

Colney Heath Junior Mixed Infant and Nursery School

High Street, Colney Heath, St Albans AL4 0NP

Inspection dates 4–5 February 2016

Overall effectiveness **Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- This is an improving school. The school's leaders took decisive and effective action to tackle a downward trend in outcomes for pupils and standards are now on a clear upward trajectory as a result of the action they have taken.
- The quality of teaching is consistently good throughout the school. Recent changes have had a clear impact on improving teaching and there is a firm commitment among staff to continue to improve the quality of teaching they provide.
- Safeguarding is effective and statutory requirements are met. The school has strong systems in place to ensure that procedures for the safer recruitment of staff are robust. Pupils feel safe at school and are taught how to keep themselves safe.
- Pupils are confident, polite and well mannered. Behaviour in classrooms and around the school is good. Pupils are developing increasingly good attitudes to learning.
- Although there are weaknesses in the published data, outcomes for pupils are now good. The school's own assessment information, coupled with the work in pupils' exercise books, shows clearly that current pupils are making good progress.
- The early years classes provide children with a good start to their education. The provision is well led and managed, and the quality of teaching in early years is good.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Recent improvements in the quality of teaching and the resulting improvements in the progress pupils make has not yet had sufficient impact on raising attainment at the end of Key Stage 2.
- Systems around school improvement are underdeveloped and need refinement in order to be as effective as possible.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that improvements in the quality of teaching and learning are maintained and built on so that a greater proportion of pupils make rapid progress and attainment returns to its previously above-average level.

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - self-evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses is appropriately self-critical so that it becomes a more finely tuned tool for identifying areas for further development
 - the school's action plan is refined (to include measurable success criteria, timescales for actions and deadlines for their completion, and milestones to show the progress expected by a given date) in order that the plan becomes a more useful document by which governors can hold the school's leaders to account.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher is a strong leader who knows the school and its pupils very well. The headteacher is reflective and thoughtful, and this has enabled him to put effective measures in place to improve the quality of teaching in the school. As a result, standards are rising again and the school is now back on an upward trajectory.
- The headteacher is well supported by an increasingly effective senior leadership team. In particular, the deputy headteacher complements the headteacher's skills well and is a strong role model for other staff.
- Provision for pupils who have special educational needs or disability is led and managed well. The coordinator knows these pupils closely and ensures that appropriate support is put in place to enable them to make good progress. She works effectively with outside agencies, where appropriate, and there is clear evidence of the impact of her work.
- The school's leaders have introduced a wide range of initiatives to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the school. For example, a strong focus on improving pupils' attitudes to learning has been effective and is now paying dividends in terms of improving outcomes for pupils. The school's leaders analyse and evaluate each initiative well to ensure that it is having the desired impact on raising standards and improving provision.
- Parents are highly supportive of the school, and Parent View (Ofsted's online questionnaire) shows that 95% of parents would recommend the school to others. Parents who spoke with the lead inspector were almost universally positive about the school. The headteacher is very well respected by parents who appreciate his frequent presence on the playground and his knowledge of every child.
- The pupil premium is spent well. Leaders and governors monitor the effectiveness of the way they use the grant to ensure that it is having an impact on improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. The pupil premium is additional government funding for pupils who are eligible for free school meals and those in the care of the local authority.
- The school's curriculum is broad and balanced, and has been developed well since the last inspection. A good range of additional activities are built into the curriculum to enrich the opportunities offered to pupils. For example, during the inspection, pupils in Year 3 and Year 4 took part in a science day led by an external provider and Year 2 visited a local church.
- The primary physical education and sports premium is spent effectively. It is having a clear impact on improving provision and participation in physical education and sport, and on encouraging healthier lifestyles. This area of the curriculum is led by an inspirational leader and the whole school shared in the excitement when she was chosen to carry the Olympic torch in the lead-up to the London 2012 Olympics.
- The school promotes equality well and takes its responsibility to promote tolerance seriously. For example, during the inspection, a small group of pupils told the lead inspector that there is some teasing in the school, such as the word 'gay' being used as an insult. The headteacher took this extremely seriously and put immediate actions in place to tackle this. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural values are promoted well and the school forms a community where everyone is known and valued.
- Self-evaluation is accurate and the school's summary information is recorded clearly and well. However, self-evaluation is not sufficiently self-critical. It details the school's strengths thoroughly but does not examine its weaker areas closely enough to act as a diagnostic tool for school improvement.
- Similarly, the school's action plan identifies appropriate priorities but is not precise and specific enough to be a key driver for school improvement. The action plan does not provide deadlines for actions to be completed or milestones for what the school expects to have achieved by a given date. Leaders have not set precise and measurable success criteria that the governing body can use to hold them to account.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The governing body has managed a tragic and challenging period well. The current Chair of the Governing Body has shown a high degree of altruism in taking back the role at a point when the school needed him to do so. His knowledge and skill in the role is invaluable to the school at this stage and he leads the governing body well, ensuring that it is effective in both supporting the school and holding its leaders to account.
 - Governors are willing and committed, and know the school well. The Chair of the Governing Body has a thorough understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, including assessment information. However, the governing body as a whole does not have sufficient knowledge and

