

London Colney Primary School

Alexander Road, London Colney, St Albans, AL2 1JG

Inspection dates 10–11 February 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
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

- Leaders and managers have not maintained the good achievement of pupils and the good teaching identified in the last inspection report.
- Pupils' attainment and progress in Years 3 to 6 declined in recent years.
- By the end of Year 6 in 2014, attainment was well below average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Year 6 pupils had not made enough progress from their starting points in Year 2, especially in reading and mathematics.
- While, pupils' progress is improving it is not yet consistently good in all classes.
- Teaching has not been strong enough in Years 3 to 6 or in the early years over time, to promote consistently good progress for pupils.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve have not been high enough.
- The work set for pupils is not always challenging and demanding enough.
- In some lessons, time is not used effectively to make the most of pupils' learning.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils make good progress in Years 1 and 2.
- Pupils have good attitudes to learning and are well behaved in lessons and around the school.
- The school successfully promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Procedures to ensure that pupils are safe are effective. Pupils feel safe and well looked after by staff.
- Strong partnerships have been established with parents.
- Improved governance is providing challenge and support.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classes. Some lessons were seen jointly with the headteacher or the deputy headteacher.
- Pupils' work was scrutinised and the information about their attainment and progress was analysed.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, other staff, a representative from the local authority, governors and pupils.
- The inspectors took account of 13 responses to the Ofsted online survey, Parent View, and the school's own parental survey.
- The inspectors examined a range of documents, including policies, safeguarding procedures and the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning.

Inspection team

Derek Watts, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jane Crow

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- London Colney is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- Pupils are from a range of ethnic heritages. Just over a third of the pupils are from a Bangladeshi background and about a third are White British.
- About half of the pupils speak English as an additional language and this is well above average. Very few pupils are at an early stage of learning English.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium is above average. The pupil premium is additional funding for looked-after children and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- All children in Reception attend full time.
- The school did not meet the current government floor standards in 2014, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The headteacher is also the executive headteacher of the Nursery and a Children's Centre on the same site. These two organisations are merging with the primary school in April 2015 but were not part of this inspection.
- There has been a high turnover of teachers since the previous inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching even more so that most pupils make good or better progress over time and raise pupils' attainment by the end of Year 6 by:
 - making sure that in all classes teachers expect pupils to do their very best
 - ensuring that in all classes, work set is at the right level of challenge for pupils, especially the most able
 - making the best use of time in lessons so that pupils learn at a quicker rate.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - taking decisive and effective action to improve any teaching that is not good.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leaders and managers have not maintained pupils' good achievement in Years 3 to 6 or ensured that teaching is consistently good since the previous inspection. Children's progress and the provision in early years are not as good as at the time of the last inspection.
- Pupils' attainment and progress in Years 3 to 6 declined during the past two years. By summer 2014, attainment by the end of Year 6 was well below average and pupils did not make enough progress. This particular year group made good progress in Years 6 but weaknesses in teaching in previous years contributed to them not achieving as well as they should.
- The headteacher and other key leaders have a clear overview of the school's performance and are taking positive steps to improve teaching and to raise pupils' achievement. Staff are working well together to bring about needed improvements. Subject leaders are fully engaged in checking pupils' progress and improving their areas of responsibility.
- The leadership of teaching has not been effective enough over time in ensuring that it is of good quality across the school. Teacher changes have contributed to inconsistencies in teaching in Years 3 to 6. Teaching has been stronger in Years 1 and 2. Teaching is improving with a more settled teaching force and because of the actions taken by senior leaders. Pupils are making faster progress but some weaknesses in teaching remain. The recruitment of teachers in the area has proved to be a challenge for leaders and governors.
- Arrangements for the management of teachers' performance are making a stronger contribution to improving teaching. Targets set to improve teachers' skills are suitably linked to pupils' progress and to priorities in the school's improvement plan. Newly qualified teachers receive good guidance and support.
- The headteacher and staff have created a positive and safe environment where pupils can learn and develop. Leaders and staff promote good behaviour and ensure that all pupils are safe. Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements and are effective and robust.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is successful. The school promotes positive qualities such as cooperation, good relationships, respect for others and tolerance. Pupils show an appreciation and a good understanding of different cultures and faiths. At London Colney, pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain.
- The school provides an appropriate range of subjects. Learning opportunities in reading and mathematics are improving. A good range of interesting additional activities such as clubs, educational visits and sport enhance pupils' learning and contribute well to their social development. Leaders and staff are beginning to implement new assessment arrangements to reflect changes nationally.
- All pupils have full and equal access to the activities on offer. The school promotes equality of opportunity, fosters good relationships and tackles all forms of discrimination.
- The primary physical education and sport premium is used well to promote pupils' physical development and to extend their sporting opportunities. Outside coaches promote physical activities at lunch time in areas such as dance and football. The grant has been used to improve outdoor equipment and the early years and this has had a positive impact on children's physical development. Pupils participate well in competitive matches against other schools including football and cricket.
- The pupil premium is used appropriately to provide eligible pupils with extra help, particularly in literacy and numeracy. While the progress of these pupils is steadily improving, it is not yet consistently good.
- Parents hold positive views about the school. Leaders and staff provide considerable guidance to families to help them support their children's learning and personal development.

