

William Martin CofE Voluntary Controlled Infant and Nursery School, Harlow

Tawneys Road, Harlow, CM18 6PN

Inspection dates 2–3 October 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Over time, there has not been enough consistently good teaching to ensure all pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have complex special educational needs, achieve as well as they should.
- Until recently, standards had been declining in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teachers' expectations have not been high enough in the past to provide sufficient challenge to pupils. The most able pupils have too often underachieved.
- Teaching assistants, including in Reception, do not always receive enough training or direction from class teachers to help them communicate with pupils and support their progress effectively.
- Although teachers mark pupils' work thoroughly and make very helpful comments for improvement, they do not always insist pupils respond to their marking or give them enough opportunities to do so.
- The inclusion manager does not have enough time in the school to help teaching staff plan suitable programmes of support and work for pupils with complex learning needs.

The school has the following strengths

- This is an improving school. In the past year, the new headteacher, deputy headteacher and governors have halted the decline in standards and significantly improved teaching.
- Pupils' achievement is now improving steadily and standards are broadly average. More pupils in Year 2 make good progress, especially in mathematics.
- Teaching is particularly good in the Nursery class. Children develop very positive attitudes to learning and make good progress.
- Pupils behave well in and around the school and feel safe. Through their philosophy lessons, they develop a good understanding of personal qualities such as kindness, loyalty and respect.
- Exceptionally good use is made of professional consultants and staff from the junior school to help new teachers develop their practice.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 16 lessons. They also observed pupils working individually or in small groups with teaching assistants. Inspectors also observed pupils' behaviour at break and lunchtimes and in assemblies.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, governors and staff. Inspectors spoke with two separate groups of pupils from Year 2.
- A discussion was held with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of school documentation, including: the school's own evaluation of its performance and its improvement plan; information about pupils' progress and the support given to pupils eligible for pupil premium funding, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Inspectors also looked at evidence of leaders' monitoring of teaching, and records relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' work in all year groups and heard some pupils from Year 1 read.
- Inspectors took account of the 14 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and to parents' written comments. Inspectors spoke with some parents at the start of the school day.
- Inspectors took account of 16 responses to the school staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Cheryl Thompson, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Susannah Edom-Baker

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is an average-sized primary school with eight classes from Nursery to Year 2. There are two classes for each year group, including the Early Years Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception). The children attend part-time in the two Nursery classes. Approximately half the children attending the Nursery classes transfer to the school's Reception classes.
- The large majority of pupils are White British.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is well below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average. Education, health and care plans are being prepared.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding is broadly average. This extra funding is for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those in the care of the local authority.
- There has been an almost complete change of teaching staff, including the headteacher, since the previous inspection. Over half the teaching staff are either in the early stages of their teaching career or newly-qualified.
- On the retirement of the previous headteacher, the decision was taken to form a hard federation between this school and the on-site junior school. This took effect in September 2013 and means that the schools share the same headteacher, governing body and inclusion manager but their financial arrangements are separate.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and achievement so that they are at least good by ensuring:
 - teachers particularly those new to the school, receive high quality support so that they are able to support pupils with complex learning needs more effectively
 - teaching assistants, particularly in Reception, are given additional support and training so that they can communicate better with pupils who are finding work difficult and are able to offer them precise directions on how they can improve it.
 - pupils act on the points for improvement set out in teachers' marking and giving them regular opportunities to do this in all year-groups
 - the inclusion manager is given more time in the school to help teachers devise structured learning activities for pupils with complex learning needs.
- Sustain the marked but recent improvements in reading, writing and mathematics by:
 - systematically checking the achievement made by all pupils, including the most able and those who have underachieved in the past, and by providing additional support as necessary to maximise their progress.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Governors chose to federate this school with the junior school because they recognised the need to improve the outcomes for pupils. They were confident that the headteacher could bring about the same improvements in pupils' progress and attainment that she had already achieved in the junior school. There is increasing evidence that their faith is justified; the impact of the leadership team on pupils' outcomes is clear to see. The school has seen steady improvements in both teaching and achievement since her appointment.
- In spite of a large change in staffing, the headteacher, backed by governors, has brought about considerable improvements in a short time span. Standards are rising at a good rate. Scrutiny of pupils' work seen in lessons indicates that further improvement is well underway. School information shows that Year 2 pupils are likely to reach the ambitious targets set for them to attain at the end of the school year.
- Central to the improvements that have already been secured are the headteacher's rigorous monitoring system and the highly effective procedures for holding teachers to account for their pupils' progress. Inadequate teaching has been eradicated. Pupils' progress is checked systematically by senior leaders. The headteacher, senior leaders and governors have a precise picture of the quality of teaching and learning across the school.
- School development planning is excellent. It is based on the headteacher's precise analysis of data on pupils' achievement, lesson observations by senior staff of both federation schools and monitoring by visiting educational consultants. Almost all areas identified for improvement by this inspection were already recognised in the school's plan.
- The headteacher, senior leaders and governors are acutely aware of the high number of teachers new to the profession. They are supporting these teachers very well through the use of an educational consultant and experienced staff from the junior school working alongside them. Teachers say they have benefited considerably from their input.
- Staff from the two federated schools are also working well together and sharing expertise. Subject leaders lead their areas of responsibility well. For example, the subject leaders for mathematics have worked together to write a calculations policy to use in both schools. This document ensures continuity of learning when pupils move to the junior school from the infant school.
- The use of the extra sports funding has been well thought-out. The school employs qualified sports coaches to teach a range of sports, and staff join lessons so that they can improve their own skills. Pupils say they like all the clubs on offer, many belong to several clubs which are shared between the infant and junior schools.
- Pupil premium funding for disadvantaged pupils has been used effectively to help eligible individuals to achieve as well as others. For example, these pupils benefit from individual tuition as needed, and are supported to take part in the extra-curricular activities on offer. Pupils who are part of the 'reading recovery' project receive skilled teaching and make at least good progress, not only in their skills but in their confidence in trying new books.
- Both schools are working together to develop a new system of assessment to replace the current one based on National Curriculum levels. The current pupil progress tracking system is in the process of being modified for use, making the transfer of assessment information between schools easy and efficient.
- The very strong links between the two schools enhances the broad and balanced curriculum in this school. Resources are shared and support staff work between the schools if extra staff are required, for example on school trips. Both schools have philosophy as part of their curriculum and this supports pupils' spiritual, moral and social development very well. Pupils are encouraged to think beyond issues of direct relevance to themselves and to consider global and local issues. Assembly themes and joint assemblies reinforce

