

Aboyne Lodge Junior Mixed and Infant School

Etna Road, St Albans, AL3 5NL

Inspection dates 4–5 December 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	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.

- The headteacher, deputy headteacher and governing body provide strong leadership. They are constantly seeking ways to improve the school and ensure high levels of achievement for all pupils.
- Children in the early years get a good start to school life. They are taught well and enjoy learning because their relationships with adults are good and fun activities are provided.
- Standards at the end of Year 6 are consistently above national averages in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school takes effective action to keep the pupils safe. Their behaviour is good, including in the playground and around the school.
- Good teaching ensures that pupils make good progress. Teachers and support staff are dedicated to raising standards.
- The curriculum is carefully planned through a range of interesting topics. It includes excellent opportunities for pupils to develop their social, moral, spiritual and cultural understanding and skills.
- The school works well with parents, who indicate that they are very satisfied with the quality of education provided for their children.
- Governors know the school well, visit regularly and are firmly committed to its development.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough of the most able pupils reach the highest standards they are capable of in writing and mathematics.
- Teachers' marking does not help pupils to fully understand how to improve their work, or challenge the most able learners to aim even higher.

Information about this inspection

- The team made 13 class observations, some of which were carried out jointly with the headteacher and the deputy headteacher. They also observed pupils learning in groups, looked at pupils' work, heard pupils read and attended two assemblies.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of school documents, including safeguarding and curriculum materials, monitoring files, policies and the school's self-evaluation report.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils over lunch, in the classroom and in the playground. Discussions were held with the deputy headteacher, teachers, parents, nine governors and two representatives from the local authority.
- Inspectors considered the 222 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and spoke with several parents in the playground. They also considered responses from recent surveys held by the school to gather the views of parents, staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Gillian Bosschaert, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Helen Booth

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is an averaged-size primary school. It has a part-time nursery and a full-time Reception class. The 2014 Year 6 had two classes instead of the usual one class.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, at about 16%, is lower than the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium, around 6%, is well below average. The pupil premium provides additional money for pupils in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for progress and standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching across the school so that pupils make the best possible progress by:
 - developing marking to show pupils how to improve their work, and making sure they learn from the advice given
 - setting more demanding work for the most able pupils in all classes so that more pupils reach the highest levels of attainment, particularly in writing and mathematics.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, senior leaders and the governing body are ambitious for the pupils and drive the school forward with determination. They work together well and are a strong team.
- Leadership responsibilities are shared well. Staff are assigned to one of three curriculum groups led by the mathematics, science and English subject leaders. Budgets are given to each team and spending is carefully monitored alongside the school development plan. All early years staff work effectively as a team to provide a secure setting for the children to develop and grow in.
- Senior leaders and the subject leaders for English and mathematics have ensured that standards remain high by carrying out careful checks on teaching and the work in pupils' books. They are quick to notice any concerns and respond. For example, they reacted to the disappointing 2014 mathematics test results by quickly arranging extra teaching.
- Leaders make effective checks on how well all pupils are doing through regular pupil progress meetings. As a result any pupils who find it difficult to keep up are identified early and additional help is given immediately. The deputy headteacher and other leaders routinely monitor the progress made by disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, to ensure that the support is effective. However, leaders have not yet ensured that the most able pupils reach the highest standards.
- The school's development plan identifies the right priorities for improvement, and links them clearly to teaching and achievement. The training needed to support the new curriculum was highlighted a year before it became statutory, with the result that staff are already confident in its application.
- The curriculum is good. Pupils say they enjoy the range of relevant and interesting topics they are taught, such as the Second World War and making marionettes for a puppet show to be presented to parents later in the year. Pupils appreciate the educational trips and visits to places of interest, and especially their visits to St Albans Abbey to sing. Skills learnt in mathematics are used in practical ways, such as measuring rooms for carpets following a recent flood in the school. Year 6 pupils were able to put together a claim to the insurance company from their investigations.
- The school makes good use of the pupil premium funding for one-to-one teaching or small group work. Pupils are identified on teachers' planning to ensure their progress is regularly monitored and they keep up with their classmates.
- The primary sports funding is used well. Increasing numbers of pupils are involved in sports and games through a range of activities during the day and after school. Staff receive training in physical education from coaches to further develop their skills. Pupils excelled in the district athletics in the summer.
- British values are promoted well through a range of topics. Pupils learn about democracy by voting for pupil representatives on the school council, and understand the importance of having rules by which to live. Assemblies promote key values of democracy and equality, and are used effectively to encourage reflection on social, moral, spiritual and cultural issues. Pupils have a good sense of right and wrong and know that staff are on hand to support them with any difficulties. As a result, they are well prepared for life in modern Britain, respect diversity and treat one another well. The school does not tolerate any form of discrimination.
- The very large majority of parents and staff feel the school is led well. Parents say their children are well looked after and achieve well.
- The local authority supports the school effectively. It receives four visits a year to help set targets, monitor standards, observe teaching and help governors challenge the headteacher's performance.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors are very dedicated to the school and are committed to ensuring pupils receive the best possible education. They ask pertinent questions to gain a good understanding about the performance of pupils and the quality of teaching. They know exactly how additional funding has been used, such as the pupil premium and the sport and physical education grant, and the impact this has had on equality of opportunity and achievement.
- Governors fully understand the link between staff pay and performance, and work closely with the school to support and challenge the headteacher to raise the performance of teachers.
- Governors visit the school regularly, and know about its strengths as well as the areas to improve. They understand how pupils' performance compares against similar schools nationally. They ensure that child protection and safeguarding arrangements meet requirements, and that the school is a safe environment for pupils and staff.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They enjoy learning and frequently demonstrate their ability to work together and help each other. The atmosphere of the school is extremely positive. Pupils greet visitors readily and are eager to hold doors open for them.
- Pupils are polite and move in and around the school impeccably. In the playground they play well together and in the dining hall sit sensibly and talk to each other without fuss. Older pupils ensure that other pupils have someone with whom they can play in the playground. They are proud to be 'friendship buddies'. They really care about each other. One child was seen to comfort another who was feeling unwell with a soft pat on the back and reassuring words.
- Pupils say they enjoy school and want to attend, and this is reflected in above-average attendance. There have not been any recent exclusions. Most parents, governors, staff and pupils say pupils behave well.
- Pupils are proud of their school and talk excitedly about lessons and the things they do, like the forthcoming end-of-term performance. They visit a local home for the elderly to sing to them, and also St Albans Cathedral. Most are keen to learn and are attentive in class. Just occasionally, a few lose interest when explanations do not fully engage them and they become restless and fidgety.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Safeguarding procedures are robust and all members of staff, as well as the governors, receive regular training. Pupils say they feel safe, and were eager to explain how to keep safe on the internet as well as on the road.
- Pupils and parents say that bullying is rare. Pupils are very clear about the different forms bullying can take, and know what to do should it occur. They say they feel happy at school.

