

Grange Junior School

Sparhawke, Letchworth Garden City, SG6 4PY

Inspection dates 20–21 May 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement.

- Pupils' attainment has improved over the past two years, but they do not make consistently good progress in all year groups and subjects.
- Teachers do not all have high enough expectations of their pupils and this leads to some unchallenging work and slow progress.
- Teachers do not always set tasks that are demanding enough for all pupils in their class, especially the most able.
- In writing, teachers do not create sufficient opportunities for pupils to extend their writing skills in different subjects and use a rich and varied vocabulary.
- In mathematics, teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to extend their problem-solving skills. As a result, pupils do not achieve as well as they could.
- Teachers' marking of pupils' work is not always effective in giving pupils guidance about how to improve it. Consequently, pupils in some classes do not know how to improve their work.

The school has the following strengths

- Despite the difficulties due to the changes in leadership, governors and leaders have worked together effectively to make teaching and achievement better.
- Governors provide strong leadership. They are efficient and hold the leaders to account very effectively. They have ensured a smooth transition in leadership.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They concentrate well on their work. The school keeps pupils safe and pupils say they feel very safe. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is effectively promoted and pupils value others' beliefs and ways of life. This prepares them well for life in modern Britain.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed pupils' learning in 11 lessons, six of which were seen jointly with the headteacher or the executive headteacher. They made a number of additional short visits to lessons and observed small groups of pupils taught by teachers and teaching assistants. The inspectors also listened to pupils in Years 3 and 6 reading to them.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, members of staff, the Chair of the Governing Body, one other governor and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of 41 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View). They talked with some parents and carers in the morning, as they accompanied their children to school.
- Inspectors considered 23 responses to a staff questionnaire.
- The inspectors looked at pupils' books and at a number of documents, including: the school's own data on pupils' current attainment and progress, the school's evaluation of its performance, school improvement plans, documentation relating to teachers' performance over time and documents and records relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Tusha Chakraborti, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Matthew O'Grady

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized junior school.
- Most pupils come from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported through the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for pupils in the care of the local authority and those known to be eligible for free school meals, is above average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is 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 includes specific learning difficulties base (SpLD) for pupils with special educational needs. It caters for pupils with severe and specific learning difficulties. It is one of ten such bases organised as a part of the local authority's Children, Schools and Families outreach provision. No classes are held on site and teachers go to schools to support identified pupils. The school's leaders manage the finances of this base and carry out the performance management of the base leader. Currently, the base supports two pupils in Grange Junior School.
- The school has recently had significant changes in the leadership team. The previous headteacher left at the end of March 2015 and the deputy headteacher has been appointed as acting headteacher. Some other teachers have also left. The governors have appointed a new headteacher and filled the other vacancies. These new staff will start from September 2015. The current acting headteacher works closely with an executive headteacher, who is the headteacher of a local primary school and has started supporting the school since April 2015.
- The school works closely with other local primary and secondary schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching in all subjects and classes by making sure that:
 - all teachers have higher expectations of the progress that pupils can make and the standards they can reach
 - teachers take into account what pupils can already do when planning lessons and set tasks that are sufficiently demanding to challenge pupils of all abilities, particularly the most-able
 - when marking pupils' work, teachers give all pupils clear guidance on what they need to do to improve it.
- Speed up pupils' progress in writing and mathematics by making sure that teachers provide:
 - regular opportunities for pupils to write in subjects other than English so that they can develop more varied and interesting vocabulary
 - more opportunities for pupils to develop and extend their skills in solving problems in mathematics.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The determined and clear-sighted drive of the senior leaders, supported by governors, has led to recent improvements in teaching and learning, which in turn are leading to pupils making faster progress and reaching higher standards. These improvements indicate the capacity of the school's leaders to implement changes effectively, although they have had too little time to have an impact on end-of-year outcomes.
- The effective leadership of the acting headteacher, currently and in her previous role, has improved teaching and learning over the past year. She has benefited from the support and commitment of the executive headteacher, other leaders and governors. The changes in the leadership team have been handled successfully to ensure minimum disruption in the school's work. Leaders have fostered a culture in which good teaching and pupils' responsible behaviour can be established. Consequently, pupils' attendance has improved and the rate of exclusion is very low.
- Subject leaders have developed a very clear understanding of their responsibilities and know what they need to do to improve pupils' achievement further. They recognise that the recent training programme has strengthened their expertise and helped them to ensure faster progress for all groups of pupils in the current year.
- Senior leaders check the quality of teaching rigorously. They make frequent observations of pupils' learning and check the work in their books. This monitoring links effectively to a comprehensive development programme to support staff to improve their skills. Although this is helping teachers to improve their performance, the impact on pupils' progress is not yet fully evident.
- Leaders monitor teachers' performance with increasing rigour. They set challenging targets for teachers and increasingly hold them responsible for their pupils' achievement. Teachers who meet the ambitious targets that are set for them move up the salary scale.
- The curriculum is planned effectively and gives pupils good opportunities to enhance their learning and skills through additional activities, events and clubs. The school places a strong emphasis on deepening pupils' understanding of British values and preparing pupils well for life in modern Britain. As ambassadors of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), pupils learn to respect democracy and understand the importance of the country's laws and the school's rules. The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well through a range of subjects, including religious studies, art and sporting activities.
- The additional primary school physical education and sport premium funding is used well to enhance pupils' enjoyment in sports activities. Specialist coaches provide additional sporting provision in and after school, as well as training for staff to enhance their expertise. Pupils enjoy a range of inter-school competitions and their participation rate in sporting activities is now very high.
- Leaders ensure that all safeguarding and child protection policies and practices meet current requirements. All staff have received training on child protection and implement procedures effectively so that the school is a safe place for pupils.
- The school's leaders are committed to sustaining equality of opportunity for all pupils. They focus strongly on raising the achievement of all groups and quickly tackle any discrimination. Leaders are aware that, although pupils are now making faster progress, the school is not fully effective in preparing pupils sufficiently for their next stage in education.
- The pupil premium funding is used effectively to ensure that disadvantaged pupils make similar progress to other pupils as a result of the school's well-organised one-to-one and small-group support. This is having a positive impact on the achievement of these pupils.
- The local authority has provided very effective support in monitoring the quality of teaching. The executive headteacher is providing effective support to the leadership team since the previous headteacher left.

