

Alton Infant School

Normandy Street, Alton, GU34 1DH

Inspection dates 3–4 February 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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.

- There is a very strong commitment among all who work in the school to do their best for pupils. Leaders and governors work well together to improve the quality of education.
- The headteacher is working successfully with staff and parents and carers, and is driving forward improvement well.
- Systems for checking the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement are comprehensive, rigorous and accurate. Improvement planning is very effectively targeted at remaining weaknesses. The school is well placed to improve further.
- Committed and effective governors hold leaders to account well through their good knowledge about teaching quality and pupils' progress.
- Pupils achieve well. In all year groups their progress is good. Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is consistently above average by the time pupils leave.
- The achievement of disadvantaged pupils is excellent. They reach the levels expected for their age.
- Teaching is consistently good. The excellent relationships between pupils and adults help create an exceptionally positive learning environment.
- Reception children are well taught and make good progress. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development is above average. Their personal development is excellent.
- The rich and diverse range of subjects and activities, together with the excellent partnerships with parents, carers and other schools and organisations, promotes pupils' learning and personal development especially well.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils develop an excellent awareness of and commitment to British values, such as democracy and tolerance.
- Behaviour in lessons and around the school is excellent. Pupils work and play very happily together and greatly enjoy school.
- Pupils and their parents and carers know that all are very safe and secure in school. Pupils' own awareness of how to keep safe is excellent.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Teaching is not yet outstanding. There are inconsistencies in the way that resources are used to support learning, the checking of pupils' progress during lessons and the level of challenge set for the most able pupils.
- Not all leaders have enough opportunities to check and support teaching and learning during lessons, including in coaching their colleagues in developing excellent practice.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed pupils' learning in 12 lessons or parts of lessons, of which two were joint observations with the headteacher. In addition, the inspection team made a number of other short visits to group or individual activities to help pupils who have fallen behind to catch up. They also heard a sample of pupils read, scrutinised a sample of pupils' written work and visited some extra-curricular activities and the breakfast club.
- Meetings were held with pupils, members of the governing body and staff, including senior and middle managers. A conversation was held with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 48 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. They spoke to a small number of parents and carers bringing their children to school.
- Responses from 17 staff questionnaires were analysed.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised a number of documents, including records on current pupils' progress, behaviour and attendance. They looked at documents related to planning and monitoring as well as safeguarding.

Inspection team

Diane Wilkinson, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Linda Rowley

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized infant school.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is slightly above average.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. Only a few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding is below average. This additional funding is to provide extra support for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and for children who are looked after.
- There have been a number of staff changes since the previous inspection. The current headteacher took up her post in April 2014 and the deputy headteacher joined the school in November 2014.
- Leaders work closely with other schools and providers for children in the area in monitoring and improving their work, including the support for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the overall quality of teaching to outstanding by ensuring that:
 - the most able pupils always work on tasks that will help them to do their very best, particularly in writing and mathematics
 - staff intervene swiftly during lessons to correct errors and move on those pupils who are learning quickly
 - consistently good use is made of resources available to support learning
 - middle leaders, including subject leaders, have more opportunities to monitor and support teaching and learning during lessons
 - teachers have greater opportunities to develop outstanding practice through coaching and support from excellent practitioners.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Leaders and governors continually look for ways to improve in order to support their goal of achieving high-quality education for all. Teamwork among staff and with governors is very good.
- Astute appointments have seen a very smooth changeover to new senior leaders, with staff quickly recognising that they share the same goal and strongly committing to supporting these leaders.
- Checking of all areas of the school's work is regular and effective. Devolved responsibility to middle leaders works well. Subject leaders and their paired governors are rightly proud of their contribution to school development, for example in the improved teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) and physical education. Staff and governors are well aware of where improvement is still needed and plans are already in place to address aspects identified during this inspection.
- Systems for reviewing and supporting teaching quality are good. Staff at all levels are keen to improve their practice. They are strongly committed to achieving performance targets, eagerly taking part in training to help do so. Leaders and governors undertake a wide range of activities to check and help improve teaching quality, but few subject leaders have the opportunity to monitor teaching during lessons.
- Coaching and support to help improve teaching in some subjects have been very effective, for example in physical education and to improve teaching assistants' skills in phonics. In other subjects, opportunities for such coaching are limited, which restricts some teachers' understanding of how to develop excellent practice.
- The programmes of work set for pupils in reading, writing and mathematics meet their needs well. The programme to support their personal, social, health and emotional development is outstanding. Pupils' very positive attitudes to learning are considerably enhanced by the rich and broad range of activities on offer that inspire great enjoyment of school.
- The allocation of additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils has an exceptionally positive impact on their achievement. Pupils benefit greatly from the expert support they receive from specialist teachers and teaching assistants to encourage their positive attitudes to school.
- The primary sports grant is used to good effect to improve teachers' skills, widen the range of sports on offer and provide extra activities for keeping fit. Teaching has improved, pupils' achievement in physical education has risen and pupils participate more in fitness activities as a result.
- Promoting equality of opportunity, fostering good relationships and discouraging discrimination are a strong priority for staff and governors. To achieve this they promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceptionally well. Their success is evident in pupils' excellent behaviour and relationships and outstanding awareness of the rights of others, whatever their background, culture or religious beliefs.
- Through their work to become a Rights Respecting School, staff have long promoted British values such as tolerance and respect. Pupils make an outstanding contribution to some important decisions for the school, for example in formulating the 'Rules for Wet Playtimes'. Hence their awareness of the importance of democracy and capacity to resist extremist behaviour are very good. In this aspect they are exceptionally well prepared for life in a democratic and diverse British society.
- Partnerships with other schools and agencies are excellent and benefit pupils considerably; for example in the support provided for pupils with behavioural, social and emotional needs.
- The local authority rightly deems this school to require little support. Leaders and governors, however, wisely use effective advice and training from local authority staff to support their improvement priorities.
- Safeguarding policies and procedures fully meet requirements. Staff are well trained, including in important areas such as child protection.
- The school has an extremely good partnership with parents and carers who are very well informed about the school's work and their children's progress. Parents and carers are very appreciative of and committed to the school, including through overseeing their children's homework.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Leaders benefit from the close and productive working relationship with governors. Governors are well informed, especially about teaching quality and pupils' achievement, including through their own observations. They have a good understanding of assessment data and effectively compare the school's performance with that of others locally and nationally. Governors hold leaders to account well for the quality of education, questioning them closely where there may be doubts about performance. Additionally, governors work effectively with staff to help address the weaker aspects, although, until recently, governors were less involved in checking the progress of important improvement priorities. There is close monitoring of aspects such as the safeguarding of pupils, including through regular

