

Yewtree Primary School

Fletcher Way, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire HP2 5QR

Inspection dates

16–17 May 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, leaders have not brought about enough improvement to ensure consistency in teaching. As a result, standards at the end of key stages 1 and 2 are not yet good.
- Leaders have not ensured a clear vision for the improvements needed. They have not followed up important actions with the rigour to ensure that they are successfully implemented.
- Leaders' evaluations of the quality of pupils' learning are not sufficiently stringent or accurate. As a result, pupils' achievement across the school is not yet good.
- The quality of teaching across the school is variable. In some classes, teachers do not plan learning that interests pupils and enables them to achieve well.
- Some teachers do not take account of pupils' prior learning or have high enough expectations of what pupils can do.
- Some of the most able pupils are not sufficiently challenged to enable them to achieve the higher standards of which they are capable.
- Disadvantaged pupils do not consistently achieve as well as they should. This is because, until recently, suitable support had not been in place to meet their needs and help accelerate their progress.
- Teachers in early years and key stage 1 are not ensuring that all pupils in phonics lessons are learning appropriately. Consequently, too few Year 1 pupils reach the expected standard in phonics.
- Too few children in early years achieve a good level of development. Children do not make swift and secure progress because teaching is not suited to their learning needs consistently enough. In addition, children spend too much time on activities that lack purpose.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders and staff have a strong commitment to the school and their desire to improve pupils' outcomes is clear.
- There are pockets of strong teaching. In these cases, pupils make good progress.
- Pupils are well cared for in a safe, positive and inclusive learning environment.
- Leaders use the physical education (PE) and sport premium funding to good effect.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and governance by ensuring that:
 - leaders develop a shared vision for high achievement and communicate this effectively to all staff, and parents and carers
 - the school’s action plans have clear checking points so that leaders and governors know whether actions have been successful or not
 - leaders’ evaluations of pupils’ learning are sharpened to provide clear next steps, especially in relation to the progress different groups of pupils are making
 - the pupil premium funding is used to build upon recent improvements so that disadvantaged pupils across the school make accelerated progress in English and mathematics consistently well from their starting points.
- Accelerate pupils’ progress and raise standards in reading, writing and mathematics across the school by ensuring that:
 - inconsistencies in the effectiveness of teaching across the school are eradicated
 - all teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - the most able pupils are set work that challenges and stretches them consistently well
 - the teaching of phonics enables pupils to acquire phonics skills more rapidly and then apply them to their reading and writing.
- Improve the achievement of children in early years by:
 - developing leadership to secure rapid improvement in the quality of teaching so that more children reach a good level of development by the end of Reception
 - using assessment information accurately to plan teaching that meets the needs of all children
 - providing more challenging and purposeful opportunities for children to practise and develop their early reading, writing and number skills when choosing their own activities.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leadership and management are not yet good. This is because actions taken to improve teaching have not yet ensured that the quality of teaching is consistently good across the school. As a result, pupils do not achieve as well as they should at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders have lacked the sense of urgency and rigour required to raise standards for all groups of pupils. Although appropriate areas for improvement have been identified and acted upon, a strong vision with a shared purpose has been lacking.
- The school's self-evaluation is not accurate. In some areas, including the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, it is over generous. Senior leaders and governors regularly review the school development plan. However, actions are not always revisited to check for quality and impact over time. Limited analysis and evaluation are hindering school improvement.
- Leaders have found it challenging to recruit and retain teachers. As a result, there have been frequent changes in the teaching team. On occasions, it has been necessary for senior leaders to teach classes themselves, and this has limited their capacity to lead and rapidly move improvements forward.
- Senior leaders and governors have begun to address the weaknesses in teaching. Appropriate training alongside more regular and focused monitoring have taken place. New approaches to teaching have been introduced and these are beginning to improve provision, but they have not been bedded in sufficiently to ensure that they make a positive difference to pupils' learning and outcomes across the school.
- There is now a stronger focus on ensuring that disadvantaged pupils make the progress required to attain as well as other pupils nationally. Governors are beginning to challenge the effectiveness of the pupil premium spending more rigorously. Leaders are ensuring that the pupil premium is better used to eradicate any gaps in the knowledge and skills of those pupils eligible for support through this fund. Although there has been some improvement in the achievement of disadvantaged pupils, for example in key stage 1, leaders know that there is still work to do to ensure that chosen approaches are effective and these pupils make strong progress across the school.
- The inclusion coordinator uses additional funding provided for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities well. She has identified the right priorities for improvement and is beginning to address these more systematically. She is ensuring more rigorous assessments of pupils' emotional and academic needs so that leaders have a better understanding of how well additional help is used to make a difference to pupils' progress. Consequently, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are currently making better progress than previously.
- Leaders use the primary PE and sport grant effectively. It is well managed, wisely spent and carefully evaluated. Pupils have been provided with opportunities to take part in a wider range of sports, including dodgeball and rugby. Good-quality training

has been provided for all staff, which is improving their teaching and coaching skills. The PE leader is evaluating provision with increasing accuracy and so knows where further improvements need to be made.