understanding of published assessment information and what this means in terms of overall outcomes for the school.

- There is some evidence that governors are beginning to ask more challenging questions of the school's leaders. However, this is not yet sufficiently well developed and governors are too reliant on the experience of the Chair in enabling them to hold leaders fully to account.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The school's leaders have focused well on improving the quality of teaching in the school. Recent improvements are having a direct impact on raising standards and improving outcomes for pupils. A range of initiatives have been introduced, such as a focus on developing marking that tells pupils clearly what the 'next steps' in their learning need to be. This is beginning to have an impact on the quality of pupils' work.
- The school's leaders identified that pupils' attitudes to learning were the biggest factor adversely affecting their progress and introduced a strong focus on improving the quality of teaching in this area. Staff have focused on developing ways to increase pupils' motivation and to encourage them to have greater belief in their own strengths and abilities. This has paid dividends; pupils are much more willing to 'have a go' and they now work harder to achieve the goals that are set for them.
- Teachers use information technology well to support and extend their teaching. The interactive whiteboards in each classroom are used effectively to illustrate teaching points and to bring subjects to life. Other technology, such as individual tablet computers, is used well to enable individual pupils to gain as much from lessons as they can. For example, in a Year 6 literacy lesson, several pupils worked on tablets instead of in exercise books using a program that supported their spelling.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can and should achieve have risen. Teachers insist that pupils present their work neatly and carefully and, as a result, the work in pupils' exercise books is well presented and of a good standard.
- Teachers have developed their methods for assessing the progress that pupils make in lessons, including self-assessment. For example, in one class, pupils each have a set of three cups (red, amber and green) stacked upside down on the desk in front of them. Pupils place the appropriately coloured cup at the top of the stack as a silent signal to the teacher to show whether they understand fully, need a little bit of help or are 'stuck'. The school finds that the increased focus on assessment is working well and pupils are starting to make better progress as a result.
- Teachers now plan lessons by thinking first about what they want pupils to learn rather than about what they want pupils to do. Tasks are well chosen to fit the purpose of the lesson. Pupils know what is expected of them because teachers make success criteria clear. Pupils are aware of and work towards achieving the individual targets that are set for them.
- Questioning is used well to probe how well pupils have understood what they have been taught and to encourage them to think more deeply about concepts. Pupils use an increasingly wide vocabulary because staff focus well on using words that are specific to what they are teaching and on encouraging pupils to make better word choices.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The school's approach to safeguarding is rigorous. Very robust systems have been developed for ensuring that appropriate checks are carried out on both employees and volunteers who work in the school. Thorough induction arrangements are in place and new volunteers are required to read a number of documents, including the school's safeguarding policy, when they join the school. The school's single central record meets statutory requirements.
- Pupils feel safe at Colney Heath. They have been taught what bullying is and what they should do if it happens. Pupils say that there is hardly any bullying at the school but they are confident that staff sort it out quickly when it does occur.

