

Micklem Primary School

Boxted Road, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire HP1 2QH

Inspection dates

1–2 May 2018

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

- The headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher, is highly effective. She has high expectations that drive improvement in pupils' achievement.
- Leaders have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They use the information to develop the expertise of teachers, who are becoming increasingly effective in their work.
- A rich curriculum provides pupils with exciting experiences. It promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- Safeguarding is important for leaders and governors. Staff are well trained. Parents and carers overwhelmingly agree that their children feel safe.
- Teaching is good. Teachers use interesting texts to develop pupils' vocabulary and guide their writing.
- Leaders closely track the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. Leaders use tailored support to meet their needs. The progress of disadvantaged pupils is accelerating.
- Pupils are currently making good progress from their starting points. As a result, an increasing proportion are working at the expected standard for their age.
- Pupils behave well. They have positive attitudes to learning. This supports the good progress they make.
- Provision in early years is good. Children make a good start to their education. Teachers plan carefully and use the attractive learning environment well to support children's development from different starting points.
- Provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is good, and they are supported appropriately. Their needs are met well and their progress is improving.
- Some teachers do not question skilfully enough to really stretch and challenge pupils' thinking and gain a clear understanding of what pupils are learning. As a result, this slows some pupils' progress.
- Not all teachers share the same high expectations of how pupils should present their work. Some pupils do not take sufficient care to produce their neatest work. Consequently, the presentation of work is inconsistent.
- Leaders' actions are improving pupils' attendance. However, rates of absence remain too high.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and accelerate pupils' progress by ensuring that teachers:
 - think more about the impact of their questioning so that they have a sharper understanding of how well pupils are progressing
 - have the same high expectations about pupils trying their best and presenting their work well.
- Improve pupils' attendance to at least the national average by working more closely with parents and pupils to develop their understanding of the importance of coming to school regularly.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher has provided strong leadership during a period of significant change in staffing arrangements. This has ensured that new staff are well supported and settle swiftly into the life of the school. Underpinned by the skilled support of the deputy headteacher, a new team of leaders quickly identified the actions needed to ensure that the quality of teaching remains good.
- The headteacher enjoys the respect of the school community. She has a strong relationship with parents and is seen to be approachable. Staff are hard-working and contribute well to the welcoming environment.
- The new leadership team has an accurate understanding of what the school does well and where further improvement is required. Leaders check that targeted support is effective. High-quality training provided by leaders meets the development needs of staff. For example, the training received for reading helps pupils to read with greater accuracy. This has helped to improve the quality of the teaching of reading.
- The curriculum excites pupils and inspires them to learn. All topics include a 'stunning start' to bring each subject alive. Active experiences stimulate pupils' curiosity. Subject leaders track the development of pupils' skills through regular assessments. This helps them to evaluate pupils' progress and alter plans accordingly. Work in pupils' books and on displays demonstrates how pupils apply skills well across a range of subjects.
- Leaders carefully consider the needs of disadvantaged pupils and use the additional funding appropriately. Leaders understand the barriers to learning that disadvantaged pupils face. Targeted support is effective in helping disadvantaged pupils to develop good attitudes to learning and to attend school more frequently. Adults working with disadvantaged pupils are well trained. As a result of these strengths, differences between outcomes of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils are diminishing quickly.
- The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCo) is knowledgeable about the needs of pupils who have SEN. He provides regular, effective training for teaching assistants. This is making a positive impact on improving pupils' social and academic progress.
- In assemblies, carefully selected themes foster pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The 'value tree' explores different ideas about building relationships with one another regardless of background and prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain.
- The sport premium has increased opportunities for pupils' participation in physical activities. For example, the list of after-school clubs has increased, with cheerleading being added in response to requests. Teachers work well alongside trained sport coaches to improve outcomes for pupils.
- The local authority provides effective support and challenge. For example, the use of local authority 'subject experts' is contributing to the good development of teachers' skills and in turn is accelerating pupils' progress, especially in mathematics and reading.