checks and building maintenance. Governors are very focused on achieving value for money. Their monitoring of the additional funding to support vulnerable pupils and the sports funding is very regular and robust. Governors' own knowledge of teaching quality helps them ensure formal performance management procedures are effectively carried out and that staff are only rewarded for good performance.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. They have excellent attitudes to learning.
- In lessons, at playtimes and when moving around school pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Lessons are very rarely disrupted by poor behaviour.
- Excellent support for the very small number of pupils who find good behaviour difficult, including that provided by external agencies, ensures that their behaviour improves very well over time and that they benefit from all the school has to offer. There have been no exclusions or racist incidents for a number of years.
- Excellent relationships with staff and each other, together with the very rich and diverse curriculum, ensure pupils greatly enjoy school and strive to do their best for teachers. Attendance is above average.
- Pupils take great pride in their school and help look after the environment especially well. Their commitment to the outdoor area is evident in the very well-tended class garden plots.
- Fostered by the excellent 'Family Group' activities where pupils from different year groups meet regularly, pupils greatly respect one another and are very polite and helpful. During the inspection they continually invited inspectors to come and look at their work or asked if they wanted help.
- In lessons, pupils work very well together in pairs or groups and show an excellent capacity to stay on task when working without direct adult involvement. Strengths such as these prepare pupils exceptionally well for their future education.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding.
- High priority is given to aspects such as site security and ensuring that pupils are very well cared for during trips out of school.
- Pupils are exceptionally well cared for in the excellent breakfast club and after-school activities. For example, adults make sure pupils are very careful to use the gardening club's tools safely.
- The programme of activities to ensure that pupils learn how to avoid hazards and keep themselves safe is outstanding; pupils have a very good understanding of road safety. They are well aware of the importance of keeping safe when using the internet, confidently telling inspectors, 'You need an adult's permission!'
- The school's status as a Rights Respecting School helps ensure that pupils have an outstanding awareness of their responsibility towards others. Pupils from different backgrounds get on exceptionally well together. Bullying is extremely rare. Pupils are very confident that adults will always respond to their concerns. Parents and carers equally have total confidence that staff keep their children safe.

The quality of teaching is good

- Throughout the school, teaching is at least good. A strong feature is the excellent learning ethos that staff create so that in all lessons, pupils strive to do their best.
- The warm and very positive relationships between staff and pupils help ensure that behaviour management are excellent.
- Staff have a good understanding of the levels at which different pupils are working due to very regular assessment of pupils' progress. On most occasions, they use this information wisely to plan lesson activities that encourage pupils to do well. On a few occasions however, tasks set for the most able pupils in writing and mathematics do not extend their learning well.
- Adults are good at explaining things clearly and demonstrating what is expected of pupils. This helps pupils to learn new skills quickly. This approach is especially good in phonics teaching where the rate of learning is accelerating well as a result. Overall, reading, literacy and mathematics are taught well across the school.
- On some occasions, very effective use of resources, such as the interactive whiteboards, helps ensure

pupils make outstanding gains in their learning. For example, during the inspection excellent learning was observed when Year 1 pupils used pictorial maps to plan a route around Alton. However, this very good use of resources is not consistent across the school.

