

Little Waltham Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

The Street, Little Waltham, Chelmsford, CM3 3NY

Inspection dates

27–28 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	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.

- The vast majority of pupils make good progress and attainment is above national average in a range of subjects, including reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teaching is now good and some teaching is outstanding. Teachers have good subject knowledge and take time to plan learning, making good use of information about pupils' prior attainment, so learning activities support pupils' good progress.
- Provision including teaching is now good for pupils requiring additional support. As a result, disabled pupils and those with special education needs, and pupils eligible to receive government funding make good progress.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils feel safe and enjoy coming to school. Attendance is above average and pupils arrive punctually, so classes begin on time. They are polite and courteous.
- The school's emphasis on developing in pupils a strong sense of values and beliefs promotes their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. A good range of sporting clubs, educational visits and residential trips help to build pupils' independence, social skills and confidence.
- The headteacher is supported well by staff, parents and governors. Since the previous inspection, leaders have improved the quality of teaching and learning. This is now good and promotes the good progress of all pupils.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Some of the more able pupils are not given work that brings out the best in them.
- The weakest readers in Key Stage 1 do not have enough opportunities to practice their reading in school in order to make the most rapid progress.
- Pupils do not have sufficient time to write independently and practise their writing skills, to build confidence in writing and progress quickly.
- The behaviour of a few pupils is not managed well.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 6 lessons. Two of these observations were completed jointly with the headteacher. Inspectors also observed pupils at breaks and lunchtimes and attended registration.
- Discussions were held with pupils, staff, governors, the headteacher and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of 44 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). They also took account of 15 responses to staff questionnaires and correspondence sent to inspectors during the inspection, by parents. A wide range of documents was examined including samples of pupils' work, information about pupils' progress, the school's development plan and self-evaluation, governors' minutes, records of any poor behaviour, and safeguarding documents.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read, observed reading-support lessons and the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make).

Inspection team

Sherry Gladwin, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much-smaller than an average-sized primary school.
- There are below average proportions of minority ethnic groups and below average proportions of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is well-below average. This is additional funding for pupils in local authority care, those known to be eligible for free school meals and those with a parent in the armed forces.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well-above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school is part of the Chelmsford Teaching Schools Alliance. The headteacher is a member of the steering group for the alliance. The school is also a member of the local delivery group that supports other local schools to improve the quality of teaching

