

Hertingfordbury Cowper Primary School

Birch Green, Hertford, SG14 2LR

Inspection dates 7–8 October 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
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.

- Pupils achieve well and make good progress. The proportion of pupils who leave Year 6 having reached the expected level in reading, writing and mathematics is well above the national average.
- Teaching is consistently good and continually improving. Teaching assistants are skilled, knowledgeable and are used effectively. Staff have high expectations and manage behaviour well.
- The headteacher is a strong leader who has brought significant improvements to teaching and achievement. She is committed to the inclusion of all children and ensures that provision is adapted to meet the needs of individuals.
- Pupils are courteous and polite and behave extremely well both in and out of lessons. Pupils are expected to take responsibility for their own behaviour and they do so. They show excellent attitudes to their work and are keen to learn.
- Parents are very pleased with the school and say that it is a welcoming place where their children feel happy and safe. Parents particularly value the very committed teaching staff and the range of opportunities offered by the school.
- The school's interesting and well-balanced curriculum is a particular strength. Music provision, including instrumental teaching and an orchestra, is particularly impressive.
- The quality of pupils' written work is a notable strength; they write neatly, take care with presentation and show pride in their work.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage provides children with a good start to their education. The newly-established team works well together.
- Governors are experienced, knowledgeable and know the school well. They are committed to ensuring that the school continues to develop and they provide good support to the headteacher.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The headteacher and governors know what the school does well, but do not use their school self-evaluation rigorously enough to drive the improvements that would make the school's overall effectiveness outstanding.
- Although some teachers use 'next steps' marking and deeper level questioning extremely effectively, these practices are not yet consistently used at the same high level throughout the school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors gathered a range of evidence to judge the quality of teaching and learning over time. They observed parts of 22 lessons throughout the school. Some observations were undertaken jointly with the headteacher or with a senior teacher. Inspectors looked at pupils’ exercise books, listened to pupils read and talked to them about their work. Inspectors examined the school’s documents on pupils’ achievement and the quality of teaching.
- The views of parents were taken into account including 98 responses to Parent View, Ofsted’s online questionnaire; 10 additional comments on Parent View; the three letters that were received; and conversations with parents on the playground. Inspectors also listened to the views of staff and evaluated the 24 staff questionnaires that were received.
- Meetings were held with pupils, staff and governors. The lead inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority on the telephone.
- Inspectors looked at a range of school documents including information about safeguarding, attendance and behaviour records, and minutes of governing body meetings.