- The local authority provides good advice and support, mainly through the Hertfordshire Improvement Partner programme. Local authority advisers provide good training and support to increase teachers' skills in aspects of English and mathematics.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance was not effective enough in challenging the school's decline in Years 3 to 6. However, governance has improved recently.
 - The current governing body has high aspirations and high expectations for the school.
 - Governors have a realistic overview of the school's performance. They understand the data on pupils' performance and are well informed about attainment and progress.
 - The governors have a clear understanding about the quality of teaching, its impact on pupils' progress and check the action being taken to improve teaching.
 - They understand requirements relating to the management of staff performance and make sure that promotion and salary increases are linked to pupils' progress. They know what is being done to tackle underperformance.
 - They ensure that the school promotes qualities and values that prepare pupils for the future and for life in modern Britain.
 - Governors check the impact of spending of the additional funding on pupils' achievement.
 - They make sure that all safeguarding procedures are robust and meet requirements.
 - The governors' good understanding of the school's performance and data enables them to challenge the leaders and hold the school to account.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils told the inspectors that they enjoyed school and the learning activities offered. They show a keen interest in learning. In lessons, they are attentive, cooperative and eager to participate. Pupils behave well in lessons, in the playground and when they move around the school. When the teaching is less challenging and engaging, pupils' attitudes and behaviour can decline a little.
- At London Colney, pupils are courteous, friendly and helpful to others. Through their studies and visits, they have developed an appreciation and a good understanding of different cultures and faiths. They show consideration and respect for others.
- Pupils willingly take on additional responsibilities. For example, pupils are elected to serve on the school council. Older pupils support the younger ones and engage in numerous roles to help the smooth running of the school.
- Attendance has steadily improved over the past three years because of the actions taken by the school. However, attendance is lower than average.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Leaders and staff take effective and robust measures to ensure that all pupils, particularly the most vulnerable, are well cared for and protected.
- Almost all parents who completed the school's survey and Parent View stated that their child feels safe and is well looked after. Pupils themselves say that they feel safe at school and that they are very well looked after by the staff. They know that there are always trusted adults that they can turn to if they are worried or upset. The findings of the inspection reflect these positive views about safety.
- Discussions with pupils reveal that they have a very good understanding of bullying. They correctly stated that bullying was unpleasant, continuous and done on purpose. Pupils were in agreement that there was

very little bullying in the school and they were equally confident that staff would deal with any bullying. Typical pupils comments were, 'Bullying is very rare' and 'if it does happen, it is quickly sorted out'.

- Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe at home, in school and in the wider community. They explained clearly to inspectors how to keep safe when using the internet.
- All staff have had recent training in child protection and safeguarding. The effective systems for checking and recording safety matters ensure that any concerns are dealt with promptly. All staff are properly checked before being appointed to the school.
- Leaders and staff establish good relationships within the school and ensure that all pupils are cared for. Regular risk assessments make sure that the school is a safe place for pupils to learn and develop.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- The quality of teaching has not been good enough over time in Years 3 to 6 to promote good progress for pupils. Past weaknesses in teaching have hindered pupils' progress, especially in reading and mathematics.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve have not been high enough and, in a few classes, this is still the case. At times, the work set for pupils is not sufficiently challenging and demanding, especially for the most able.
- Time in lessons is not always used to make the most of pupils' learning. On occasions, pupils spend too long consolidating learning that is secure rather than being moved on to work that challenges, engages and enables them to apply and practise skills.
- Teaching is improving because of the action taken by leaders and pupils are making faster progress. However, teaching is not yet consistently good in all classes.
- The teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) has improved and pupils are now making good progress in acquiring early reading skills. Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to apply their reading skills.
- In the teaching of writing, pupils receive effective guidance on how to create accurate and interesting sentences. Good attention is given to developing pupils' grammar, punctuation and spelling. In some classes, teachers' expectations of presentation and the amount that pupils should write are not high enough.
- The teaching of mathematics is improving but is not yet consistently good. Pupils make good progress when teachers' explanations of mathematical operations are clear and engaging. They benefit from skilful questioning that challenges their thinking and checks their understanding. They make good progress when given opportunities to apply and practise their skills to solve demanding problems. Pupils' learning is less effective when explanations and questions do not inspire and work is not sufficiently challenging.
- The marking of pupils' work is a strength. Teachers identify good work and provide helpful comments to guide improvement. Pupils report positively how the marking helps them to improve.
- The teaching of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is improving. Learning support assistants are usually effectively deployed and they make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning, particularly for those who need additional help with language, literacy and numeracy.

