

Shepherd Primary School

Shepherd's Lane, Mill End, Rickmansworth, WD3 8JJ

Inspection dates

6–7 February 2014

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.

- Pupils' achievement has improved since the previous inspection. All groups of pupils make good progress from their below average starting points on entry to the school.
- Standards at the end of Years 2 and 6 are in line with the national averages and have risen over the past two years.
- Teaching is good and some is outstanding. Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan lessons which are enjoyable and stimulating so that pupils are excited about learning.
- Pupils enjoy reading and are taught how to sound out letters and words effectively.
- Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' achievement.
- Pupils' good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning contribute considerably to their achievement. They feel safe and enjoy coming to school.
- The acting headteacher, well supported by governors, the acting deputy headteacher and other staff, has continued to take effective action to improve further the quality of teaching which staff are keen to engage with. This has resulted in rapid improvement in pupils' achievement across the school.
- Governors play an effective role in supporting the continuing success and development of this school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not always plan and set work that ensures that pupils make the best progress they can, particularly the more-able pupils.
- In mathematics, marking does not always give pupils clear guidance on how to improve their work to move their learning on.
- Some subject leaders are new and only just beginning to develop their skills in monitoring teaching and learning.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 12 lessons, of which seven were joint observations with the acting headteacher and the acting deputy headteacher. The inspector also heard pupils in Years 2 and 6 read.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, members of the school’s staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and another member, and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors took account of 56 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and 26 responses to the staff inspection questionnaire. They spoke with parents and carers during the inspection.
- The inspector looked at a range of documents, including the school’s own data on pupils’ current attainment and progress, the school’s evaluation of its performance, school improvement planning, documentation relating to teachers’ performance over time and records relating to safeguarding and pupils’ behaviour.

Inspection team

Tusha Chakraborti, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Angela Podmore

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The large majority of pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is in line with the national average, as is the proportion speaking English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in local authority care and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, is average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- There have been significant changes in staffing, including to the senior leadership team, over the past year. Three senior leaders, including the headteacher and deputy headteacher, are on maternity leave. Consequently, two members of staff have been appointed to the posts of acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher since February 2013. Two new teachers have joined the school in January 2014 and some of the subject leaders are new to their posts.
- The school is a member of the local schools' consortium, which includes several primary schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching to accelerate pupils' progress and raise achievement further by:
 - ensuring that tasks set in lessons build on what teachers' assessments tell them their pupils already know and understand, and are better able to stretch all groups of pupils, especially the more-able
 - making sure that marking in mathematics consistently provides pupils with clear advice about how to make their work better.
- Strengthen leadership by developing the capacity of new subject leaders to check teaching and learning in their areas effectively.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children enter the school with knowledge and skills that are below those expected for their age. This is lower than recorded at the time of the last inspection. The school's well-planned programme of learning and teachers' careful monitoring ensure children make good progress and, by the end of Reception, most achieve a good standard in all areas of learning, and some exceed this.
- Pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics overall. Progress in mathematics had not been as strong as in other subjects, especially for the more-able. This is because pupils' problem-solving skills were not sufficiently developed. The school identified this as an area for further development and has taken effective action to address this. Teaching programmes for mathematics have been reviewed to ensure that pupils are able to build on their prior learning consistently. Pupils are now developing good problem-solving skills.
- Pupils' overall attainment was in line with the national average by the end of both key stages over the past two years. This shows a steady improvement in pupils' achievement since the last inspection. The school's data on current pupils' progress and targets for 2014, supported by the work seen in their books and in lessons, suggest that many pupils are making rapid progress in all areas and that attainment is likely to rise further. More-able pupils also make good progress, though there are occasions when they could make even more progress, given the right amount of challenge in their work.
- Standards in reading are good across the school. Younger pupils apply their knowledge of phonics (linking letters and sounds) to read a range of fiction and non-fiction books. Older pupils develop a good understanding of different styles of writing and write well for different purposes. The results of the Year 1 phonics screening check were above average in 2013.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make consistently good progress from their starting points because the school provides well-targeted support for them. Pupils from minority ethnic families or those who speak English as an additional language also make equally good progress as their classmates.
- Pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding make good progress, attaining as well as the others in English and mathematics. The additional funding has been spent on staff who give carefully planned support for individuals or small groups of pupils to ensure that they do not fall behind in their learning. As a result, the gap between these pupils' attainment and that of others has narrowed very effectively over the past two years. The gap was closed fully in 2013 and some of these pupils achieved even higher standards than others.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching has improved markedly since the previous inspection as a result of effective and systematic support for all staff over the past year. Staff create a purposeful learning environment. They treat pupils with respect and are interested in what they have to say. As a result, pupils are actively engaged in lessons and know that teachers are keen to hear their views and ideas. This ensures that pupils have good attitudes to learning and develop high self-esteem.

