

William Ransom Primary School

Stuart Drive, Hitchin, SG4 9QB

Inspection dates

4–5 December 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	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.

- Leadership, including governance, is outstanding at all levels. When pupils leave the school, all aspects of their learning and well-being have been strongly developed. They are very well prepared for the next stage in their education
- Pupils achieve standards in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 that are consistently and considerably above the national averages in English and mathematics.
- Many pupils make more than the progress expected of them in mathematics. Although pupils' progress in writing in 2014 was not as rapid as it was in mathematics, reading, grammar, punctuation and spelling, this is already being addressed by leaders.
- The headteacher provides outstanding leadership. With the highly effective deputy headteacher, she has established a strong sense of teamwork amongst all the staff and has sustained the high quality of teaching seen in the last inspection. Subject leaders make a valuable contribution to raising standards in the areas they lead.
- Teaching is consistently good, with much that is outstanding. Teachers form very positive relationships with pupils. This ensures they concentrate well in lessons and learn enthusiastically.
- Teachers' excellent subject knowledge and very good understanding of what pupils can do enables them to plan very precisely for different groups. As a result, pupils make rapid progress in all year groups.
- Teachers and teaching assistants have very high expectations of how quickly pupils can learn and how highly they can achieve.
- Pupils love coming to school and have outstanding attitudes to learning. Pupils feel very safe and their behaviour in lessons and around the school is impeccable. Their attendance is above average.
- All aspects of pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development are catered for extremely well. As a result pupils are mature and confident when they leave school.
- The school's curriculum is vibrant and exciting. There is a strong focus on creative subjects, as well as literacy and numeracy. Although the curriculum already provides regular opportunities for pupils to practise and improve their writing skills in other subjects, there is scope for these to be used even more ambitiously.
- Children in the early years quickly develop an enjoyment of school life and make rapid progress in all areas of learning. This is because staff are well-trained and skilled in providing activities that enable childrens' learning to flourish.
- Governors have an excellent understanding of the school. This enables them to challenge the school effectively and make significant contributions to the school's plans for the future.
- Parents are very pleased with the school. A very large majority would recommend the school to others. Almost all say their children are happy, kept safe and are well-behaved.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 14 lessons, of which two were joint observations with the headteacher and one was observed jointly with the deputy headteacher.
- The inspectors talked with two groups of pupils, as well as individual pupils during lessons and at playtimes, to find out their views about the school. The team undertook a scrutiny of pupils' English and mathematics books to establish the quality of pupils' work. They heard two groups of pupils read.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, leaders, staff and several governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body. A further discussion was held by telephone with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents, including the school's plans for improvement, records of lesson observations, information on pupils' progress and the quality of writing in pupils' books. They also scrutinised records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding. Inspectors looked at pupils' work on display throughout the school.
- Inspectors took account of the 105 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire. They checked information on the school's website, and took into consideration the 30 questionnaires completed by staff.

Inspection team

Susan Thomas-Pounce, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Michelle Beszelzen	Additional Inspector
William Alexander	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups or who speak English as an additional language is average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is about 6%, which is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is around 2%, which is significantly below average. The pupil premium provides additional funding 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 pupils' attainment and progress.
- In September 2014, two newly qualified teachers started at the school.
- Early Years provision in the Reception class is full time.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make even better use of the opportunities provided in other subjects for pupils to write creatively and at length, and develop pupils' subject specific language, so that they achieve their full potential in writing by the end of Year 6.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher and the deputy headteacher work seamlessly together to ensure that every pupil and the children in the early years achieves the very best they can. Governors and school leaders constantly strive to improve all aspects of the school for the pupils' benefit. Every pupil is valued as an individual, cared for and supported to achieve the very highest of academic standards. There is a strong focus on promoting pupils' excellent behaviour to support their learning.
- All teachers and leaders use information about pupils' progress and attainment very well to analyse how well individual pupils and groups of pupils are achieving. School leaders use an extensive programme of monitoring activities to check the quality of teaching. This enables leaders to focus on the right areas for development and so secure further improvement.
- Leaders make sure that teachers' pay and performance are closely linked to their effectiveness in raising pupils' attainment. Teachers new to the profession receive excellent help and support. This helps to ensure that the standards of teaching and the rate of pupils' progress remain very high.
- Leaders have ensured that pupils learn successfully across an exciting range of subjects and enjoy many experiences beyond the classroom. Well-planned additional activities and educational visits, including visiting various places of worship, and a wide range of competitive sporting opportunities are provided. Pupils also receive specialist teaching in music, go to London theatres and take part in a six-day residential trip when they reach Year 6. This wide range of social and cultural events contributes to pupils' strong understanding of what it means to live in modern Britain and helps them to become very well-prepared for the next stage of their education. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is exceptionally well developed.
- Staff treat pupils equally and do not tolerate discrimination. This is evident in all classes, where the contributions of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are valued, and teachers ensure they are helped to progress as fast as all other pupils. Funding that the school receives for disadvantaged pupils is used very effectively to meet identified needs.
- The school uses the government's additional primary sports funding effectively. A professional sports coach has worked with all classes to develop teachers' skills in delivering high-quality PE lessons. Pupils' participation in a wide range of competitive tournaments has increased and these opportunities have a very strong impact on pupils' health and well-being.
- Relationships between leaders, governors, staff, pupils and parents are very positive. By setting high expectations and rewarding pupils who attend regularly, they have secured above average attendance levels.
- The school has developed its preferred approach to assessment, following the removal of National Curriculum levels, in conjunction with the local authority, which provides appropriate levels of support for this outstanding school.
- Leaders ensure all staff rigorously implement the school's well-established procedures to safeguard pupils.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are fully committed to the continual development of the school and are highly effective. They bring a wide range of skills to support leaders from within the business sector, education and other fields. Governors keep their skills up-to-date through regular training.
 - All governors are involved in the development of the school's vision and policy. Governors understand how well the performance of pupils at the school compares with pupils in other schools nationally and ensure leaders continue to work successfully to sustain this positive situation.
 - Governors visit the school frequently and challenge and question school leaders to satisfy themselves that the school is performing as well as it possibly can. They receive detailed information regarding the

