

Graveley Primary School

Ashwell Common, Graveley, Hitchin, SG4 7LJ

Inspection dates 19–20 September 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils achieve well and reach above average standards. Progress is good in the Early Years Foundation Stage and at Key Stages 1 and 2.
- By the end of Year 1, pupils' knowledge of the sounds that letters make is well above that of pupils in most schools.
- Teaching is always at least good, with some that is outstanding. Much of the teaching of mathematics in Years 5 and 6 is excellent, enabling many pupils to make outstanding progress.
- Learning opportunities are matched well to pupils' needs and interests. Imaginative links between subjects mean that pupils are eager to learn.
- Behaviour is good and pupils are safe in school. Where teaching is at its best, pupils show a genuine thirst for knowledge and this helps them to make rapid progress.
- Since the last inspection, school leaders, managers and the governing body have been successful in raising pupils' achievement and improving the quality of teaching.
- Improvement has been good and leaders are ambitious for the school's future development.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- More pupils could reach higher levels in writing and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1 and in writing at the end of Key Stage 2.
- Occasionally, teachers do not make sure that all pupils are clear about how best to tackle new work, which slows some pupils' learning.
- While teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good, outdoor activities are not always planned as well as they could be.
- Leaders have not yet focused as closely as they could on the key differences between good and outstanding teaching, in their efforts to increase the amount that is outstanding.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited 14 lessons, four jointly with the headteacher. She observed an assembly, sampled pupils' work in class and listened to younger pupils read.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and with a group of pupils. A telephone discussion took place with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector took account of the 60 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), to a school survey of parents' views and analysed questionnaires completed by 12 members of staff.
- The inspector looked at the school's work and at documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, its development plan and information about pupils' attainment and progress. She also looked at records relating to aspects of behaviour and safeguarding, and at teachers' planning.

Inspection team

Margaret Goodchild, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage. An average proportion are of minority ethnic heritage and speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium funding (additional government funding, in this case, for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals) is well below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action varies from year to year: it is below average overall but above average in some years.
- The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set minimum expectations for attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Enable more pupils to reach Level 3 in writing and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1 and Levels 5 and 6 in writing at the end of Key Stage 2 by:
 - looking even more closely at pupils' work to see where there are gaps in their skills and knowledge that are holding them back from reaching the highest levels
 - providing the planned staff training so that teachers are able to support more pupils in reaching the highest levels in writing.
- Increase the amount of teaching that is outstanding by:
 - making sure teachers always show the class how to tackle tasks when they introduce new learning and check that all pupils have understood
 - planning in depth what learning is meant to take place in the Early Years Foundation Stage from activities children choose for themselves in the outdoor area
 - pinpointing what makes the difference between good and outstanding teaching, and using the outstanding teaching already in the school to improve teaching that is currently good.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are broadly in line with national expectations for their age. They make good progress and move up to Year 1 with attainment that is generally above that of children nationally in all areas of learning.
- In the Year 1 check on pupils' knowledge of letters and sounds (phonics), all pupils reached the expected level in 2012 and the school's results were again well above average in 2013. Throughout the school, pupils make good progress in reading and this supports their learning well in a range of subjects.
- Pupils' achievement at Key Stages 1 and 2 has improved since the last inspection and standards have shown year-on-year improvement. Attainment at the end of Year 2 has been above average in reading, writing and mathematics over the last two years. In 2012, pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 was above average in reading and mathematics and average in writing.
- In 2013, there was a further improvement in standards in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6. Pupils made good progress during their time at Key Stage 2 in English, reaching above average standards, and did exceptionally well in mathematics where standards were high.
- Pupils make at least good progress in lessons and outstanding progress in some. The school's records of pupils' achievement in different year groups show that nearly all pupils are making at least expected progress, most are making good progress and some are doing exceptionally well.
- Progress for many pupils is outstanding in mathematics in Years 5 and 6. Pupils make rapid progress in problem solving and their outstanding attitudes to learning do much to promote their achievement and their eagerness to grasp new skills.
- There were too few pupils known to be eligible for free school meals at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 in 2012 to compare their attainment with that of their classmates. However, the progress of pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium funding is generally at least in line with that of the rest of the class in English and mathematics and often better. More-able pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium have been supported in reaching high standards. This is because the school uses its funding well to support pupils' individual needs and carefully tracks their progress.
- Support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is good and enables them to make similar progress to their classmates. Pupils make particularly good progress when they work in small groups with teaching assistants, doing work that is well matched to their learning needs.
- The school promotes equal opportunities well, fosters good relations and tackles discrimination effectively. This helps to make sure that pupils of minority ethnic heritage and those who speak English as an additional language make similar progress to their classmates.
- More pupils reach higher levels in reading at the end of Year 2 than in writing and mathematics. At the end of Year 6, fewer pupils reach high levels in writing than in reading and especially in mathematics.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is consistently at least good and some is outstanding. During the inspection, outstanding teaching was seen in mathematics in Years 5 and 6, and in communication in Years 3 and 4.
- Where teaching is outstanding, teachers explain new learning exceptionally well and choose imaginative ways of introducing topics. They capture pupils' enthusiasm so that no time is wasted and a great deal is achieved. In an outstanding mathematics lesson, the teacher made sure that pupils became absorbed in solving a fascinating spatial problem, then built on their enthusiasm and held their interest when teaching them the basics of algebra in a very practical way.
- In another outstanding lesson, the teacher was particularly skilled in getting pupils to think for themselves about how to investigate and solve a series of difficult problems. She provided exactly the right level of support and challenge enabling pupils to draw on their mathematical knowledge and use a range of clues to arrive at the correct answers.
- Throughout the school, teachers make learning interesting and provide meaningful links between topics. In mixed-age classes, pupils are often divided into groups by ability and work is matched well to their learning needs. Teachers' marking is helpful and usually makes clear to pupils what they need to do to improve their work.
- The teaching of English and mathematics is good. Grouping of pupils by ability in mathematics in Years 5 and 6 has contributed significantly to the rapid progress pupils are making. Throughout the school, more-able pupils have good opportunities to work with older pupils so that they receive enough challenge, sometimes moving up to another class to make sure work is difficult enough for them.
- The school has some very skilled teaching assistants who provide pupils with clear explanations and question them thoroughly to check their understanding. Teaching assistants make a good contribution to pupils' learning, both in class and when providing support sessions for groups of pupils.
- The school has thorough systems for checking children's attainment when they join the Early Years Foundation Stage, for recording their progress and involving parents in their learning. Teaching is good so that children are well-grounded in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy, as well as developing positive attitudes to learning.
- While a range of activities is provided in each session in the Early Years Foundation Stage, planning for the outdoor activities that children choose for themselves does not focus in detail on what they are meant to learn. Some activities do not provide opportunities for children to develop in-depth investigation and thinking skills.
- Occasionally at Key Stages 1 and 2, teachers introduce new learning but do not show the class how best to approach it or check that everyone has understood. As a result, some pupils take longer than they should to try to find a way of succeeding and at times become confused, which slows their learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' behaviour is good in class and around the school. In all lessons, pupils conduct