- Subject leaders are ensuring that a breadth of subjects is being taught with increasing effectiveness. Enrichment is provided through visits to places in the local environment, including the local church and further away; for example, the Year 6 residential visit to the Isle of Wight. A programme of visitors to the school such as the local rabbi and a rainforest workshop provides pupils with opportunities to extend their knowledge and discuss topics with confidence and sensitivity. Leaders are currently increasing the links with the local community so that the curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development more strongly.
- Leaders have ensured that there is appropriate support for vulnerable pupils and their families. The staff who support these pupils are particularly effective. This is because they know the pupils and their families well. They offer good support for pupils' well-being and help them develop positive attitudes to learning.
- Staff, including newly qualified teachers, speak highly of the support they receive. Leaders are providing a range of training to support teachers and teaching assistants to develop their skills so that improvement is rapid. Staff have embraced this training positively. They told inspectors that they feel valued, and morale among staff is high.
- Leaders have worked hard to establish a positive working partnership with parents. Almost all parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, appreciate the hard work and dedication of staff. One parent summed up the views of many by saying, 'The school has helped us so much as a family. The teachers and support staff are nurturing and always welcoming.'
- Until recently, the local authority provided regular support for the school. This has been effective in developing the skills of subject leaders, who now have a clearer understanding of where further improvements need to be made in their areas of responsibility. The school now works with an external consultant to continue the support given to the school so that outcomes improve rapidly.

Governance of the school

- Governors make an improving contribution to the school. They use their range of skills and expertise to ensure they fulfil statutory responsibilities.
- Governors are asking increasingly effective questions about the achievement of pupils but, as yet, are not following up the answers by checking on the impact that leaders' actions are having on pupils' progress and outcomes.
- The governing body is ambitious for the school and for its pupils to do well. Governors recognise that there needs to be more rapid, sustained improvement and greater consistency across the school. Governors are determined that standards will improve.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders ensure all statutory requirements, including checks on staff before they start

working at the school, are fully met. Staff and governors receive relevant training and updates, including on radicalisation and extremism. Annual update training for all staff ensures that safeguarding training requirements are fully met. There is a strong culture of safeguarding across the school, led by the headteacher, and key personnel such as the business manager, safeguarding officer and the school's family worker.

- The school works effectively with external agencies to support vulnerable pupils. Leaders are tenacious in ensuring that pupils are kept safe. When needed, they challenge external agencies so that pupils receive the support they need and in a timely manner.
- Parents recognise and appreciate that the school places a high priority on maintaining pupils' safety and care.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching and learning is not yet consistently good across the school. Although there have been some recent improvements in teaching, weaknesses in some year groups still remain. Effective practice has not been developed rapidly enough and is not securely in place in all classes.
- Expectations are not consistently high for all groups of pupils. For example, where teaching is weaker, teachers in some lessons do not set work for pupils at the right level of difficulty. Some tasks are too easy and do not challenge pupils, especially the most able. This prevents them from rapidly developing their skills and knowledge, thus limiting their progress. Equally, when teaching is less engaging, or not well matched to pupils' needs, some pupils lose interest and do not get on with their work.
- In contrast, where teaching is stronger, teachers have strong subject knowledge, questioning is effective and pupils are challenged appropriately.
- Teaching assistants work with pupils effectively in those classes where teachers make clear their expectations for pupils' learning. In these situations, teaching assistants provide support that encourages pupils, make use of practical resources to aid understanding and are effective in developing pupils' independence and securing progress. However, teaching assistants are not deployed effectively in all lessons across the school.
- Leaders have recently introduced a new phonics programme. Although teachers and teaching assistants have received training in how to teach this new method, phonics is not consistently taught well across classes and year groups. Some phonics sessions do not have sufficient rigour and challenge. On occasions, staff lack enthusiasm so that the activities provided for pupils are not always presented in an interesting or engaging way. As a result, not all pupils sustain their concentration in phonics sessions, and consequently, do not attain as highly as they could.
- The teaching of reading is inconsistent across the school. Leaders have provided training for teachers, and where teachers have used this new knowledge and skills, reading is taught more effectively. In these lessons, the tasks set meet pupils' needs and teaching is engaging and interesting. Consequently, pupils enjoy their learning and make good progress. However, in other classes, pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to develop their reading skills to become confident and successful

readers.