Inspection team

Wendy Varney, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Jane Guest

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This voluntary aided Church of England primary school is smaller than average, set in large and attractive grounds. The building is a mixture of the original village school and newer extensions, including the recent addition of a sizeable hall and an additional classroom. The school has one class per year group from Nursery to Year 6.
- The proportion of pupils who are from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium is well below average. The pupil premium provides additional government funding for those who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children in the care of the local authority and other groups.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is well below average. The proportion of such pupils supported at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- There is pre-school provision on the site but this is not managed by the governing body and is subject to separate inspection.
- The school meets current floor standards; these are the minimum expectations, set by the government, for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the robustness and rigour of self-evaluation processes to ensure that school improvement is as effective as possible.
- Improve the consistency of feedback given to pupils by ensuring that the same high-quality 'next steps' marking and deeper-level questioning seen in some classes is developed throughout the school.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- This is a good school at the heart of the community. The headteacher is a strong leader who has a very clear vision for her school and high expectations of herself, the staff and the pupils. She believes passionately that education should be inclusive and is prepared to stand by this belief to meet the needs of all her pupils. The headteacher has the full support of the staff team and has created a strong culture of mutual respect, where pupils value each other, behave and attend well, work hard and readily take responsibility.
- The curriculum is a particular strength of the school and prepares pupils well for life in modern British society. Great care has been taken to ensure that the curriculum is interesting, broad and balanced. It meets the requirements of the new National Curriculum whilst dovetailing with the school's existing, creative approach. A wide range of interesting topics is taught (such as 'The Mayans' and 'Temples, Tombs and Treasures'). The school's exciting curriculum encourages a thirst for knowledge and a love of learning in pupils and supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- The broader curriculum provides a wide range of opportunities for pupils to learn instruments, and to join the school's orchestra and two choirs. There are currently 98 individual pupils learning to play an instrument, including a wide range of orchestral instruments in addition to playing steel pans in Year 4 and recorders in Year 3. The school grounds are used increasingly as part of the curriculum, and all classes have regular 'forest schools' sessions. The school recently produced a much-acclaimed, outdoor production of 'A Midsummer's Night's Dream'. All pupils in Key Stage 2 are offered the opportunity to attend a residential visit each year.
- Leaders of core and other subjects are committed to the school and share the headteacher's vision. They understand the strengths and weaknesses of their subjects and have identified priorities for the school's development. They use the school's own data to monitor pupils' attainment and progress but are less familiar with handling published performance information, such as Data Dashboard. The Special Educational Needs Coordinator leads the work of teaching assistants well and monitors effectively the attainment and progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.
- Teachers' appraisal targets are linked to school improvement and reflect the school's high expectations of its staff. The headteacher is not afraid to tackle under-performance when necessary, but also ensures that support is put in place where required.
- The primary school sports funding is being used effectively to encourage participation in physical activity, improve standards and broaden the number of clubs that are offered. The school has employed a sports apprentice, and teachers have received coaching and training from specialist colleagues.
- The school monitors closely the impact of its use of the pupil premium. Although there are few eligible pupils in the school, most make good progress. Gaps between the attainment of these pupils and their peers in school are narrowing.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements. Child protection training for staff and governors is up-to-date and procedures are appropriate. Pupils show awareness of how to keep themselves safe, and pupils in Key Stage 2 have been taught about E-safety.
- The very large number of parents who completed the online questionnaire, Parent View, is indicative of their high level of satisfaction with the school. Responses to the questionnaire were overwhelmingly positive, as were the letters and additional comments received by inspectors. Parents that inspectors spoke to face-to-face were also universally supportive of the school.
- The headteacher and senior leaders know the school well because they routinely check the quality of provision: data is analysed, pupils' work is monitored and teaching is regularly observed. However, this

information is not used well enough to plan improvement to make the school's overall effectiveness outstanding. The school improvement plan for this academic year is not yet complete.

- The school draws sensibly on support from the local authority, and has made good use of external reviews to strengthen its provision. Subject leaders value the guidance provided by external training courses.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors discharge their statutory duties effectively. They know the school well and are committed to its ongoing improvement. However, they need to have a better understanding of what needs to be done to ensure that the school is outstanding. In this regard, the school's current systems for self-evaluation and action planning are not sufficiently formalised or rigorous.
- Governors ensure that there are effective arrangements for managing the performance of staff, including that of the headteacher. They have, in the past, rightly supported the headteacher's robust stance on addressing any weaknesses in staff performance.
- A recent governing body audit showed that governors have a strong set of complementary skills. However, governors are keen to increase their effectiveness and have planned further training to fill any gaps identified. They have, for example, recently undertaken data training and have found this useful in understanding the information provided for them.
- Governors take careful note of the views and concerns of parents.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. They listen carefully during lessons and work well with each other. Teachers have very high expectations of how pupils should behave and they do not accept anything less. They manage behaviour very well in classrooms and these expectations continue in less-structured parts of the day, such as break times. Pupils know what the school rules are and that they are expected to take responsibility for their own behaviour.
- Pupils show excellent attitudes to school and have a love of learning. They are keen to discuss their work and share the knowledge that they have gained. Pupils work well, both in groups and with a partner, and show pride in the work that they produce. Pupils' positive attitudes are reflected in their good attendance.
- No poor behaviour was seen on inspection and school records show that incidents of unacceptable behaviour are very rare. Records show that incidents are investigated fully and appropriately and that firm action is taken when necessary.
- Pupils are courteous and polite. They are keen to talk to visitors and speak confidently and appropriately. Pupils are rightly proud of their school.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils say that they feel safe at school and parents echo this.
- Pupils have a good understanding of what bullying is and what it is not. They say that bullying does not happen very often but, if it does, they know that they should speak to staff who will 'sort it out'. Pupils are aware of cyber-bullying and have an age-appropriate understanding of how to keep themselves safe.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching is good and is improving. The headteacher is not afraid to tackle underperformance and, as a result, the quality of teaching is almost always good or better across the school, including the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teachers' assessments of pupils' work are rigorous. Assessments made at the end of all key stages have

been moderated within the last two years and were found to be accurate. Leaders are currently revising their assessment arrangements in the light of the recent changes to the national curriculum.