- Children in Nursery and Reception thrive in a stimulating learning environment and pursue activities of their own choice as well as those directed by adults. They work cooperatively, engaging well in reading and developing language skills. This was seen in a family reading session, where children enjoyed reading and sharing a range of stories with their parents and staff, identifying and describing some of the characters.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge. They use questioning effectively to check pupils' understanding and challenge them to think more deeply about issues in order to build on what they already know. For example, in a Year 6 lesson, pupils were very well engaged in investigating how to pay for different items, using an imaginary new coinage system introduced by the government. This meant that they had to think hard about the process and build on their learning in the previous lesson about the systematic approach to investigation for problem-solving.
- The teaching of reading is good. Group reading sessions are used effectively to deepen pupils' understanding of different styles of texts or to analyse events and characters.
- Work is usually pitched at just the right level for all groups of pupils. Joint planning between teachers and the skilful teaching assistants enables the latter to offer pupils good support for the targeted pupils. However, teachers do not always use assessment information effectively to ensure that all groups, particularly the more-able, are stretched to reach the standards of which they are capable.
- Teachers mark pupils' work in literacy regularly and effectively, providing clear guidance as to how well pupils are doing and how to move forward to the next stage in their learning. They make sure that pupils respond to the guidance, correcting their work. However, marking in mathematics is not as effective as in English in informing pupils what they can do to improve their work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils are well mannered and friendly. They are courteous and respectful of each other and adults. They have very positive attitudes to learning and get on well in lessons without disruption. This is a key factor in their good and improving progress.
- The behaviour of pupils is good. As a result, they are growing up as mature and confident learners. There are good procedures for adults to manage pupils' behaviour. These are applied consistently and pupils respond well to them. Pupils are proud of their school and thrive in the school's inclusive atmosphere where everyone is valued and trusted.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils feel safe at school and all parents who responded to the questionnaire agree. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe, including when using the internet or on the road, and in case of fire. They are concerned about the safety of others and are well aware of how to stay healthy from an early age because these issues are often included in lessons. For example, in a lesson in Reception, a group of children discussed healthy food and concluded that some cereals already have sugar in them and too much sugar is bad for teeth.
- Pupils say that there is very little bullying in the school. They are confident that if it did occur it would be dealt with quickly and fairly. Pupils show a good understanding of different forms of bullying, including name-calling, racism and cyber-bullying.

- Pupils develop a strong sense of responsibility. Older pupils successfully fulfil their role as peer mediators. Year 6 play leaders lead lunchtime activities for younger children. Pupils raise funds for national and international charities. Recently, they chose and raised funds for a local hospice which supports terminally ill children.
- Attendance has been average over recent years but has improved in the current year. This is because the school has worked very hard with external agencies and parents over the past year to raise attendance.

The leadership and management are good

- The acting headteacher, ably supported by other leaders, staff and the governors, has successfully continued the work of the headteacher to raise standards in all areas of the school's work since taking up her post. Together, they have established a harmonious and welcoming environment where pupils grow up as mature learners. The school has an accurate view of its successes and of where further improvements can be made.
- The quality of teaching is monitored effectively and set against challenging individual annual performance targets for staff. These are linked to teachers' professional development. Staff are keen to improve their practice and this is contributing to rising standards. Subject leaders carry out their roles conscientiously. They continually reflect on the quality of their work and use these insights to develop their roles further. However, some, including the Early Years Foundation Stage leader, are new to post. They have not all had a chance to develop fully their role in monitoring teaching and pupils' achievement across the school.
- The curriculum appeals to pupils' interests, helping them to develop good attitudes to learning. As a result, pupils strive to achieve well. A range of clubs, music tuition, sailing lessons and activities, such as singing at the Royal Albert Hall, make pupils' learning meaningful and appealing. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. Assemblies and religious studies provide opportunities for pupils to reflect on teachings from the Bible and other religions.
- The school is using the new primary sports funding to support a range of initiatives and events that are designed to increase pupils' involvement. Expert coaching from the Watford Football Club and effective training have ensured high quality physical education lessons. Pupils enjoy a wide range of after-school sporting activities and their participation rate is now high.
- The local authority has provided very effective support to the school, which has helped it improve within a short time. Membership of the consortium of local schools also helps to share and develop good practice.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are competent and knowledgeable and play an active role in the school's development. For example, the governors ensured that the acting headteacher is well supported by a local leader in education and agreed to fund this. They are well informed about the quality of teaching and pupils' performance through their own monitoring visits and reports from the headteacher and the local authority adviser. They understand data about pupils' achievement and know how the school's results compare with other schools nationally. Governors know how funding is used, including pupil premium and sports funding, and are well informed about how well the funding is supporting pupils' achievement. They have a clear understanding of the school's performance management system and hold the headteacher to

account for ensuring that teachers' salaries and performance are closely linked. Governors are diligently involved in regular safeguarding checks, such as the completion of risk assessments. They ensure that the procedures for safeguarding pupils are robust and meet statutory requirements.

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	117096
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	430754

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	209
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Richard Sutton
Head Teacher	Claire Foad (Head Teacher) Rebecca Workman (Acting Head Teacher)
Date of previous school inspection	20 June 2012
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