- In writing, following training and leadership support, teachers are improving their own subject knowledge. There is evidence in pupils' books that, in some classes, writing is being taught successfully and pupils are making stronger progress. This is not yet the case across the school. Where teaching is effective, pupils are fully engaged in their learning and develop their writing skills rapidly. For example, in one Year 5 lesson, pupils were relishing the challenge of writing about different Shakespearian plays. They talked enthusiastically about the language used in the plays, writing terms such as 'romance' and 'tragedy' with accuracy and confidence. One pupil commented, 'I love "Macbeth" because it is scary.' Another pupil stated, 'I prefer "Romeo and Juliet" because of the romance.'
- The teaching of mathematics is beginning to improve. As a result of training and support, some teachers are more confident in developing pupils' skills in reasoning and problem solving. In some lessons, inspectors observed pupils completing a range of mathematical problems and explaining their learning confidently. Effective teaching is not yet in place in all classes, so pupils' progress is mixed.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities receive suitably tailored support from well-trained staff. Pupils' work is carefully planned to address their needs and improve their learning. As a result, these pupils' progress and achievement are improving in a range of subjects across the school.
- In most classes, teachers are now more successfully meeting the needs of pupils who speak English as an additional language. Teachers and teaching assistants often model correct sentence construction and use effective questioning to develop pupils' language skills. This enables pupils to think about their learning and explain their answers more successfully. Consequently, these pupils are making stronger progress than previously.
- Classrooms and corridors are brightly decorated with interesting displays of pupils' work and helpful guidance for learning. These resources and examples of good work encourage pupils and show them what they can achieve.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils speak with pride about their school. They were keen to tell inspectors how safe they feel and how much they appreciate their teachers whom they say, 'treat everyone fairly', and, 'help us bit by bit so we understand'. Pupils also told inspectors that there is very little bullying in the school. If bullying does happen, then pupils are confident that the adults will sort it out quickly.
- Pupils are taught to be kind to each other and show respect to different lifestyles and opinions. One group of pupils commented, 'We are nice to each other and we help each other if we are hurt.' Another group of pupils told inspectors, 'We treat each other with respect. We use the "4Bs" – be caring; be respectful; be responsible; be safe – to make our school a happy and safe place.' During a whole-school assembly, pupils listened attentively and clearly enjoyed celebrating the achievements of other pupils.

- Older pupils enjoy the additional responsibilities they are given, such as being members of the school council, eco council and the sports crew. They understand that these roles develop their own confidence and organisational skills alongside looking after younger pupils.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. This is because, when teaching is weaker, some pupils do not consistently demonstrate strong learning behaviours that contribute to rapid and accelerating progress. For example, some pupils wait too long for instructions rather than actively seeking to get on with learning quickly.
- When teachers are not vigilant, a few pupils become restless or waste time. This slows their progress, and occasionally, that of others.
- Pupils' conduct around the school is better. They generally play well together at breaktimes, which are well supervised by adults. Pupils also demonstrate good table manners and behaviour in the dining hall.
- Leaders have worked hard to promote the importance of good attendance with pupils and their families. Staff closely monitor why pupils are absent and follow up concerns with parents quickly. Leaders work closely with other external agencies, such as the attendance improvement officer, to ensure that any attendance concerns are addressed. As a result, attendance rates are improving and are now close to the national average. The proportion of pupils who regularly miss school is also reducing and, although still high, is moving nearer to national figures.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- As a result of inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, not all groups of pupils have made consistently good progress across different subjects over time.
- In 2016 and 2017, the standards reached by children at the end of early years and by pupils at the end of key stages 1 and 2 have been below national averages. The progress of some pupils currently in the school is improving, but this is not consistent across all year groups and all subjects.
- The proportion of pupils who met the expected standard in the phonics screening check at the end of Years 1 and 2 was below the national average in 2016 and 2017. This is because phonics lessons are not always of high quality and a lack of training meant that there were gaps in teachers' knowledge and understanding. Leaders have now provided training for staff. However, the teaching of phonics is still not taught well enough within classes and across year groups.
- The quality of pupils' writing varies from class to class. Teachers' assessments indicate that there have been improvements to pupils' writing skills and that standards are moving closer to the national average, especially by the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2. However, pupils' work and the learning observed in lessons show that the progress of pupils is inconsistent.
- Work in pupils' mathematics books and discussions with pupils about their learning show that in some classes, pupils are acquiring the knowledge, skills and

understanding expected for their age. However, this is not consistent within and across all year groups. The progress pupils make in mathematics is not always rapid enough.