Governance of the school

- Governors know the school well. They are committed to helping the school to meet the needs of the community. Their visits to school and discussions with pupils help them to understand how school leaders are addressing the priorities for improvement. They work with leaders to ensure that they make the best use of all resources.
- Governors have a range of skills and knowledge that they use well in their roles. They receive information from the headteacher and make use of published information that helps them to ask questions and hold leaders to account. Their assessment of the school's effectiveness is accurate. Governors place a high priority on safeguarding. All have received training and regularly check procedures when they visit the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders and governors have established a strong culture of safety. They are committed to keeping children safe and promote a sense of care within the school. As one parent commented to inspectors, 'I feel very comfortable with leaving my child at Micklem Primary School.' Parents receive regular newsletters providing information about how they can support their child when using the internet. Procedures for recording and maintaining records are robust and well organised.
- Staff receive training so that they are alert to any signs that a pupil may be at risk. Safeguarding is discussed regularly at staff meetings. This helps to keep their knowledge up to date. As a result, staff understand how and when to report concerns to leaders. Records are closely monitored to ensure that agreed actions take place to keep children safe. Procedures for vetting staff and carrying out background checks are securely in place.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Effective teaching ensures that pupils are making good progress from their starting points. Teachers have good subject knowledge. They use this to plan interesting tasks to engage pupils in learning. Teachers know pupils well and provide appropriate work to meet their needs. Pupils say that they appreciate having a choice of activity to challenge their thinking further on some occasions.
- Teachers select interesting texts to widen pupils' vocabulary. Pupils learn about story structures through discussions. In a key stage 1 class, pupils were retelling the story of 'The Lighthouse Keeper's Lunch'. They developed their own phrases and produced sentences using ambitious language, for example 'Mrs Grinling concocted a fabulous lunch.'
- Teaching assistants contribute well to pupils' good progress. They receive appropriate training and use their skills to guide pupils' learning effectively. For example, during the inspection, a teaching assistant identified pupils who struggled with Roman numerals, and skilfully selected resources to make clear the numbers they represent. This level of support from teaching assistants was typical of that observed in other classrooms.

- Pupils write with great confidence, using their writing skills across different subjects. Teachers help pupils to craft their ideas through developing clear steps. Writing activities are purposeful and stretch pupils' thinking. For example, pupils used the play 'Macbeth' to write a balanced argument explaining why a king was good or bad.
- The school's chosen approach in mathematics makes use of practical materials to help pupils visualise problems. This is particularly effective for those who struggle with their work. Teachers' guidance often helps pupils to address misconceptions. This helps pupils improve their mathematical knowledge and make good progress.
- Pupils read with confidence and understanding. Those who read to inspectors articulated key events and demonstrated comprehension of characters' feelings. Younger pupils use their knowledge of letter sounds to read unfamiliar words. Phonics teaching is well matched to the ability of pupils. Older pupils discussed a range of books they enjoyed from the good selection of literature in their classroom.
- Where learning is most effective, teachers' questioning deepens pupils' thinking and checks understanding in different subjects. However, this is not consistent, and not all teachers use questioning in this way.
- Evidence from work in pupils' books shows that the quality of presentation is too variable where teachers' expectations do not match those of leaders. In some work, pupils' handwriting skills are weak and consequently work is difficult to read.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are happy to undertake additional responsibilities. House captains are good role models for other pupils. They take their job seriously and enjoy representing the views and opinions of other pupils. Monthly house council meetings provide opportunities for pupils to share ideas that support their sense of belonging to the school community.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe. They understand how to use the internet safely and told inspectors that they know how to protect their own personal information when online.
- Pupils understand about different forms of bullying. Pupils told inspectors that they enjoy their school because they make friends easily. Pupils were adamant that there were 'no bullies'. However, they recognise that sometimes children become angry when they get upset on the playground. Pupils were confident that if they were worried, they could talk to an adult who would help them.
- Pupils learn about different cultures and faiths. They respect each other, commenting, 'It's OK to be different.'
- School leaders and staff promote a caring community. Adults provide high-quality support for pupils when they need it. They work well with families to promote their welfare. A response reflected this ethos and the view of many other parents on Parent View, the Ofsted online parent questionnaire, when it stated that staff 'go out of their way to help families and those with additional needs as best they can'. The learning