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement and increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by:
 - providing tasks that enable more-able pupils to reach their potential.
 - taking steps to enable the weakest readers in Key Stage 1 to improve more rapidly
 - increasing the opportunities available for pupils to write independently and practise their writing skills in order to build confidence and help them progress more quickly.
 - managing more effectively the behaviour of the few pupils who find it difficult to behave consistently well.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children start in the Reception class with skills and abilities that are often below those expected for their age. By the time they leave Year 6, they have achieved well.
- Good teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage prepares children well for entry to Year 1. Consequently, children leave the Reception class with skills and abilities closer to those expected for their age.
- Pupils use and understand letters and sounds well, so most read with increasing accuracy and confidence. Broadly average proportions of pupils reached the required standards in the national phonics screening in Year 1. Pupil progress information shows that current pupils in Year 1 are on track to achieve higher outcomes in 2014.
- In 2013, pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 attained broadly average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. This represented good progress. School information shows that Key Stage 1 pupils continue to make good progress. Pupils in Year 2 are on track to reach at least expected standards and the vast majority are on track to exceed expected standards. A few weaker readers in Key Stage 1 make slower progress because they are not given enough opportunities to practice their reading in school.
- Good improvement in the quality of teaching and learning led to good attainment for Key Stage 2 pupils in 2013. Almost all Year 6 pupils attained the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics and significant proportions reached above national standards. Current Year 6 pupils are on track to sustain last year's good improvement.
- Pupils requiring additional support because they are disabled or have special educational needs, or those eligible for pupil premium funding make good progress. The quality of provision including teaching has improved since the previous inspection, so that pupils identified as not making good progress receive carefully planned and targeted input that ensures good progress. There were too few pupils in Year 6 entitled to free school meals for their performance to be compared with their classmates.
- The more able pupils make progress in line with their peers. However, given their respective starting points, some do not make enough progress to fulfil their potential until Year 6 where progress accelerates.
- In 2013, the proportions of pupils who made more progress than most pupils nationally compares favourably with national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. Achievement in reading and mathematics was better than in writing. Writing progress was slower because pupils were not given enough opportunities to practice their writing and develop more confidence. Pupil progress information shows that current Year 6 pupils are on track to sustain last year's improvements.
- Minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language progress at least as well as other pupils.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers plan learning with care, making good use of the information they have about pupils' prior learning. Activities hold pupils' interest and provoke them to question.
- Teachers make the classrooms into bright and attractive places in which to learn. Displays are presented thoughtfully, providing good aids to learning. A variety of pupils' work is displayed including marked pieces with written comments that show pupils how they can develop their ideas. These exemplars remind pupils of important learning points, clarify understanding and help to raise aspiration. The 'writer of the week' display board is a good example.
- Teachers and pupils show mutual respect. Pupils co-operate with teachers, so teaching time is used efficiently to maximise learning. Teachers are skilled in managing their classes, making good use of praise and house points to secure pupils' concentration, motivation and reward them. They establish clear routines from the earliest years, so pupils develop high expectations for their learning. Pupils present their written work tidily and thoughtfully.
- Marking is consistently good. Teachers mark pupils' class and homework regularly and accurately. Good quality comments which show pupils how to improve their work and move to the next stage are written in pupils' exercise books. Marking is at its best in English and mathematics. Pupils value the helpful comments and respond to them as requested. Good follow-up by teachers ensures that pupils apply new learning and make good progress.
- The quality of phonics teaching has improved since the previous inspection. Teachers and teaching assistants have good knowledge and understand how to teach phonics effectively. Whole class teaching is delivered with skill and clarity and pupils make good progress. Pupils requiring additional help receive planned support from a teaching assistant. This plugs gaps in knowledge and skills. However, teaching for weaker readers in Key Stage 1 does not enable them to practise reading enough to make the best possible progress.
- Teachers use a wide variety of techniques to encourage learning. For instance, their questions provoke reflection, challenge pupils' thinking and generate thoughtful discussions. Pupils respond spontaneously, listen to one another and show positive attitudes to learning. Pupils often show understanding, thought and good articulation in response to the teachers' good range of thought-provoking tasks on offer. However, the most able pupils are not always given work that gets the best out of them.
- Reading, writing, communication and mathematics are taught effectively. Pupils do not make as much progress in writing as they do in reading and mathematics because they have less well developed technical skills. Where pupils encounter opportunities to write independently and practise their writing, they quickly improve their writing and build confidence. This was seen in a Year 6 lesson following an engaging presentation from a visiting author. These opportunities are not widespread enough and as a result, progress in writing over Key Stage 2 was not as good as the other subjects in 2013. Current progress shows that this is an improving picture.
- The pupil premium is used effectively to ensure the good progress of eligible pupils, through one-to-one and small group sessions, and access to educational visits, music and clubs.
- Teaching for pupils who are disabled or those who have special educational needs has improved since the previous inspection, so that it is now good. Teachers and teaching assistants carefully plan support for these pupils so they achieve age appropriate levels.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are honest, courteous, polite and friendly. The school promotes consideration and respect successfully. Pupils spontaneously hold doors open and step aside to let other people pass by. They have empathy and show care and compassion in different situations. They understand that they are more fortunate than many in the world and raise significant sums of money for a variety of charities, including 'Water Aid', 'Readathon' and 'Sport Relief'.
- Attitudes to learning are positive. Pupils listen to adults and follow instructions quickly and sensibly. On entry to the school, children settle quickly in the Reception class and respond to high expectations and the established routines. They are eager to learn and their positive attitude to learning supports their good progress.
- Pupils welcome responsibility. They behave sensibly around the school. Older pupils have an opportunity to serve the school as prefects, librarians, playground leaders and house captains. Responsibility is encouraged across all year groups, pupils serve at the salad bar at lunchtime, sit on the school council, organise music for assemblies, book and register monitors etc. These opportunities promote self-confidence and strengthen community.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils feel safe in school. They understand how to keep themselves safe, including the use of the internet, at school and in the community. They enjoy coming to school and attend punctually so classes start on time. Attendance is above average. The school uses the pupil premium to ensure the good attendance of eligible pupils. All absence from school is investigated promptly and the school's family worker support families to ensure good attendance.
- Pupils understand right and wrong. They understand different types of bullying, including sexist, racist and homophobic bullying. Pupils report that staff deal promptly with bullying and help pupils to resolve issues.
- The school has worked with the local authority to develop effective behaviour management strategies for a small number of pupils who find it difficult and this work is still ongoing. The school's approach is inclusive. Circle time, small group social skills sessions and PSHE are being used well to develop more positive attitudes. Pupils with challenging behaviour are helped and treated with compassion. Good partnerships with parents and carers, and external agencies successfully support pupils in managing their own behaviour.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher leads the school well. Good progress with all of the key issues identified in the previous inspection report has resulted in improvements in the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.
- The school knows itself well. Effective analysis of the school's strengths and areas for development results in the right issues being identified in the school development plan. Senior and subject leaders monitor progress with initiatives in the school development plan regularly and report to governors. Regular monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning by leaders, together with good support from the Chelmsford Teaching Alliance and the local delivery group help improve the quality of teaching and learning.

