

Oughton Primary and Nursery School

Mattocke Road, Hitchin, SG5 2NZ

Inspection dates 11–12 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	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
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement.

- Pupils do not make consistently good progress in all year groups and subjects. Although standards have risen over the past year, too few of the most-able pupils reach higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teachers do not always use assessment information well to set tasks that are demanding enough for all pupils in their class, especially for the most-able pupils.
- Teachers do not check that pupils complete corrections or follow the advice they are given to improve their work.
- Teachers do not create sufficient opportunities for pupils to extend their writing skills in subjects other than English. Teachers do not prompt pupils to use a good variety of words in order to make their writing more interesting.
- Teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to extend their problem-solving skills in mathematics.
- Pupils' skills in presenting their work are weak because teachers do not all insist on neat presentation.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders and governors have taken decisive actions that have ensured the school's recent, rapid improvement. They have worked together effectively to improve teaching and achievement over the past year.
- Governors provide strong leadership. They are efficient and hold the leaders to account very effectively.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They concentrate well on their work. The school keeps pupils safe and they say they feel very safe.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well and teaches them to value others' beliefs and ways of life. This prepares them well for life in modern Britain.
- Children in the early years make good progress because of the good teaching they receive.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed pupils' learning in 17 lessons. Three of these lessons were seen jointly with the headteacher. Inspectors 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 read.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, members of staff, the Chair of the Governing Body, four other governors and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of 49 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View). They talked with some parents and carers in the morning, who were accompanying their children to school.
- Inspectors considered 21 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

Jonathan Gardiner

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Information about this school

- Oughton Primary and Nursery School is of average size. Children are taught part time in the Nursery and full time in the Reception classes.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. A small minority of pupils come from minority ethnic 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.
- More pupils than in most schools join or leave the school part way through the school year.
- 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 classes in order to raise standards further in all subjects by making sure that:
 - teachers use information on pupils' progress and attainment to challenge pupils of all abilities, especially the most able, to extend their knowledge and skills and deepen their understanding in all subjects
 - pupils use the written guidance they receive from their teachers to improve their next pieces of work
 - pupils improve their skills in presenting their work in all subjects.
- 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 to make their writing more mature and interesting
 - more opportunities for pupils to develop and extend their skills in solving problems in mathematics.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and other senior leaders, supported by governors and staff, have worked successfully to ensure key improvements. They gained valuable support from the monitoring visits by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and the local authority improvement partner in moving the school forward.
- Leaders have established a culture across the school where good behaviour and successful teaching are expected of all. Consequently, pupils are making faster progress and reaching higher standards. Their attendance has improved and the rate of exclusion is, currently, very low. These secure improvements indicate the good capacity of the school's leaders to take the school further forward.
- The headteacher has implemented a robust system for managing the performance of staff that is having a notable impact on improving teaching. Staff are set challenging targets for improvement, linked closely to the progress of pupils in their classes. They understand their performance determines their rates of pay.
- The school's leaders have established clear responsibilities at all levels of leadership. Phase leaders, the special needs co-ordinator and subject leaders work well together to improve all aspects of the school's work.
- Leaders, including the subject 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. The recent training programme has enhanced leaders' expertise and helped them to ensure faster progress for all groups of pupils in the current year.
- The curriculum provides pupils with good opportunities to enhance their learning and skills through different subjects and additional activities, events and clubs. The school's strong emphasis on teaching values, such as tolerance and respect for others, deepens pupils' understanding of British values and prepares them well for life in modern Britain. As a result, pupils learn to respect democracy and understand how the electoral system and Parliament work. The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well through a range of subjects including religious studies, art and sporting activities. Consequently, pupils behave well and gain understanding of different cultures and beliefs.
- The school uses the primary sports funding effectively to promote pupils' health and well-being. It employs a specialist coach who provides 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 participate actively and regularly.
- 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 is committed to equal opportunity for all pupils and ensures that there is no discrimination, whatever pupils' background or ability. However, leaders are aware that, although pupils are making faster progress, the school is not fully effective in preparing pupils sufficiently for their next stage in education by gaining even higher standards.
- The school uses pupil premium funding effectively to support eligible pupils. The funds are used to support these pupils through well-organised, one-to-one and small-group support. This action is having a positive impact on the achievement of disadvantaged pupils.
- The local authority has provided very effective support in monitoring all aspects of the school's work, particularly teaching and pupils' achievement. Staff also work closely with other local schools to enhance their expertise 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 governance of the school:

- The governing body has been reorganised following the external review of governance in 2014 and is effective. It has successfully appointed new governors with the skills and expertise required within the school. Governors have ensured that standards and the quality of teaching are improving at a much faster rate than prior to the last inspection. They gain an understanding of all aspects of the school's work through regular planned visits and through discussions with pupils and teachers. Governors have an accurate understanding of how pupils are achieving compared with national standards. They ask probing questions about how any underperformance is tackled in teaching and in pupils' achievement. Governors are highly supportive but also ensure that leaders and staff are sharply focused on raising pupils' achievement. They set challenging targets for the headteacher and ensure 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 funds for sports and pupil premium are used effectively to improve pupils' achievement, including that of disadvantaged pupils. It ensures that safeguarding arrangements meet national requirements.