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Pupils' attainment and progress in Years 3 to 6 declined during the past two years. By the end of Year 6 in 2014, pupils' attainment was well below average in reading, writing and mathematics. This group of pupils

did not make enough progress from their different starting points because of weaknesses in teaching in the past.

- The headteacher, key leaders and staff are taking positive steps to raise pupils' achievement. Pupils are now making faster progress but it is not consistently good in all classes. However, the underachievement of the past has mainly now been eradicated. Pupils in the current Year 6 are on course to attain higher standards than the previous year.
- In 2014, the Year 6 pupils supported by the pupil premium attained lower standards than the others in reading, writing and mathematics. These pupils were about 12 months behind their classmates in mathematics, about eight months behind in writing and about six months in reading.
- When they are compared to other pupils nationally, disadvantaged pupils at London Colney were about seven terms behind in mathematics, five terms behind in reading and three terms behind in writing. Improved teaching and well-planned support programmes are helping the disadvantaged pupils to make better progress so that gaps in attainment are closing.
- The achievement of the most able is improving. In 2014, a well below average proportion of Year 6 pupils attained the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics. With stronger teaching, more pupils are attaining the higher levels. However, there are occasions when work set is not sufficiently demanding to extend the most able.
- The progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is improving because of better teaching. Pupils are receiving well-targeted and specific support that meets their needs.
- Pupils in Years 1 and 2 make good progress and attainment by the end of Year 2 in 2014 was above average in writing, just above average in reading and average in mathematics.
- Pupils' achievement in reading is improving. The proportion of pupils that reach the required standard in the Year 1 phonics check is steadily improving but has been below average. The current Year 1 pupils are making good progress in phonics and standards in the current Year 1 are predicted to be higher than previous years. Throughout the school, pupils enjoy reading. Older pupils apply their reading skills well to gather useful information or to review a piece of text.
- In writing, pupils write for different purposes. Their grammar, punctuation and spelling are developing well. Pupils in Year 6 made good progress in using formal, persuasive language. In their writing they used terms such as 'in my opinion' and 'most people agree that' to put across a convincing argument.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics is improving. Most pupils show clear knowledge and understanding of how to make calculations and carry out essential mathematical operations. They are increasingly applying their knowledge and skills to solve problems. For example, pupils in Year 2 made good progress in investigating the capacity of different containers. They measured liquids accurately and showed a clear understanding of units and symbols.

The early years provision

requires improvement

- Children join the Reception class with knowledge, understanding and skills below those typical for their age, particularly in mathematics, language and understanding of the world.
- The leadership and management of the early years require improvement. Leaders and managers have not ensured that teaching is consistently good and, therefore, the early years provision is not as effective as it was at the time of the last inspection.
- The early years requires improvement because children's progress has not been consistently good over time. In 2014, a below average proportion of children achieved a good level of development. Children's skills in speaking, reading, writing and number were the weakest areas. The quality of teaching has not

been consistent enough in recent years to ensure that children make good progress.

- Positive action is being taken to strengthen teaching and improve the learning environment. The recently appointed teacher is settling in well. Leaders and staff ensure that the early years is a safe and welcoming place and that children are well behaved. Teaching is improving but there are occasions when activities are not demanding enough to extend the learning of the most able.
- Good emphasis is placed on developing children’s speaking skills. Children receive clear guidance in the teaching of phonics and in early writing skills. Children are making faster progress in mathematics. For example, in a session during the inspection, children made good gains in identifying the values of different coins. They used the coins to purchase priced food items in the shop and solved simple problems involving money.
- Improvements to the outdoor learning equipment are having a positive impact on children’s physical skills. Children are imaginative with colour in painting self-portraits.
- Children are making good progress in their personal and social development. They enjoy their learning and participate well in the different activities provided. Adults have developed strong relationships with the children. Children take turns, share resources and learn and play well together. Their behaviour is good when learning indoors and outside. Adults ensure they are kept safe.

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	117146
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	456043

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	154
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Theresa Clements
Headteacher	Lisa Valla
Date of previous school inspection	13 September 2011
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