of pupils very carefully and give all the attention they need to maintain rapid progress. This is whether they are the most able, disadvantaged or are struggling with the work.
- Teachers continually extend the learning of the most able through their questions and the tasks they give them to complete. They set work that engages their imaginations, challenges their thinking and deepens their understanding of new ideas.
- Pupils show their teachers great respect and are very keen to please them. Teachers have clear routines and high expectations that they are rapidly establishing at the start of the year. Pupils respond immediately. Consequently, classrooms are calm and purposeful.
- Teachers and support staff carefully check the pupils' understanding and adapt their teaching so that misconceptions can be eliminated swiftly or extra challenge provided. Progress over time is checked carefully so that any pupil falling behind their targets is identified quickly along with remedial action. This and the skilled guidance of learning support assistants enables disabled pupils and those with special educational needs to participate fully in lessons.
- The pupils' outstanding progress in writing is based on opportunities provided by teachers for them to plan and write at length along with the constant introduction of new vocabulary by teachers. Pupils are given every opportunity to deepen their understanding of number alongside sharpening their calculating skills by regularly solving problems, through investigations and undertaking practical tasks.
- Pupils generally know what they should be trying to build into their work because their targets are in a clear and understandable form. Teachers' marking and feedback to pupils, although very effective in some classes, lacks consistency across the school. Not all teachers provide clear enough advice for pupils about how to further improve their work and do not always make sure that pupils follow up this advice by applying it and showing their teachers that they have understood.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Pupils make outstanding progress during their time at the school from skills typical for their age on entry. Their attainment is high in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2. Few pupils fail to reach levels expected for their age by the end of Year 2 and most exceed this. Pupils develop a very firm foundation for success in their learning in preparation for the junior school.

- Results of Year 2 assessments have been consistently much higher than the national average since the last inspection. They rose in 2014 in all subjects because a higher proportion of pupils exceeded levels expected for their age in all subjects.
- The achievement of the most-able pupils is also outstanding. An indication of their rapid progress is that considerably more pupils reach and exceed levels expected for their age by the end of Year 2 than was the case when they entered the school.
- Pupils make rapid progress in developing reading skills. Their attainment in phonics (sounds that letters make) has risen sharply, following action taken by the school in response to average results for Year 1 pupils in the screening check in 2013.
- The school makes excellent use of the pupil premium to support the achievement of eligible pupils. This is achieved through a small 'nurture group', playground mentors and by teachers being fully aware of and taking careful account of their specific needs. These pupils attain as well and make similarly outstanding progress as others and reach levels of attainment much higher than those of similar pupils nationally.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs also make outstanding progress. Their individual needs are carefully identified, targets set and highly effective programmes such as 'Numbers Count' put into place for these to be met.

The early years provision

is outstanding

- Children make rapid progress in the Nursery and Reception classes. Their attainment by the end of Reception was well above average in 2013 and has risen further in 2014. Many children exceed levels expected for their age by the time they enter Year 1.
- The children remain absorbed by activities for long periods of time because they find them so interesting. Many show much initiative by organising themselves and selecting resources with the minimum of fuss. Teachers continually assess the children's learning so they can plan to ensure each child is stretched including providing additional challenge for the most able. Learning is more effective inside than outdoors at present, which is a matter the school is seeking to address.
- All adults place a great emphasis on keeping the children safe and ensuring their well-being. Children have access to a wide range of resources to extend their physical development. The children's personal development is a continual focus of the adults work with strong and trusting relationships established so that children are confident they have someone they can turn to if needed.
- Leadership has successfully pushed through improvements in teaching and the children's achievement. This has been as a result of careful evaluation of the impact of changes introduced. The new leadership team this year is implementing carefully areas for improvement identified in an audit last year, but their skills in planning for further improvement are untested.

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	117268
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	448479

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	324
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Roger Thomas
Headteacher	Jane Whitehurst
Date of previous school inspection	19 November 2009
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