values such as taking responsibility and being respectful of the needs and views of others.

- The inclusion manager is responsible for overseeing the provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs across both schools. She is very committed and works very effectively but her dual role means she only has limited time in each school. School leaders agree that the current provision for these pupils and the support for teachers and their assistants is insufficient and needs to be increased.
- The local authority has provided good support for the school in the past year, especially in respect of the difficult staffing issues leaders have often had to address.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- In just one year since the federation was established, governors have developed their roles well. Under the guidance of a highly efficient Chair of the Governing Body, they have evaluated their skills and recruited new members with skills they recognised they did not have. They have all attended training to increase their understanding about pupils' achievement.
- They have given the headteacher their full support throughout the recent period of staff recruitment. They oversee the arrangements for managing the performance of teachers well and know where teaching has needed to improve and what has been done to bring this about.
- Governors are ambitious for the school and have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses within it.
- Together, with the headteacher, they use funding wisely to purchase the services of educational consultants and monitor their impact on the effectiveness of the school to ensure value for money.
- Finances are managed well, including the use of pupil premium and sports funding to increase pupils' achievement.
- The governing body makes sure that the school meets the current national requirements for safeguarding and child protection.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils say they enjoy school and feel safe in it. Their attendance is consistently above average. There is little persistent absenteeism and no exclusions.
- In the Nursery, children's behaviour is excellent. On entry to the class, they settle very quickly to the interesting activities provided. They listen and join in readily to well-known stories. A good number of children were able to empathise with 'The Little Red Hen' and understand why she would not allow the other creatures to eat the bread she had made.
- In lessons, pupils listen attentively to their teachers and are keen to do well. Their work shows they try very hard to include the particular features in their writing that their teachers have told them will improve their work. For example, Year 1 made a very good start on using time connectives such as 'then', 'next' and 'after' in their writing about aliens.
- The school's curriculum includes philosophy which promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Pupils are encouraged to explore in depth what words such as 'family', 'love' and 'respect' mean to them. In Year 2, pupils demonstrated considerable maturity in their thoughts. For example, one was heard saying 'You may not agree with someone's ideas but you should respect them'.
- Pupils play well together in the playground and on the outdoor apparatus. Lunchtime playtimes are particularly enjoyable when older 'play leaders' from the junior school join in games.
- Behaviour is not outstanding because a very small number of pupils have difficulties managing their behaviour. Teaching assistants work closely with these pupils to ensure both they and other pupils are kept safe.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. All parents agree that their child feels safe in school. School leaders, including governors, ensure that all safeguarding requirements are met and are checked regularly.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe. For example, they know that the rules for using the outdoor climbing apparatus are for making sure they can play safely. They have a good awareness of road safety and, for their age, a good understanding of how to be safe using computers and mobile phones.
- Discussions with pupils indicate that they know that 'We fall out with each other sometimes' but they understand that such disagreements are not bullying. They consider there is no bullying or name-calling in the school and that if they have any worries, staff will deal with them quickly and to their satisfaction.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is not yet consistently good and there is little outstanding teaching.
- Where teaching is less effective it is because teaching assistants are not always given precise instructions in how to make sure the groups they are working with make optimum progress. The teaching assistants have a general picture of what is expected of them but are not provided with sufficient prompts for questions to encourage thinking or probe understanding or words to use to extend pupils' vocabulary. Teaching assistants have not had enough training on how to communicate with pupils who find it difficult to understand the guidance they are being given.
- The quality of teaching for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is not always good enough. Teachers at the very early stage of their career have yet to develop the skill in setting work or directing support for the very few pupils with complex learning and/or behavioural needs. As a result, these pupils do not always make enough progress. However, they are receiving the appropriate support to enable them to develop these skills.
- All teachers mark their pupils' work in detail and tell them how to improve. However, this time-consuming marking is not having a consistently strong impact on pupils' progress. Teachers do not routinely ensure pupils read and act on their very helpful points for improvement.