Leaders work closely with other local schools to extend the expertise of staff and to share good practice.

- The school has a close partnership with parents and carers. Most parents and carers spoken with during the inspection and those responding to the questionnaire were very positive about the school and pleased with all it is doing for their children.
- The school staff work well with staff from the SpLD base. The acting headteacher monitors the work of the base leader using reports from the schools where the base teachers are working. When pupils from the Grange are involved, the acting headteacher checks from time to time the quality of the support pupils receive within the school. The base leader is effective in supporting identified pupils and their parents.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is well organised and has taken decisive actions to ensure that standards and the quality of teaching are improving at a faster rate than was the case in the past. Governors have been effective in gaining an understanding of all aspects of the school's work through regular planned visits to the school and through discussions with pupils and teachers. Governors use this information to ask pertinent questions about how leaders are tackling any underperformance in teaching and in pupils' achievement. They interpret data about pupils' attainment and progress effectively and know how the school's results compare with other schools nationally. The governing body is highly supportive but also ensures that leaders and staff are sharply focused on raising pupils' achievement. It has been very prompt in appointing an experienced headteacher and has provided good support for the acting headteacher so that pupils' progress is not affected by the changes in leadership. It sets challenging targets for the headteacher and ensures that members of staff receive a pay increase only if they meet their targets in raising achievement. The governing body monitors the school's finances carefully and ensures that the pupil premium and extra funds for sport are used effectively to improve pupils' achievement and well-being. It ensures that all safeguarding requirements are met.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils display positive attitudes to learning and take pride in their work. They learn to respect the diversity of culture and religion in and outside their school and demonstrate a good understanding of British values. Occasionally, when pupils are not sufficiently engaged by the work in class, their concentration lapses slightly.
- Staff are fair and consistent in implementing the school's procedures for managing pupils' behaviour. As a result, pupils throughout the school behave responsibly in and around the school. Pupils are confident that behaviour in school is good and that teachers deal with any rare, low-level disruption in lessons effectively to ensure there is a positive environment in classrooms to support pupils' learning.
- Pupils are keen to take on responsibilities. They review the playground rules and adhere to these. As UNICEF Ambassadors, they are proud that the school has been designated as a UNICEF 'Rights Respecting School' and learn to respect their own rights as well as those of others in the community. They raise funds for national and international charities.
- Pupils' attendance has improved and is in line with the national average.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. All staff are checked prior to appointment and the building is kept secure. The vast majority of parents are confident that their children are safe at school at all times. Pupils say they that they feel safe and that they receive high-quality support and care from all staff in the school.
- Pupils understand the dangers of the misuse of the internet, social networking sites, drugs and alcohol because they are taught about these dangers in lessons and know how to avoid them. They understand how to keep themselves and others safe.