- Pupils are exposed to a wide range of subjects. They also have access to residential trips, educational visits and a wide range of sporting and artistic clubs. These opportunities along with the emphasis the school places on developing in pupils a strong set of values and beliefs promote the good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils and prepare them to become caring, responsible citizens.
- The sports funding provided to primary schools is used to widen access to sport for pupils. A sports coach provides expert tuition during after-school clubs for pupils in netball and football. The quality of physical education teaching is also being improved because teachers identify areas for development in their teaching. These are shared with the sports coach and co-teaching explores ways of strengthening these areas.
- The local authority has worked successfully with the headteacher and subject leaders to improve the quality of teaching and learning, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Parents and carers are supportive of the school. Parents commented on the improved communication with parents and carers since the previous inspection. Governors now consult parents about the quality of education and care in the school and these opportunities are welcome by many parents. Phonics workshops help parents understand how they can help their children develop good reading skills.
- Equality of opportunity is promoted well because pupils are free from discrimination and harassment. Pupils from all backgrounds and abilities are helped to make good progress. The pupil premium is used effectively to provide enrichment opportunities and a range of academic support for eligible pupils.
- The school’s safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are skilled, committed and ambitious for the school to do well. Good support for school leaders has resulted in good progress with all of the key issues identified in the previous inspection report. Governors promote equal opportunity for all pupils because they carefully monitor the school’s tracking of pupils’ behaviour and academic progress against set targets. They accurately understand and interpret pupils’ progress and performance information because they receive training in this and other areas of governance.
 - Governors visit the school regularly and possess an accurate understanding of its strengths and areas for development. They monitor progress with initiatives in the school development plan, including the quality of teaching and learning through regular reports from the headteacher to governors’ meetings. Governors understand the value good teaching plays in securing high standards. The headteacher’s performance is managed closely by governors. The headteacher’s own targets form the basis of targets for all staff in the school and drive school improvement. The school’s finances are managed prudently. Governors can account for the spending of the pupil premium and its impact on achievement. Governors effectively and efficiently deploy staff to support pupils’ learning.

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	115175
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	432097

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	143
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Brian Pope
Headteacher	Elizabeth Maycock
Date of previous school inspection	15 November 2012
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