- The pupil premium funding is beginning to be used more effectively. Pupils' barriers to learning are now more swiftly identified and appropriate support is put in place. As a result, in key stage 1, the variation between disadvantaged and other pupils is diminishing. However, leaders recognise that they need to check on the effectiveness of their actions more closely across some year groups in key stage 2 where the difference between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and that of others in reading, writing and mathematics has widened. In addition, disadvantaged pupils still do not make the rapid progress required to attain as well as other pupils nationally.
- The most able pupils do not always make strong progress, because of the lack of challenge in some lessons. A number of most-able pupils themselves confirmed to inspectors that their work was sometimes 'too easy' and they felt that they were capable of achieving more. On occasions, teachers skilfully adapt learning for the most able pupils during lessons and this deepens their understanding. However, this group of pupils is typically not stretched sufficiently and as such, they do not always make the rapid progress they should or reach the higher standards of which they are capable.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are currently making better progress than previously. This is because teachers and teaching assistants meet their specific needs and support these pupils more effectively.
- In most classes, teachers successfully meet the needs of pupils who speak English as an additional language. Pupils receive targeted support to help them to improve their speaking and writing skills quickly. Consequently, these pupils make similar and sometimes better progress than their English-speaking classmates.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- The proportion of children reaching a good level of development at the end of Reception has been below the national average since the previous inspection. Although children's starting points when they start in Nursery and when they join the Reception class are low, this still does not represent sufficiently positive progress for many children.
- The leadership of early years is currently being developed. The new early years leader is keen and enthusiastic. She has already benefited from training and support provided by a local authority early years adviser. This is enabling the early years leader to begin to put the appropriate actions in place to secure improvement. There is now an improving view of what is working well and what needs to improve across early years. However, leaders know that plans for improvement need to be more coherent and tightly focused in order to rapidly improve provision and children's outcomes.
- The physical learning environment in early years has improved since the previous inspection. Children now have the opportunity to learn in well-resourced and attractive indoor and outside areas. However, the effectiveness of teaching in early years is mixed. Children typically make more progress when working directly with a teacher or teaching assistant than when tackling independent activities. This is because staff do not make the most of the learning environment by providing a wide range of

stimulating and engaging activities so that children learn as they play. As a result, children are not developing their early reading, writing and mathematical skills well enough.

- Staff do not currently use assessment information as sharply as they could do to inform planning. As a result, teaching is not consistently matched to children's learning needs, which slows the rate at which learning progresses. Leaders do not have a clear enough overview of children's progress across the Nursery and Reception classes.
- Relationships between adults and children in early years are positive. Staff ensure that children are well cared for and learn and play happily together.
- Children are enthusiastic and enjoy their learning because the relationships between adults and children are strong. They listen carefully to adults and behave well, moving sensibly between activities and showing consideration for others.
- All welfare requirements are met in both the Nursery and Reception classes. Children are happy and feel safe in school.
- Since the previous inspection, early years staff have worked effectively to develop positive and supportive relationships with parents. Parents receive regular information about their children's progress through online learning journals so that they have a clear idea of their children's achievements. There is a range of events in place for parents to come into school and find out how to support their children's learning at home, including a variety of practical workshops.

School details

Unique reference number	135222
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10053850

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 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	334
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jenny Underwood
Headteacher	Faye Ewen
Telephone number	01442 424920
Website	www.yewtree.herts.sch.uk
Email address	admin@yewtree.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	10– 11 September 2014

Information about this school

- The school is an average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is just above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for support through the government's pupil premium funding is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is well above the national average. The proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is below the national average.
- In 2017, the school met the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in every class. Some of the observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher or one of the assistant headteachers.
- A wide range of pupils' workbooks was examined by inspectors throughout the inspection.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, the assistant headteachers (one of whom is the inclusion coordinator), a group of subject leaders, newly qualified teachers, and the school business manager. The lead inspector also met with the chair of the governing body and one other governor. In addition, the lead inspector spoke on the telephone with the local authority adviser who, until recently, was working with the school.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils informally in class, and around the school at break- and lunchtimes to seek their views about the school. They also met with three different groups of pupils more formally to discuss their learning and many aspects of school life. Inspectors attended two assemblies.
- Members of the inspection team heard some pupils read. Inspectors talked to pupils about their reading habits and looked at their reading records.
- The team scrutinised the school's website and a range of school documents, including: assessment information; minutes from governing body meetings; reports produced by external consultants; the school's own self-evaluation; improvement plans; and records about behaviour, safeguarding children and attendance.
- Inspectors considered the 19 responses made by parents to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire and the 19 responses to the Ofsted free-text facility. Inspectors also spoke to some parents before and after school, and during the inspection. Additionally, inspectors took account of the 39 views expressed by members of staff to Ofsted's online survey.
- Inspectors also considered additional views submitted by parents and staff.

Inspection team

Fiona Webb, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Michael Jude	Ofsted Inspector
Lynda Walker	Ofsted Inspector

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