

Friars Primary School and Nursery

Constable Way, Shoeburyness, Southend-on-Sea, SS3 9XX

Inspection dates

4–5 December 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.

- Leaders, managers and governors have a very clear view of how well the school is performing and where it can do better. As a result, all aspects of the school have improved since the previous inspection.
- Leaders' checks on teaching have led to improvements and this has made a positive impact on pupils' achievement.
- Children get a good start to their learning in the early years, where they make good progress in a stimulating environment.
- Pupils build on this good start in the rest of the school. By the time they leave Year 6, they have achieved well in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Disadvantaged pupils supported through the pupil premium, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are supported well, so they make good progress and achieve well.
- Teaching is good. Teachers ask probing questions to ascertain what pupils know, and adapt their planning well to ensure progress is good.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school. Their behaviour is good, they are proud of their school and they are keen to learn. Their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe is effective. Most parents who stated a view agree and would recommend the school to others.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils, including the most able, are not always given work that is hard enough to enable them to make the best possible progress.
- Teachers' marking is not always effective in helping to improve pupils' work.
- The school's system for checking and analysing how well different groups of pupils are doing is too complicated. This means staff cannot use it quickly and easily to identify any pupils who could be making better progress.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors made visits to 15 lessons or parts of lessons, seven of which were seen jointly with the executive headteacher or head of school. Inspectors also observed a celebration assembly, the breakfast club, play and lunchtime behaviour.
- Discussions were held with pupils, parents, the executive headteacher, the head of school, senior and middle leaders, four governors including the Chair of the Governing Body, and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at the work pupils were doing in lessons and in their books over time. They listened to pupils read and talked to them about their enjoyment of reading.
- The inspectors examined a range of documents including a summary of the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan, the school's own achievement data, attendance information and policies aimed at keeping pupils safe.
- The views of 28 parents and carers were analysed through the Parent View website.
- The views expressed by 32 staff who returned a questionnaire were also considered.

Inspection team

| | |
|----------------------------|----------------------|
| Ruth Brock, Lead inspector | Additional Inspector |
| Ken Parry | Additional Inspector |
| Cheryl Jackson | Additional Inspector |

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- There are fewer pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds than in most schools of this size. Few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, at about 17%, is broadly average.
- Over half the pupils are disadvantaged and supported by the pupil premium, which is additional government funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or in local authority care. This is well above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school runs its own breakfast club.
- An executive headteacher and a head of school from a local outstanding school were appointed by the governing body to lead the school from September 2012.
- The school is part of the Shoeburyness Cluster, which supports the work of leaders in this and other local schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise teaching and achievement to outstanding by:
 - setting work that is always hard enough so that pupils are consistently challenged to make the best possible progress and attain the highest standards
 - simplifying the system for checking and analysing pupils' achievement, so all staff can use it easily and quickly to help pupils make faster progress
 - ensuring that teachers' marking leads to improvements in pupils' work.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Leaders and managers have taken effective and successful action to address previous weaknesses. This is making a positive difference to pupils' achievement throughout the school.
- Staff are proud to work at Friars Primary School and Nursery. The executive headteacher and head of school are highly respected by staff, pupils and parents alike and have created an environment where staff and pupils feel valued. Most staff, parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaires were positive about all aspects of the school and would recommend the school to other families.
- Key leadership roles have been developed and these are having a positive impact on the quality of teaching and standards throughout the school. For example, subject leaders have clear 'mini self-improvement and evaluation plans' and check up on the progress and attainment of pupils.
- The vibrant curriculum is well planned, engages pupils effectively in their learning and contributes significantly to their well-developed spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness, as seen in the First World War work, 'We Remember'. Pupils learn not to discriminate and are well prepared for life in modern Britain. The curriculum is focused on developing pupils' basic skills in speaking and listening, reading, writing and mathematics, but is also enhanced by a good range of activities, clubs, trips and visits covering sport, music and culture that pupils enjoy. For example, a 'tuba workshop' extended pupils' knowledge of orchestral instruments.
- Government sports funding is used effectively to provide specialist coaches to lead high-quality sports activities. The school provides a full and very varied sports programme. It engages in local competitions and was awarded the 'most improved school in sports' in the area. These opportunities are helping pupils to learn new skills and increase their understanding of healthy lifestyles.
- Leaders are committed to ensuring that all pupils have an equal opportunity to succeed. For example, additional government funding is used effectively to support disadvantaged pupils eligible for the pupil premium. Leaders track their progress carefully to ensure that the support provided for them is planned carefully and effective in improving their achievement. By the end of Year 6, a higher proportion of eligible pupils reach nationally expected standards than other pupils.
- Leaders are working closely with the local authority and a consultant to help the school move forward. The local authority has confidence in the capacity for further improvement and spoke knowledgeably about the positive impact of the governors in holding leaders to account.
- The school's system for checking how well pupils are doing has been strengthened. However, it is over-complicated. As a result, the ongoing progress of different groups, such as the most able, is not always checked as promptly or effectively as it could be. This means that teaching and support are not always adapted quickly enough to ensure that all groups are making the best possible progress.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors carry out a well-planned programme of 'learning walks alongside staff'. As a consequence they have an accurate awareness of the school's strengths and areas for development and challenge leaders appropriately. They contribute to and scrutinise the school's evaluation of its own performance, and make effective use of external advisers.
 - The governors know about the quality of teaching, and have developed systems to reward the very best teaching and put these to good use. They know what leaders are doing to tackle weaknesses.
 - Governors manage the school's finances effectively. They have a good knowledge of how the pupil premium funding is spent and the impact it is having. They make sure that the school meets all of its statutory duties, including through its effective procedures related to safeguarding.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. A consistent approach to standards of behaviour ensures pupils demonstrate good attitudes to learning and want to succeed. Pupils are enthusiastic learners who are

proud of their school and say it is a 'happy and fun place to be'.