- Teachers have strong subject knowledge and this enables them to teach interesting lessons. In a Year 6 literacy lesson, the teacher delivered her input on the construction of complex sentences in such a clear, lively and exciting way that pupils made extremely good progress in developing their writing skills. A French teacher from a local secondary school provides specialist teaching for Year 6 and her expertise is used to share best practice with the school's Key Stage 2 teachers.
- Lesson activities are well-planned and well-structured. Teachers show good knowledge of how pupils' understanding develops and they provide information in appropriate steps to enable them to make good progress. For example, in a Year 3 science lesson, the teacher used a drawing of a boneless man then a full-sized skeleton, and then allowed pupils to make their own life-sized drawings to develop their knowledge of human bone structure.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work together well to tackle misconceptions and this helps pupils to make good progress. For example, in a Year 1 lesson on the value of coins, a teaching assistant noticed a pupil's error and said, 'Do we have a four pence coin?' encouraging the pupil to think and solve her own mistake.
- In general, teachers use questioning well to ensure that all pupils participate and to check their understanding. However, in some classes, questioning is too superficial and needs to be extended to probe pupils' understanding further and to prompt them to think more deeply.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and model the school's handwriting policy when writing in pupils' books. This reinforces the school's high expectations and, as a result, pupils' books are noticeably neat and well-presented. Teachers' marking is positive and encouraging and, in the best examples, it provides pupils with clear next steps for how to improve their work. However, marking is not yet of the same consistently high standard throughout the school.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are taught well. Teaching assistants work closely with teachers to ensure that pupils achieve well.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Standards in Key Stage 2 improved notably this year. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected level was above the national average in all subjects in 2014. The proportion achieving the higher levels in the Key Stage 2 national tests was also well above average. All pupils in the cohort made expected progress, and a higher than average proportion made more than expected progress. This is a notable improvement on previous years.
- Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 is in line with the national average in reading and mathematics and above average in writing. The proportion achieving higher levels was above average in all areas. This represents good achievement for this cohort.
- The school has worked hard to improve its teaching of phonics (the letters that represent sounds) and 100% of pupils reached the required level in the Year 1 phonics screening check this year.
- In 2013, there were too few pupils eligible for the pupil premium to allow their attainment to be compared with that of their peers without risk of identifying them. In general, pupils entitled to the pupil premium make good progress and the gap is narrowing between these pupils and their classmates.
- Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds make the same good progress as other groups.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress because their needs are considered on an individual basis and appropriate interventions are put in place.

- Pupils read well and often. They show enjoyment of books and a love of reading. Pupils read confidently to an inspector, with good expression and intonation, and discussed their choice of texts with maturity.

The early years provision

is good

- The Early Years Foundation Stage is well- led and managed and staff work well as a team. Staff know the children well and plan for their individual needs across the seven areas of learning.
- The Early Years team is working towards the local authority's 'Quality Standards' award and this is providing them with good support and direction for their ongoing improvement. They know what their training needs are and in which ways they should continue to develop provision.
- Children enter the nursery class in the Early Years with skills and abilities typical of their age, with some children above them. Children make good progress, and a much higher than average number achieved a good level of development this year.
- Transition arrangements from pre-schools into the Nursery are good and developing. Good arrangements are also in place to enable the children to move smoothly from Reception into Year 1.

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	117563
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	449325

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	204
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Caroline Brown
Headteacher	Alison Richards
Date of previous school inspection	4 July 2011
Telephone number	01992 583239
Fax number	01992 505656
Email address	admin@hertingfordbury.herts.sch.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2014