themselves well and learning takes place in a calm and orderly atmosphere, but there is a difference between their behaviour in good and outstanding lessons.

- Where teaching is at its best, pupils' behaviour in lessons is outstanding. In these lessons, they become 'fired up' with enthusiasm and totally absorbed in learning, whether working independently, in groups or as a whole class. They show themselves to be lively learners who are full of ideas and think creatively. Where teaching is good, pupils quickly follow instructions and are rarely off task, but they are less inclined to think deeply for themselves and the pace of their learning is a little slower.
- Pupils speak very positively about all that the school has to offer. They get on well together and say that everyone is friendly. They like the fact that they are well known as individuals, that their views are listened to and they have good opportunities to take responsibility.
- Pupils are safe in school and are able to talk knowledgeably about how to stay safe, including when using computers. They have a good understanding of different types of bullying and say that bullying in school is rare. School records support their view that the few incidents that do occur are handled promptly.
- Parents express a high level of satisfaction with the way pupils' behaviour is managed and consider that their children are safe in school and well looked after.
- Pupils' enjoyment of school is evident in the attendance rate which has been consistently above average in recent years.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and senior leaders have provided strong leadership that has led to clear improvement since the last inspection and they are ambitious for the school's future development. The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed to ensure children are given a secure start to their education.
- Leaders have provided good support for staff with responsibility for subjects. There has been considerable improvement in the way teachers assess pupils' attainment and check their progress in subjects other than English and mathematics. The school has also made good improvement in the way it matches work to the needs of more-able pupils.
- Leaders have been successful in their push to raise standards in mathematics at Key Stage 2, so that a greater proportion of pupils are now reaching higher levels by the end of Year 6. They have, rightly, turned their attention now to increasing the proportion of pupils who reach higher levels at the end of Year 2 and in writing by the end of Year 6. Further checks are planned to identify gaps in pupils' learning and staff are to undergo training in how to support pupils in reaching the highest levels in writing.
- Senior leaders regularly check pupils' progress to identify those who need additional help. A wide range of special programmes has been put in place to support pupils' academic progress and the school provides very skilled support for pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable.
- Subjects and topics are matched well to the needs and interests of pupils, giving them varied experiences and fostering positive attitudes to learning. The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well, including through their involvement in activities such as 'eco warriors', the 'pupil parliament' and 'collectives group'.

- Senior leaders have clear plans for using the primary sports funding. Sport is already a strong feature of the school's work and leaders intend to extend involvement with local sports providers. They have already trialled the services of a company that provides lunchtime sporting activities and found that this is capable of promoting pupils' health and well-being.
- The local authority has an accurate knowledge of the school's work and has provided it with valuable support in evaluating its effectiveness, setting targets and checking on the quality of teaching.
- The headteacher carries out detailed observations of lessons and there are regular checks on other aspects of teachers' work. However, senior leaders have not drawn on the full range of evidence they collect to identify the key differences between good and outstanding teaching. Partly as a result of this, they are not yet making full use of the best teaching in the school to increase the amount that is outstanding.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are well trained and make a good contribution to the school's work. The Chair of the Governing Body was able to discuss the school's effectiveness in detail, including what data reveal about pupils' achievement.
 - The governing body is closely involved in school improvement and has produced a plan entitled 'Towards Outstanding', considering the range of actions it needs to take to help the school move forward.
 - Governors are generally clear about the quality of teaching and know that performance management is used to reward more effective teachers and to tackle underperformance.
 - Governors keep a close check on the spending of pupil premium funding and make sure that it is spent appropriately to meet the needs of pupils for whom it is intended.
 - The governing body makes sure that financial planning is rigorous and fulfils its statutory responsibilities well, including ensuring that the school meets requirements for safeguarding its pupils.

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	117395
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	425378

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	107
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Albert Swinson
Headteacher	Lisa Massey
Date of previous school inspection	21 October 2010
Telephone number	01438 351377
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