- Pupils are taught about a wide range of safety issues in assemblies and through the curriculum. They know about e-safety and how to keep themselves safe when using the internet. Visitors, such as the police and fire service, help to reinforce important safety messages.
- Pupils come to school regularly and attendance is good overall. However, disadvantaged pupils' attendance is well below the national average. The school has taken firm action to address this, and individual pupils' attendance is rising as a result of the actions taken.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Behaviour is managed well and the school's 'blue sky rules' are followed consistently. Staff use positive behaviour management strategies effectively.
- Pupils are polite, welcoming and confident. They were keen to talk to inspectors about their school and showed great pride in it. Pupils have good manners, speaking politely to adults and frequently holding doors open for adults to pass through.
- The school's work to improve pupils' attitudes to learning is having a clear impact. Pupils show good attitudes to learning and were eager to speak to inspectors about the work that they were doing. The school has introduced five learning behaviours – challenge, stickability (resilience), reflection, communication and creativity – and these are becoming increasingly well established.
- Pupils work well together and are supportive of each other. They generally show respect for each other's views and differences and play well together. Pupils say that there is some name-calling at the school but that it stops quickly when staff are made aware of it.
- Pupils are given a range of responsibilities and they carry these out sensibly. The school council is well established and plays an active part in school life.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- The school's leaders recognised that published assessment information for pupils in Key Stage 2 indicated that they were making slower progress than they should. Leaders analysed this information carefully and looked at reasons for it. They took appropriate action to improve the quality of teaching in the school and to tackle the weaknesses identified. As a result, the school's current assessment information, and the work in pupils' books particularly, shows that outcomes for pupils are on a clear upward trajectory once again.
- Children enter early years with skills and abilities that are typical of their age. They make good progress and the proportion who achieve a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year is consistently just above the national average.
- Pupils continue to make good progress in Year 1 and the proportion who reached the expected level in the phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) screening check is above the national average. Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1 has fluctuated over the last three years but has remained broadly in line with the national average.
- Overall attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 was well above average in 2013 and remained above average in 2014. Attainment in reading and writing has been well above average for two of the last three years. Standards fell in 2015 as a result of issues specific to the cohort. School assessment information indicates a rise in standards in 2016.
- The quality of work in pupils' books is good and there is strong evidence that they are making good progress. There is a good quantity of work in books, expectations are high and pupils try hard.
- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress because their progress is monitored closely and appropriate interventions are put in place when they are needed.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability make good progress from their individual starting points. The most-able pupils are now making good progress.
- The action taken by the school's leaders is having the desired effect and pupils are now making good progress throughout the school. There has not yet been enough time for this to be reflected in the school's results.

Early years provision

is good

- Children make a good start to their education in the early years classes. The environment is bright and welcoming and they are provided with an appropriate balance of self-chosen and adult-led activities.
- The early years leader has a good understanding of the provision's strengths and areas for further development. She has ensured that the quality of teaching is good and that staff work well together as a team.
- Children's learning journals include activities and observations across the full range of areas of learning in the early years curriculum. Staff identify 'next steps' well and use these to inform their planning. Parents are increasingly involved in their children's learning.
- Children settle well into both Nursery and Reception classes, quickly learning the rules and routines. They are able to articulate what good learning behaviours are and the children in early years take full advantage of the opportunities that are offered to them.
- From broadly typical starting points, children make good progress during their time in early years. They are prepared well for the challenges and additional demands of Year 1.

School details

Unique reference number	117145
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10003504

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	236
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Simon Speller
Headteacher	Pete Rose
Telephone number	01727 823898
Website	www.colneyheath.herts.sch.uk
Email address	admin@colneyheath.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	7–8 December 2010

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized primary school with one class per year group from Reception Year to Year 6. The school also has a Nursery class.
- Children attend the Nursery class on a part-time basis. Children join the Reception Year in the September after their fourth birthday and attend full time.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium is similar to the national average. The pupil premium grant provides additional government funding for pupils who are eligible for free school meals and those in the care of the local authority.
- Fewer pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds than typically found nationally and the proportion who speak English as an additional language is much lower than the national average.
- The school meets current floor standards. These are the minimum standards, set by the government, for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors gathered a range of evidence to judge the quality of teaching and learning over time. They observed parts of 16 lessons, some jointly with the headteacher.
- Inspectors looked closely at the work in pupils' exercise books, sometimes jointly with the headteacher. They listened to pupils read and talked to them about their work.
- Inspectors examined the school's assessment information and records of leaders' monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning in the school.
- The views of parents were taken into account, including 64 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and conversations with parents on the playground at the beginning of the school day.
- Inspectors took account of the views of the 28 members of staff who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire.
- Meetings were held with pupils, staff and governors. The lead inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority on the telephone.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of school documents.

Inspection team

Wendy Varney, lead inspector

Linda Allison

Tania Perry

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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