mentor provides good support in helping pupils to manage their emotions.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave well in their classes. They enjoy positive relationships with adults, who help them to respond well to direction and instruction. Most pupils know how to manage their own behaviour. Pupils are polite and confidently talk to visitors about their school and work.
- Pupils understand the school's golden rules and know how these help them to support their friendships. Pupils encourage one another to behave. This helps to ensure that classroom environments are calm.
- Most pupils take pride in the presentation of their work. However, on occasions, work is not as well presented where teachers' expectations are not made clear or when pupils simply do not try as hard as they could do.
- Attendance rates are below the national average. Leaders are taking steps to encourage better attendance, for example by including regular features about attendance in newsletters and offering rewards to pupils for coming to school regularly. Information shared during the inspection shows that pupils attend school more frequently than they previously did, but absences remain high. Leaders acknowledge that more work needs to be done to improve pupils' attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils' progress at the end of key stage 2 in the key subjects of reading and mathematics was low in 2017. This is not typical. In 2015 and 2016, different groups of pupils made good progress from their starting points. The school's assessment information and current work in pupils' books demonstrate that current progress in a broad range of subjects is good. A majority of pupils are now achieving expected standards for their age. This means that pupils are well prepared for their next stage of education.
- In 2017, pupils in key stage 2 made progress in writing similar to the national score. Inspection evidence seen, including pupils' work, demonstrates that pupils are making good progress in developing their writing skills over time. Pupils use their writing skills in different subject areas. As a result, they are becoming confident in applying their punctuation and spelling skills in different contexts.
- Typically, pupils make good progress from their starting points in key stage 1. This means that pupils are well prepared for key stage 2. In 2017, the proportion of pupils in key stage 1 attaining the expected standards was not as high as the previous year. However, the proportion of pupils attaining greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics was above that nationally.
- Younger pupils successfully apply their knowledge of phonics to read accurately. Pupils use consistent strategies to tackle new and unfamiliar words. Results of the Year 1 phonics screening check were below the national level in 2017. Evidence gathered during the inspection supports the school's view that a higher proportion of pupils are

on track to achieve the required score this year.

- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are making good progress from their starting points across all subjects. This is because teachers and teaching assistants in particular provide effective support. Close monitoring of interventions by the SENCo ensure that actions taken to support pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make the intended impact on pupils' progress.
- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress, and increasing proportions make very good progress. Good teaching across the school is reducing the differences in achievement between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally.

Early years provision

Good

- The proportion of children reaching a good level of development at the end of Reception has previously been above the national average. In 2017, it was broadly average. Nevertheless, this represented good progress from children's different starting points.
- Children enter the early years provision with skills below those typical for their age. Their starting points for communication and language are particularly low. Additional funding for disadvantaged children provides increased teaching assistant support. Teaching assistants focus particularly well on developing children's speech by asking a range of stimulating questions. By the time children leave the setting, their language has improved because they make good progress.
- Leadership of the early years is good. The early years leader has a good grasp of the provision's strengths and areas for improvement. The leader has quickly identified support for newly appointed adults to the Reception class to develop their questioning skills. Children in the Nursery typically make stronger progress than those in Reception because adults use their knowledge of children's learning to move them on more rapidly.
- Activities organised by teachers successfully build on children's early knowledge and skills. The stimulating learning environment both indoors and outdoors provides opportunities for children to develop both socially and academically. For example, children who were making aliens from different materials were able to describe their appearance and characteristics using a good range of words and phrases.
- Positive relationships create a calm environment. Links made with external agencies are used effectively. Families are helped to access the support they need to meet their child's needs, when appropriate. Safeguarding is effective and follows similar approaches used across the school.
- Children behave well and happily work together. Children understand about taking turns and encourage each other. For example, during a class activity, children waited patiently for a turn to count potatoes in order.
- Strong partnerships between school and home underpin children's learning and development in the early years. Communication with parents is effective. Parents appreciate the opportunity to contribute to their child's learning record and receive regular updates from staff about the progress their child is making.

School details

Unique reference number	117231
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10053879

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	199
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Fuggle
Headteacher	Elizabeth Ormonde
Telephone number	01442 408964
Website	www.micklem.herts.sch.uk/
Email address	head@micklem.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	18 and 19 June 2014

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the averaged-sized primary school.
- The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. A very small proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportions of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN are above the proportions of pupils seen nationally.
- There have been significant changes in staffing over the past two years. Staffing is now stable.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed learning across a variety of lessons across all classes, some jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors reviewed a range of pupils' work across different subjects.
- Meetings and discussions were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, English and mathematics leaders and the early years leader.
- An inspector met with a group of governors.
- A meeting was held with a representative from the local authority to discuss the support and challenge provided to school leaders.
- Discussions were held with pupils.
- An inspector observed pupils on the playground at playtime and lunchtime.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and asked them questions about their reading.
- Responses from 25 parents to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, and 16 free-text responses from parents were analysed.
- Inspectors examined a wide range of documentation, including information relating to safeguarding, exclusion, attendance records and the school's own information regarding reports on the quality of teaching and assessment.

Inspection team

Steve Mellors, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Brenda Watson

Ofsted Inspector

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