- Attendance has risen and is at least average. Pupils enjoy school and arrive promptly each day, many attending the popular breakfast club. Inspectors observed over 60 pupils from the early years to Year 6 eagerly engaging with adults, and this made for good preparation for the working day ahead.
- Discussions with pupils and the school's behaviour records show that poor behaviour is rare. Pupils who sometimes have difficulty controlling their behaviour are supported in a nurturing and caring way.
- Behaviour is good in assembly and around the school. Pupils behave responsibly in the hall at lunchtime and play safely and well together at break times.
- Pupils take pride in their work and behave well in lessons so that learning typically proceeds smoothly and without interruption. Only occasionally does their attention wander, when tasks are not engaging enough.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say that they feel very safe in school, and are well cared for with 'teachers looking out' for them. They know how to keep themselves safe in different situations, including on roads, when cycling and when using the internet.
- Pupils have a good knowledge of the different forms of bullying, including what to do if they encounter racist or discriminatory incidents. Bullying is rare and is dealt with effectively by the school.
- Most parents who responded to the Parent View survey think that their children are happy, safe and well looked after at the school. Direct observations and discussions during the inspection support this view.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching has improved since the previous inspection. The work in pupils' books, the school's records and discussions with pupils show that teaching has an increasingly positive impact on pupils' progress and helps them achieve well.
- Teachers adhere to the 'Friars' Formula of non-negotiables', which has ensured that they ask questions skilfully to judge how much pupils know, understand and can do. As a result, they adjust their teaching effectively to tackle any misconceptions pupils may have.
- Teaching is typified by strong and caring relationships between all staff and pupils. This creates a learning climate where pupils are respectful to others. They are keen to share their ideas and apply themselves willingly in lessons.
- Teachers take pride in providing attractive, bright and stimulating classrooms for their pupils. Displays of pupils' work are a common feature on show in the corridors. Pupils were keen to tell inspectors about their work, which is moved each term from within their classroom to the display boards outside for wider appreciation.
- Support staff are largely used well across the school. Where they are most effective, they work closely with the class teacher and make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning.
- Although teachers' expectations of what can be achieved by pupils are generally high, tasks for the most-able pupils are sometimes too easy. Teaching does not always enable pupils to apply and fully extend their knowledge and skills.
- Teachers mark pupils' work well and regularly. However, they do not always check to make sure pupils act upon the good guidance in order to make prompt improvements to their work.

The achievement of pupils is good

- A significant proportion of children start at the school with skills and knowledge below the levels typical for their age. Improved progress ensures that a majority now enter Year 1 having caught up with other children of their age.
- The proportion of Year 1 pupils meeting the expected standard in their knowledge of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) is increasing. In 2014, it was broadly average.
- In Year 2 pupils' attainment in 2014 in reading, writing and mathematics had improved on 2013 and was broadly average in these subjects. School data show that the progress pupils made in 2014 in all three areas improved significantly. They achieved well.
- In Year 6, standards in 2014 was broadly average overall, although standards in mathematics and writing were lower than in reading. Many pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, exceeded the progress expected nationally for their age in reading.
- The work seen and school data show that the most able pupils sometimes do not progress as rapidly as they could. The proportion of pupils who achieved the higher Level 3 in Year 2 in reading and mathematics, and the proportion of Year 6 pupils who achieved the higher Level 5 in mathematics and writing, were below average in 2014. This is because their progress is not always checked regularly enough and they are not always given work that is challenging. The school has recognised that improving the achievement of the most able pupils remains a priority.
- The disadvantaged pupils supported by additional funding make good progress. Eligible pupils in Year 6 in 2014 closed the gap from 2013 in all key subjects. Their attainment was slightly ahead of other pupils in the school in reading and mathematics, though a term and a half behind in writing. Compared to all pupils nationally, their attainment was one or two terms behind in mathematics, reading and writing. Overall, they made similar progress to others in the school and nationally.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress throughout the school. The school's data show that many pupils are now making accelerated progress.

The early years provision is good

- The leadership of the early years is good. Leaders have acted quickly to make considerable improvements to the learning environment so that children are well prepared for Year 1. In 2014, the proportion achieving a good level of development rose to average. All made good progress. This includes vulnerable pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs and those supported by the pupil premium.
- The quality of teaching is good. Staff have high expectations of what the children can achieve and make sure that learning is purposeful and well focused. Teachers provide opportunities for children to play and explore in an environment that is rich in language and number. A wonderful example was seen during the inspection when children were in the 'Mud Kitchen'. Unprompted, one child asked, 'I want to see if the mud will fall through the holes in the colander.'
- Teachers regularly ask probing questions to assess children's progress, and record it accurately. Children are well motivated, show good attitudes to learning, and are developing the ability to make their own choices. The early years provision makes a strong contribution to children's physical and emotional health, safety and well-being, as well as to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- To aid children's transition into Nursery, strong links are made with parents, other early years providers and the nearby children's centre. Teachers make good use of information gathered in children's 'This is Me' bags to inform their planning and as part of each child's 'learning journey'.
- Behaviour is good. Children are settled and know the well-established daily routines securely. Children are happy and respond well to all adults. They show respect towards each other as they play together with the different toys and many resources.

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

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| Unique reference number | 134704 |
| Local authority | Southend-on-Sea |
| Inspection number | 442065 |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 3–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 423 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Alan Murkin |
| Headteacher | Cheryl Woolf (Executive Headteacher) |
| Date of previous school inspection | 23 January 2013 |
| Telephone number | 01702 294837 |
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