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 respond well to the way the school values individuals from all backgrounds and its positive approach to managing behaviour. As a result, the school is a harmonious community.
- Pupils try hard in lessons and concentrate well, although, occasionally, they lose focus when lesson activities are not sufficiently challenging. They collaborate well in groups and when discussing their learning with partners.
- Pupils throughout the school behave responsibly. They are confident that behaviour in school is good because staff always implement the procedures for promoting good behaviour fairly and ensure a positive environment in classrooms to support pupils' learning.
- Pupils take on responsibilities and carry them out sensibly. This is reflected in their commitment to the work of the school council and in raising funds for charities. Recently, pupils took part in a lottery-funded initiative from Kew Gardens and built bee houses and sowed seeds to encourage wildlife in the school grounds.
- Pupils are punctual and their attendance is in line with the national average.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say that bullying is rare and the school's records confirm this. Pupils are confident that teachers and other adults will deal with any incidents quickly.
- Pupils say that they feel safe and secure in school at all times. Most parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire and spoke to the inspectors during the inspection think that children behave well and feel happy and safe at school.
- Pupils understand the dangers of the misuse of the internet, social networking sites and drugs because the school teaches them about these dangers. Consequently, they understand how to keep themselves and others safe.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching, although improved over the past year, is not yet effective enough in securing good achievement consistently in all classes. Teachers do not always ensure that the level of difficulty of the tasks is just right, especially for the most able. As a result, many pupils do not fully achieve the standards of which they are capable.
- In writing, teachers do not always ask pupils to write enough in subjects other than English. Teachers do not all ensure that pupils use varied and well-chosen words, phrases and sentences to make their writing more mature and interesting. Teachers are not rigorous enough in demanding that pupils always present their work neatly and well. Consequently, pupils' skills in presenting their work are not well developed.
- In mathematics, teachers do not consistently give pupils 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. Written feedback gives clear guidance for pupils to improve their work. However, pupils are often not given the opportunity to act upon this advice and, therefore, do not make as much progress as they should.
- There is a positive climate for learning in lessons and pupils respond readily to tasks set for them. Relationships are good and teachers manage behaviour well in all classes. In most lessons, teaching assistants are effective in giving pupils the help they need to improve their work.
- Where teaching is good, pupils learn rapidly. In most lessons, teachers display good subject knowledge. They use effective questioning to check on pupils' understanding and build on what they already know. As a result, pupils increase their confidence and make good progress. However, this good practice does not fully extend across the school.
- In reading sessions, pupils gain a good understanding of the writing styles of different authors. Teachers guide them to review and analyse the effectiveness of different styles of writing. This good practice is helping pupils to improve their writing skills in English.
- The teaching of phonics (sounds and corresponding letters) is effective. The school has a consistent approach to the teaching of reading so that pupils can build on what they are learning from week to week. This has led to improvement in pupils' reading skills over the past year.

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Over time, pupils have not made consistently good progress in reading, writing and mathematics across all year groups. Inspection evidence shows that pupils have made faster progress in the current year, but they are not yet making the progress that would ensure good achievement.
- In writing, pupils do not make as much progress as they could because they do not have sufficient opportunities to write extensively in subjects other than English, 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 in all classes.
- Disadvantaged pupils are achieving more. In 2014, the attainment of disadvantaged pupils as they left Year 6 was two terms behind that of other pupils in the school in reading and writing, and three terms behind in mathematics. These pupils made slower progress than other pupils, nationally, and were approximately four terms behind in reading and mathematics and two and half terms behind in writing. The support provided for disadvantaged pupils is enabling them to make faster progress throughout the

school than previously, and they are currently achieving as well as their classmates. However, pupils overall are not making the progress of which they are capable.

- Pupils who join the school during term time and those from various minority ethnic communities are making similar progress to that of their classmates.
- Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 has improved markedly over the past year. These standards indicate a significant improvement over the past two years, especially at Key Stage 2.
- Pupils' work and the school's own assessment information show that current pupils are making much faster progress this year in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion of pupils making more-than-expected progress has increased rapidly. As a result, more pupils in Year 6 are better placed to attain higher standards by the end of the year in all subjects than those who left in 2014.
- Pupils throughout the school are making accelerated progress in reading. Most pupils are fluent readers and are developing good comprehension skills. Their spelling, grammar and punctuation skills are also improving at a rapid rate.
- More of the most-able pupils are making good progress this year. They read a range of stories and non-fiction texts that enhance their understanding of different styles of writing. In mathematics, they are using calculating skills increasingly well 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 higher-level skills, especially in writing and mathematics.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs made faster progress over the past year from their different starting points. A well-planned literacy and numeracy programme has speeded up their progress.

The early years provision is good

- The leadership of the early years is effective in promoting teamwork among staff. Leaders have taken steps to strengthen the assessment system so that staff can ensure that all children make good progress. Children are encouraged to become confident in pursuing indoor and outdoor activities that match their own interests as well as those activities directed by adults. Disabled children and those who have special educational needs are well integrated and benefit from good support from skilled staff.
- Children start in the Nursery with skills and knowledge that are below those typical for their age, especially in language and mathematical skills. They make good progress in the early years and enter Year 1 well prepared for further learning. The proportion of children who achieved a good level of development this year is above the 2014 national average.
- Teaching is good overall and ensures children's achievement is above that in the main school. Staff create a welcoming environment where children develop rapidly in all aspects of personal and social development. An attractive learning environment with vibrant displays and a good range of resources interest children and stimulate their imagination. As a result, children quickly engage in a good range of indoor and outdoor activities that stimulate their learning.
- Regular teaching of phonics supports children well in developing their literacy skills. For example, inspectors observed groups of children using the interactive whiteboard to find out new words, successfully identifying the letters and sounds. Children are eager to explain what they do and are keen to tell the stories from picture books of their own choice.
- Children's behaviour is good. Children have good relationships with their teachers and teaching assistants. They listen carefully, support one another and take on simple responsibilities, such as tidying up.
- Staff work closely with parents to ensure that there are good levels of communication and the children get

off to a good start in learning and personal development. Their health, safety and well-being are always of the utmost importance to staff and, as a result, children are very safe and secure in school.

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	133323
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	462613

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	229
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jane Mainwaring
Headteacher	Lisa Clayton
Date of previous school inspection	28 January 2014
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