The quality of teaching is good

- Pupils are taught well in all age groups. This helps to ensure that all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs, are making good progress in all subjects.
- Teachers show that they have good subject knowledge and are able to capture pupils' interest well. Pupils say they enjoy their lessons. In one lesson seen, pupils were captivated by the teacher's use of a 'naughty elf' to take things away to give them a better understanding of subtraction.
- Reading, including the use of phonics, is taught particularly well and by Year 6 pupils reach above-average standards. They read fluently and with great intonation and confidence. They use inflection to create mood or the voice of a character when reading aloud. Reading to younger pupils is encouraged throughout Key Stage 2, and weekly visits enable the youngest pupils to enjoy a range of stories.

- Teaching assistants provide valuable support when working with small groups of pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. They assist teachers during lessons, explain new vocabulary in mathematics and talk through patterns in grammar. They help pupils practise and apply their skills in new learning.
- Homework contributes well to pupils' progress. Younger pupils are encouraged to read with parents. Older pupils are set tasks that require them to apply what they have recently learned to new problems.
- The senior staff and class teachers hold regular meetings to monitor pupils' progress. This helps them to quickly identify any pupils who may be struggling to keep up, and provide extra help and guidance for those who need it.
- The quality and quantity of information in pupils' books show that most are challenged to think carefully and research information to increase their knowledge and understanding of a particular subject. In some classes the work given to pupils is not always hard enough, which means that the most able pupils in particular are not always pushed to reach the highest levels of attainment.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly, and some provide a checklist for pupils to mark their own or a partner's work. However, not all teachers make helpful comments that show how pupils can improve their work to move their learning forward and reach higher levels, or ensure that pupils respond to any advice given.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Results at the end of Year 6 are consistently above average in all subjects. Most pupils make at least the progress expected nationally and many make better progress in reading.
- The school's 2014 results show that many pupils had made better progress than pupils nationally in reading, especially among the boys. In writing, all pupils made at least the progress expected for their age and the proportion who exceeded it was broadly average. In mathematics, only a minority made better than expected progress. The school has already addressed this discrepancy by giving extra support to groups of pupils for mathematics, and the work seen in lessons and pupils' books shows that this is beginning to have an impact.
- The small number of disadvantaged pupils make good progress. It is not possible to comment on their attainment in Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics without risk of identifying individuals.
- Disabled pupils and those who have educational special needs also make good progress. The school offers a wealth of additional support groups and extra help in lessons from competent teachers and teaching assistants. In the past these pupils have made better progress in reading and writing than in mathematics, but senior leaders have already addressed this and they are now making good progress in all subjects.
- The most able pupils reach expected levels at the end of Year 2, but not enough reach the highest levels of attainment in the Year 6 assessments in writing and mathematics. Pupils' books show that they sometimes easily complete the work set for them, showing that they are not always challenged in some classes.

The early years provision

is good

- Good teaching and effective leadership and management ensure that children enter Year 1 well prepared for the next phase of their journey through school. The proportion of children who have reached a good level of development has risen over the last three years and exceeds local and national expectations for their age. In 2014 it was well above the national average, from broadly typical starting points.

- Staff make home visits to find out where children are in their learning so that they can plan ahead with new learning before they arrive at school. This helps children to make a rapid start and allows the school to tackle any gaps in their learning quickly.

- Children settle quickly because the adults around them are already familiar faces. They feel secure and are quickly encouraged to develop self-confidence by making their own choices. They behave well in a safe environment. Nursery children learn to butter their own toast, share utensils and wash them up afterwards. Sharing and understanding each other set the foundations for the positive behaviour seen further up the school.

- Adults harness the children's interests and concentration well, and they enjoy a wide variety of inviting activities indoors and outside. Following on from the story *Each Peach Pear Plum* children visited the local market and bought different fruit to taste from one of the stalls. This helped to develop their vocabulary and their speaking and listening skills, and in turn led to some good attempts at early writing about the visit.

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	117141
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	449403

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	226
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrew Hill
Headteacher	Amanda Abley
Date of previous school inspection	28 April 2009
Telephone number	01727 766117
Fax number	N/A
Email address	admin@aboyne.herts.sch.uk

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