

Fairlands Primary School and Nursery

Pound Avenue, Stevenage, Hertfordshire, SG1 3JA

Inspection dates

3–4 October 2012

| | | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|--------------|----------|
| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Satisfactory | 3 |
| | 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.

- School leaders have established a culture of high expectations and a positive climate for learning in which pupils achieve well, both academically and personally.
- School leaders and governors have successfully tackled previous weaknesses in teaching through a robust system of performance management. This has led to improvements in pupils' achievement.
- Pupils make good progress in reading and mathematics and reach standards that are above average by the end of Year 6.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similar progress to their classmates as a result of the good support they receive.
- The quality of teaching has improved, with most being good and an increasing proportion that is outstanding.
- Staff implement the school's behaviour policy consistently and pupils feel safe and they behave well. They enjoy working and playing together, reflecting the school's provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The school provides very good support for the very few pupils who find some aspects of school difficult to manage. It works in close partnership with parents and outside agencies. As a result, exclusions have fallen and most pupils attend school regularly and on time.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage provides a calm, nurturing environment in which children thrive and flourish.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils do not make as much progress in writing as they do in reading and mathematics.
- The activities provided for pupils are not always matched well enough to their learning needs.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 24 lessons or parts of lessons taught by 14 teachers, listened to pupils read and scrutinised their work. Some lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, members of the governing body, pupils and parents. The lead inspector also met with the local authority adviser.
- Among the documents scrutinised were pupil assessment and tracking information, school development planning, minutes from meetings of the governing body and documentation relating to safeguarding pupils.
- Inspectors took account of the 19 responses to the Parent View online survey to establish the views of parents and carers.

Inspection team

| | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------|
| Joy Considine, Lead inspector | Additional Inspector |
| Christine Mayle | Additional Inspector |
| Duncan Cooper | Additional Inspector |

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school. Following an extensive building programme, the school has become a three-form entry primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who are from minority ethnic groups and who speak English as an additional language is broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported at school action is above average, although the proportion of pupils who are supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average. Their needs relate mainly to emotional and behavioural difficulties or speech, language and communication difficulties.
- The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and for whom the school receives additional income (the pupil premium) is above average.
- There is a breakfast club that is managed by the governing body and was included in this inspection. There is on-site pre-school provision that is not managed by the governing body, so was not part of this inspection.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations of pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that a higher proportion is outstanding by ensuring that learning activities are matched to the needs of pupils.
- Improve the quality of pupils' writing by:
 - providing high quality texts that allow pupils to see good models of written language
 - reducing the number of photocopied resource sheets in order to give pupils more opportunities to record their work independently
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills in other subjects.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Pupils, including those who speak English as an additional language, are well motivated and keen to learn. Consequently, they achieve well. Pupils make good progress in reading and mathematics and reach standards that are above average by the end of Year 6.
- Although standards in writing have improved, and are broadly average, the rate of progress in writing has not been rapid enough. Scrutiny of pupils' work and assessment information held by the school shows that pupils make better than expected progress in some classes, but this is not consistent across all year groups.
- Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and have improved their skills year-on-year. Many start school with skills that are well below those expected for their age but they make good and sometimes outstanding progress by the time they enter Year 1. Children quickly settle into routines and get on well together, reflecting good development of their personal and social skills.
- Pupils across the school enjoy reading and take delight in talking about stories and predicting what might happen next. By the end of Year 2, they have developed a range of strategies to read unfamiliar words, although their limited knowledge of punctuation means that a few pupils do not read with understanding. By the end of Year 6, pupils make good progress and they enjoy reading.
- Pupils' skills in writing do not match those of reading and mathematics. Although most pupils have developed their basic skills and can write for a variety of purposes, too few write fluently and legibly using correct punctuation and grammar. In lessons, they do not always have opportunities to write independently and there are too few occasions when teachers present high-quality books, other than in reading lessons, to show good examples of written language.
- Across the school, pupils make good progress in mathematics. By the end of Year 6, they confidently apply their knowledge of number to solve real-life problems. Pupils have positive attitudes to mathematics and particularly enjoy the early morning activity in which a briskly paced mathematics activity enables them to practise their basic skills.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similar rates of progress to other pupils. This is because staff carefully track their progress and have put into place programmes of work to help them to overcome their difficulties. Additionally, skilled teaching assistants provide targeted support, often on a one-to-one basis.
- The pupil premium funding has been used to increase the number of support staff and to provide an Easter School to provide extra help for those pupils who are at risk of underachieving. These pupils made good progress in reading and mathematics across the school.

The quality of teaching

is good

- The relentless drive by senior leaders to improve the quality of teaching has been successful. Most teachers plan interesting activities that capture pupils' interest and inspire them to work hard. Typically, teaching is lively and enthusiastic and, consequently, pupils enjoy learning.

- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, staff have created a stimulating environment in which children explore and investigate both indoors and outside. During the inspection, one child was examining the properties of sand. He told the inspector why the sand needed to be 'not too dry and not too wet' to make a sandcastle. Staff sensitively question children to develop their knowledge and understanding. Staff routinely observe children and take notes of their achievements to plan further learning that is exceptionally well matched to their needs.
- Most teachers know their subject well and they make good use of probing questions to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding. In whole-class discussions, teachers skilfully use pupils' curiosity to explore and discuss their ideas. In a science lesson in Year 5, the teacher presented pupils with a problem in which they had to plan and design a machine to drop a heavy load onto an unexplored imaginary planet. Pupils discussed their ideas and realised that they would need to conduct fair tests for their design to be successful.
- In the large majority of lessons, learning activities are very well planned to meet the needs of different groups of pupils and this helps them to make good progress. Teachers set clear learning intentions so that pupils understand what they are expected to learn. The pace is usually brisk and pupils are interested and want to work hard. However, there are occasions when the work is not matched well enough to what pupils are to learn and does not offer enough challenge. Opportunities are sometimes missed for pupils to practise their writing skills in subjects other than English because they record their work on photocopied resource sheets.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and provide detailed comments about what they have done well and what they need to learn next. Most teachers provide pupils with time to respond to their comments and to correct and improve their work.
- Relationships between adults and pupils are good and this makes a good contribution to the positive climate for learning. Pupils behave well in lessons, although occasionally, when they are not challenged, they become fidgety and restless.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Parents, staff and pupils say that behaviour has improved. Staff implement the school's policies for behaviour management consistently so that pupils understand and respond to the high expectations for their behaviour. Consequently, the rate of exclusions has reduced significantly and reported incidents of poor behaviour are rare. Most pupils attend school regularly and on time.
- Pupils enjoy school and they behave well in lessons and around the school. They move around the school safely showing good awareness of the needs of others. They are friendly and polite and they get on well together regardless of background. This reflects their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Staff take pupils' concerns seriously and are on hand to intervene when occasionally, minor incidents arise. Pupils understand different forms of bullying such as cyber-bullying and that related to prejudice. They say there is no bullying and that pupils usually behave well. Incidents relating to racist behaviour are rare. Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe and they are aware of the dangers posed by external risks such as tobacco and substance abuse.
- The school provides good support for the very few pupils who find some aspects of school difficult to manage and consequently, their behaviour has improved. The school works in close partnership with parents and carers and go out of their way to access support to meet individual needs.

- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage behave exceptionally well. They quickly settle into the routines and understand the expectations of staff. They work and play well together even when taking part in activities independently from staff.
- The breakfast club provides pupils with a calm and nutritious start to the school day.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has created a strong leadership team who share his drive and enthusiasm. School leaders are ambitious and they share a determination to bring about further improvement. They have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and plans for development are focused on raising pupils' achievement. Since the previous inspection, there have been significant improvements, demonstrating the school's capacity to improve further.
 - Through an extensive programme of monitoring, previously weaker teaching has been improved. Senior leaders regularly monitor the quality of teaching through data analysis, regular lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work. Systems to manage the performance of teachers are robust and are used effectively to secure further improvement.
 - The local authority provides good support. The support from its consultants has contributed to the improvements in teaching and to pupils' achievement in reading and mathematics.
 - The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets the needs of most groups of pupils well. It promotes the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics but there are too few occasions when pupils are exposed to enough high-quality books for learning. Pupils enjoy learning through topics such as 'Deadly Diseases', which meet their needs and interests. The curriculum is enriched by a variety of activities that contribute well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
 - School leaders are fully aware of the needs of a small number of pupils whose circumstances may make them more vulnerable. They work in close partnership with external agencies to support these pupils and their families. Consequently, equality of opportunity is promoted well and all steps are taken to prevent discrimination on any grounds. Arrangements for protecting pupils are good and safeguarding procedures meet all statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
- has a secure understanding of what the school does well and where further improvements are needed, based on a structured programme of visits and meetings with key leaders
 - provides good support and challenge to school leaders, particularly regarding pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching
 - is well organised and has a planned programme in place to monitor the school's policies and practices
 - ensures that leaders are accountable for spending decisions and that pupil premium funding is spent wisely.

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 | 117152 |
| Local authority | Hertfordshire |
| Inspection number | 405688 |

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 | 410 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | David Gray |
| Headteacher | Robert Staples |
| Date of previous school inspection | 4 November 2010 |
| Telephone number | 01438 351053 |
| Fax number | 01438 750116 |
| Email address | admin@fairlands.herts.sch.uk |

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2012