quality of teaching and know how this relates to teachers' pay.

- Governors ensure that the school's financial resources are well-managed, and they check on the impact of additional funding, such as sports funding and the pupil premium. They have successfully overseen the introduction of the new National Curriculum, and checked that the new arrangements for assessment are being put in place.
- Governors make an excellent contribution to ensuring pupils are safe and that the school is meeting statutory requirements for safeguarding and for the recruitment of staff.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of children in the early years and of pupils throughout the school is outstanding. School records and parents' very positive responses to the on-line questionnaire confirm the inspection evidence that pupils' outstanding behaviour continues to be strength of the school. There is an atmosphere of mutual trust that is evident in all aspects of pupils' behaviour.
- Pupils have outstanding attitudes to learning and work very hard. They show perseverance when faced with difficult tasks and demonstrate mature responses to other pupils' comments and answers. No time is wasted in lessons because pupils follow instructions quickly and can be trusted to work independently or in small groups as directed.
- Pupils are extremely proud of their school and want to take an active part in its work. They are very keen to serve on the school council and show their sense of responsibility by the caring ways they look out for each other. Older pupils willingly help and support younger members of their school and provide excellent role models. For example, they take care of younger pupils who may be unhappy in the playground, and are involved in serving water at lunch-time and checking on the younger pupils to encourage them to eat healthily.
- Attendance has been above average for many years, reflecting the enjoyment that pupils feel when coming to school.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Leaders take all aspects of safety extremely seriously. They make sure that all adults are trained in recognising the signs of possible child abuse and know what to do if they have concerns.
- Pupils have developed a very good understanding of how to keep safe and are taught how to recognise and respond to all types of bullying. They know that any prejudice-based language will not be tolerated and they understand about the different forms of bullying, including cyber bullying, and know what to do should it happen. Pupils are acutely aware of how to keep themselves safe when using the internet and in other situations, such as road safety.
- Bullying in the school is very rare and dealt with highly effectively. Pupils said there is always someone they can ask for help and advice if they need to. The school is very successful in fostering good relations between pupils and in preventing any hint of discrimination.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Teaching including that for children in the early years, is outstanding. Teachers have very high expectations of the academic standards pupils should achieve. This ensures that pupils' achievement in literacy, reading and mathematics is rapid and sustained. Because teaching engages them, pupils listen and respond well in lessons. They complete work to a high standard of neatness and accuracy.
- Teachers know pupils extremely well and have excellent relationships with them. Together with their excellent subject knowledge, this enables them to plan activities that interest and meet the needs of different groups of pupils very well. In a Year 5 and Year 6 history lesson, pupils were using archived

material from different sources to show how the Victorians spent their leisure time. They were asked to use photographs, advertisements and pictures to consider how railways changed people's lives, and to compare leisure activities then and now. The teacher valued the pupils' ideas and, through searching questions, helped them to understand what it was like for children to live in Victorian Britain.