- Pupils have a good understanding of the different forms of bullying, including cyber-bullying. They say that bullying is rare in school and the school's records confirm this. Pupils are confident that teachers and other adults will deal with any incidents quickly.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching, although improved over the past year, is not consistently good in all classes. Teachers do not always have high enough expectations of how much pupils can achieve. In some cases, they do not ensure that the level of difficulty of the tasks is just right for all pupils, especially for the most able. As a result, many pupils do not achieve the standards of which they are capable.
- The teaching of writing requires improvement. Teachers do not always ask pupils to write at length in different subjects or to use varied and rich language effectively to make their writing more mature and interesting.
- The teaching of mathematics is not yet good. Teachers do not give pupils enough opportunities to extend their problem-solving skills. Consequently, pupils do not achieve high enough standards in this area of mathematics.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly but do not consistently comment on how pupils can improve their work. Sometimes, teachers' comments are either too brief or not analytical enough.
- There is a positive climate for learning in lessons and pupils respond readily to tasks, showing interest and enthusiasm. Relationships are good and teachers manage behaviour well in all classes. In most lessons, teachers ensure that the teaching assistants give pupils the help they need to improve their work. Pupils, who are supported by the SpLD staff, receive effective one-to-one teaching.
- In some lessons, pupils make particularly good progress because teachers have good subject knowledge and use effective questioning to check on their understanding and build on what they already know. Teachers' high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour in these classes help pupils to increase their confidence and they make good progress. However, this good practice does not extend across the school.
- Teaching in reading ensures that pupils gain a good understanding of the writing styles of different authors. Pupils review the effectiveness of technical writing features and analyse different styles of writing. This is beginning to help pupils to improve their writing skills.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Over time, pupils have not made consistently good progress in reading, writing and mathematics in all year groups. Inspection evidence shows that pupils have made faster progress in the current year, but they are not making the progress that would lead to good achievement.
- In writing, pupils do not make as much progress as they could because teachers do not give them sufficient opportunities to write extensively in different subjects, using rich and varied vocabulary. Older pupils, however, are gaining an increasing understanding of different styles of writing and are keen to discuss their favourite characters from books.
- In mathematics, pupils do not achieve as well as they could because teachers provide limited opportunities for them to develop their problem-solving skills and apply the mathematical skills they have mastered.
- In 2014, the attainment of disadvantaged pupils as they left Year 6 was less than a term behind that of other pupils in the school in reading and writing, and two terms behind in mathematics. These pupils made slower progress than other pupils, nationally, and were approximately two terms behind them in reading and writing and over three terms behind in mathematics. The support provided for disadvantaged pupils is enabling them to make faster progress throughout the school than previously and their

achievement is now in line with that of their classmates. However, pupils overall are not making the progress of which they are capable.

- Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 has improved since the previous inspection. In 2013, standards were below average in reading writing and mathematics, but in all three subjects pupils reached average standards in 2014. Although improved, standards in grammar, punctuation and spelling remained below average.
- Pupils' work and the school's own assessment data show that current pupils are making faster progress this year in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion of pupils making more than the expected progress has increased rapidly. As a result, a higher proportion of pupils are on track to achieve higher standards by the end of the year, particularly in reading.
- Pupils throughout the school are making rapid progress in reading. Most are fluent readers and are developing good comprehension skills. Their spelling, grammar and punctuation skills are also improving at a rapid rate.
- An increasing number of the most-able pupils are making good progress this year, especially in reading. They read a range of stories and information texts that enhance their understanding of different styles of writing. In mathematics, they are using calculation skills increasingly to solve problems. Sometimes, however, the progress of these pupils slows because teachers do not always set them challenging tasks that help them to gain high-level skills, especially in writing and mathematics.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, including those supported by the SpLD base staff, made faster progress over the past year from their different starting points. A well-planned literacy and numeracy programme has speeded up their progress and has ensured that they are making similar progress to that of their classmates.

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	117122
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	462094

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	222
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Clive Mitchell
Headteacher	Sasha Lees (Acting Headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	4 July 2013
Telephone number	01462 621444
Email address	admin@grange.herts.sch.uk

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