- When introducing new concepts that pupils find difficult to understand, staff are very good at questioning pupils or discussing things with them to enhance their understanding. Teaching assistants also are good at doing this and support groups well, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. When supporting the latter, however, teachers do not always ensure that teaching assistants have the best resources to support the pupils' needs.
- The quality of marking is consistently good and helps pupils understand how well they are doing and what they need to improve. Pupils' personal improvement targets are used effectively to encourage their progress. Those used to encourage good handwriting and spelling are excellent.
- When pupils work on their own activities, most staff keep a continuous check on how well pupils are doing, but on a few occasions they miss opportunities to correct errors or misconceptions, or to move pupils on to a new level when they are learning quickly.
- Staff involvement in the very regular checking of pupils' progress helps ensure that there is a concerted approach to improving achievement. Staff know individual pupils' needs and strengths well and, where necessary, special programmes to help pupils catch up are speedily put in place.
- Disadvantaged pupils benefit from expert teaching. The support for these pupils both in lessons and in the activities to help them catch up is excellent.
- Well-thought-out homework tasks support learning well. Parents and carers are very good at ensuring their children complete the tasks.
- Coaching and support for teachers from a physical education specialist provided through the sports grant have improved the quality of teaching in this subject well. Less emphasis is given to coaching in other subjects, including reading, writing and mathematics, in order to raise the quality of teaching further.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Across all year groups, pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics, and attainment is consistently above average by the end of Year 2.
- Children enter Reception with skills at levels slightly below those typically seen at this age. They achieve well in all areas of learning and exceptionally well in their personal, social and emotional development. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the end of the year is above average in all areas.
- This good start is built on well in other year groups. Results in the national phonics check for Year 1 pupils are above average and rising. The new programme in place has seen rapid improvement in pupils' phonics skills this year.
- Nearly all pupils reach at least the levels expected for their age in reading by the time they leave and increasingly exceed them. Progress is accelerating well in this subject, with more than half of the pupils currently in Years 1 and 2 exceeding the attainment levels for their age.
- The school is equally good at ensuring that in writing, most pupils reach the levels expected by the end of Year 2. Pupils' knowledge of grammar and punctuation is good and the vocabulary they use is very effective. High-quality writing was seen during the inspection in Year 2 pupils' 'Winter' poetry. Pupils' spelling accuracy has increased well over the past year due to their good understanding of letter patterns in words.
- Virtually all pupils reach the levels expected for their age in mathematics due to the effective teaching of calculation and their ability to use this when working with measures or data and in solving problems. Their knowledge of place value is very good. By Year 2, pupils work confidently with hundreds, tens and units.
- The most able pupils achieve well, with the proportion of pupils exceeding the levels expected for their age increasing in all subjects. However, it is not rising quite as well in writing and mathematics as in reading as, on a few occasions, the activities set for these pupils do not help them to do their very best.
- The achievement of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is good and virtually all reach the levels expected for their age by the end of Year 2.
- The achievement of vulnerable pupils is very much better than in most schools. In last year's national tests in reading, writing and mathematics, their attainment was above that of other pupils nationally and at a similar level to that of other pupils in the school.
- Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve well and most attain above average standards. Pupils who speak English as an additional language achieve equally well.

The early years provision is good

- Excellent liaison with local playgroups and arrangements for starting school help children to settle in quickly. From the start, staff very wisely emphasise the learning of important skills such as communication, concentration and perseverance.
- Children make at least good progress in all areas of learning and rapid progress in their personal, social and emotional development. Their behaviour is exemplary. Children get on really well together and demonstrate an excellent capacity for sustaining interest and working on their own, in pairs or in groups.
- Children have a real thirst for learning, eagerly participating in the wide range of activities, including those to promote their communication and language, literacy and mathematics. In these areas they make good progress; the large majority reaching a good level of development by the time they enter Year 1. They are well prepared for their future education.
- Children gain a very secure understanding of phonics so, by the end of the year, the majority can read simple books and understand the story. They develop good handwriting and spelling skills, the large majority writing accurately in sentences by the end of the year. Children's oral language is very good.
- Mathematically, most children work accurately with numbers up to 20, undertaking simple addition and subtraction. Their knowledge of different shapes and measures is good.
- Children are well taught. Lessons activities are effectively planned to move children on well from the stages at which they are working. Good teamwork between staff ensures a consistent approach to teaching which benefits children well.
- The learning environment is well organised to support progress across all areas of learning. In the classrooms, resources are very well set out to help children learn, although this is not always the case in the outdoor area.
- Children's safety and well-being are given high priority, including making sure they use tools and equipment safely; children develop very good safety awareness. Supervision both indoors and out is excellent. Excellent liaison with parents and carers in supporting their children's learning benefits children especially well.
- Leadership and management are good because very effective teamwork and a commitment to helping children achieve well mean staff are constantly looking for ways to improve. Staff keep a close check on the impact of teaching on children's achievement, with new assessment systems enhancing this area of their work.

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	115850
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	448778

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	5–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	179
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Allan Coombs
Headteacher	Jayne Broach
Date of previous school inspection	16–17 September 2009
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