- Pupils work well together, either as a whole class or when required to learn on their own or in small groups. Additional adults provide excellent support, particularly for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. This enables them to take an active part in all lessons and learn very well.
- Teachers' marking is detailed and pupils respond quickly to the advice they receive to improve the quality of their work still further. The checks teachers make on pupils' work help them to decide what is to be covered in subsequent lessons. This ensures pupils of all abilities, including the most able, are provided with work that is suitably demanding. All classes have homework set at the appropriate level and pupils say homework is interesting and relevant.
- The teaching of phonics is highly effective. Pupils quickly acquire skills which enable them to become confident readers and develop pleasure in reading a wide range of books. This enjoyment of reading continues throughout the school.
- The teaching of mathematics is strong. Teachers use their excellent subject knowledge to provide challenging work for all to enjoy. There are many opportunities for pupils to use their mathematical knowledge and skills in a range of challenging problem-solving activities.
- Although the teaching of writing is effective, and opportunities for pupils to extend their literacy skills in other subject areas are in place, the school recognises that it needs to maximise its use of these opportunities to encourage pupils to write creatively and at length, and to use subject specific language more frequently.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Pupils achieve outstandingly well during their time at this school. Most children start at the school with skills, knowledge and understanding that are typical for their age. They very quickly settle into school life and reach very high levels of attainment in the early years and at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2. These high levels of attainment have been sustained since the previous inspection.
- School data, work seen in pupils' books and lessons visited, all demonstrate that pupils make consistently outstanding progress in every class. By the time they leave the school, pupils are extremely well-prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Throughout the school, the most-able pupils are supported and challenged exceptionally well. They, too, are helped to make outstanding progress during their time at school. As a result, the proportion of Year 6 pupils gaining Level 5 in mathematics, reading, grammar, punctuation and spelling in 2014 was significantly above average; the proportion gaining the very high Level 6 was also above average in mathematics and English.
- The progress made by disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is excellent. Staff thoroughly understand the individual needs of those pupils who need more help. They provide effectively tailored programmes of support, which are monitored closely by the headteacher, senior staff and governors to ensure that pupils' needs are met.
- The progress made by the pupils from minority ethnic groups, or who speak English as an additional language, is outstanding. There are no significant differences between the achievement of pupils with an ethnic minority background and that of other groups.
- There are a very few pupils in the school who are eligible for the pupil premium. The number of such

pupils leaving school in Year 6 in 2014 was too low for their attainment to be reported without identifying individuals. However, the school uses the additional government funding most effectively to support disadvantaged pupils in lower age-groups. Consequently, their progress in reading, writing and mathematics matches, and sometimes exceeds, that of other pupils in the school.

- Pupils are encouraged to love reading from the start of school. They quickly develop skills from the Reception Year upwards and this is reflected in higher than national results in both the phonics screening check and other tests. By the time they leave the school, pupils' reading skills are well above those found nationally, enabling pupils to learn extremely well across the range of subjects. Pupils enjoy reading for pleasure in all classes. The school ensures that a wide variety of texts are available to meet the range of their interests.
- Pupils have an excellent ability to calculate in their heads and so can complete written calculations very quickly and accurately. The most-able pupils are confident in doing calculations involving fractions. Lower-ability pupils know their multiplication tables and can add a series of three numbers accurately in their heads. Pupils confidently apply their calculation skills in problems.
- Although there was a dip in attainment in writing in 2014, most pupils still made at least expected progress. A scrutiny of current pupils' work shows that this drop has already been reversed, with most pupils on track to regain the high standards in writing that the school has historically seen. Pupils write fluently and accurately and in ways that fully reflect their 'audience'. The pupils' very neat handwriting and carefully presented work in their books, and in displays across the school, similarly reflect their strong commitment to high standards.

The early years provision

is outstanding

- When children start school they generally arrive with skills that are typical for their age. As a result of outstanding teaching, children settle quickly and soon make rapid progress in developing the skills which will serve them well as they move through school. The proportion of children that reach a good level of development by the time they leave Reception is well above the national average. Children are exceptionally well-prepared to move into Year 1.
- As in the rest of the school, adults know the interests and abilities of all the children very well. They plan activities both inside and outside the classroom that are consistently exciting and motivating and allow children to explore ideas and activities for themselves so that their understanding quickly grows.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work exceptionally well together to support children's development. Checks on progress are thorough and regular and ensure that each child enjoys the well-planned and challenging activities they are consistently provided with. Adults ask challenging questions which make children think and which give them every opportunity to speak clearly and communicate their ideas.
- Children grow in confidence and make rapid progress in understanding how to learn and play happily together. They learn to concentrate intently for long periods, really enjoy their learning and behave exceptionally well.
- Leaders and staff have established strong relationships with parents, which help children to feel safe and secure at school. Regular meetings and informal conversations at the start and end of each day also help parents to be fully involved in their child's development.
- Staff establish and maintain consistent routines and procedures to keep pupils safe. They work diligently to sustain warm working relationships with the children at all times. Staff manage childrens' behaviour and promote their social skills extremely well. All statutory welfare requirements are met.

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	117314
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	449393

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	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	275
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ian Hankin
Headteacher	Mary Driver
Date of previous school inspection	3 June 2009
Telephone number	01462 624777
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Email address	head@wransom.herts.sch.uk

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