- The headteacher and governors are providing very good support for all teachers, especially those at the start of their careers. Teachers appreciate the expert support they have from educational consultants and from colleagues in the junior school. They work well as a team and all have high expectations of themselves and their pupils. As a result, the quality of teaching is improving at a good rate.
- Teaching in whole-class sessions is good. Teachers use challenging questioning and set high expectations that pupils will do their best to answer. Teachers' explanations are clear and pupils are enthused to learn.
- The teaching of phonics (the links between sounds and letters in words) is good. Standards in the Year 1 phonic check have risen to above average as a result. The headteacher has ensured that staff new to the school and to the profession have high quality support from educational consultants to maintain current standards.
- Teaching for the most able pupils is now good. School leaders have focused on the provision for these pupils and as a result, teachers set very challenging work for them, to which they readily respond. In Year 2, the most able pupils are taught as a group for mathematics. They are working competently at the levels expected for pupils in Years 3 and 4.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Until recently, standards in reading, writing and mathematics had been in decline. Standards at the end of Year 2 were below average. From broadly typical starting points in Nursery and Reception, pupils made insufficient progress particularly in writing and mathematics. The most able pupils underachieved.
- Achievement is not yet consistently good across the school. There remains a legacy of underachievement from past years. However, through good coaching to help them improve their practice, teachers are improving their use of assessment to spot gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding and from this, to plan work that is appropriate for all groups of pupils.
- Disabled pupils and those who have complex needs make similar progress to their classmates but do not always achieve as well as they could. They receive additional support in lessons but this support is not always as effective as intended because it is not closely tailored to what they need to help them learn. Teaching assistants do not always have the skills necessary to support these pupils effectively.
- On her appointment, the headteacher took determined steps to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. These measures were successful so that in the 2014 teacher assessments, standards were broadly average and more pupils attained the higher Level 3 in mathematics.
- The most able pupils now achieve well. In Year 1, the most able pupils make good use of their phonics strategies and write at length. In Year 2, in response to teachers' high expectations, pupils pay good attention to punctuation, and make great efforts to use 'wow' words (adjectives or adverbs) to make their writing interesting.
- Results of the 2014 national phonic screening check for Year 1 indicates considerable improvement on the low standards in past years. Work seen in lessons indicates that pupils use their knowledge of letter sounds confidently to help them spell unfamiliar words. Pupils also make good use of their phonic knowledge to help them work out unknown words in their reading material.
- Pupils who are eligible for support through pupil premium funding make similar progress to their classmates. Data held by the school and from national sources suggests that these pupils generally progress as well as, and attain standards that are similar to, those of comparable pupils nationally. In the school, the gaps this year between eligible pupils and others are negligible.

The early years provision

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching in Reception requires improvement. Teaching assistants are not always given precise instructions about what the children are expected to learn when undertaking an activity. Similarly, they are not sufficiently guided by teaching staff about how to ask questions to extend children's learning, including the most able.
- Teaching in the Nursery is good. In a calm and purposeful atmosphere, children settle into routines very quickly. Adults' high expectations for listening carefully, kindness to others and being helpful are met consistently.
- Leadership and management are good. The leader monitors provision closely in both classes, knows exactly what needs to be improved, and has made very good use of advice from an educational consultant to give extra support in areas that need it. Since her start in the role, the Nursery and Reception class leader has introduced the beginning stages of learning phonics into the Nursery with very good results. Early literacy skills develop well. Children who have attended the school Nursery and move in to the Reception are generally ahead of those who have not, in their knowledge of letters and sounds.
- Children enjoy choosing a new book to take home to share with their families and are well aware of the

enjoyment to be had from reading.

- Nursery and Reception children feel safe in school. In the main, their social skills develop well. They are kind and helpful to one another. Children with complex behavioural needs do not always get the structured support they need and, as a result, do not make enough progress in learning how to manage their own behaviour.

- Parents say that the staff are very approachable and have helped their children settle in happily.

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	115101
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	449283

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3-7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	227
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Emma Forde
Headteacher	Janet Matthews
Date of previous school inspection	13 September 2010
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